

**Critique of**

***When Was Ancient  
Jerusalem Destroyed?***

***Part 1: Why It Matters;  
What the Evidence Shows***

***(The Watchtower, October 1, 2011)***

**Doug Mason**



This is the first of two articles in consecutive issues of *The Watchtower* that discuss scholarly questions surrounding the date of the destruction of ancient Jerusalem. This two-part series presents thoroughly researched and Bible-based answers to questions that have puzzled some readers.

**When Was Ancient Jerusalem Destroyed?**

PART ONE WHY IT MATTERS  
WHAT THE EVIDENCE SHOWS

The October 1, 2011 *Watchtower* carries a simplistic apology to defend the Watchtower Society's date of 607 BCE for the destruction of Jerusalem.

This is a Critique of that *Watchtower* article. This Critique is, of necessity, far larger. It is very easy to make a series of unsubstantiated assertions, which is exactly what the *Watchtower* article does. For example:

Thus, by the fall of  
537 B.C.E., the Jews had returned to Jerusa-  
lem to restore true worship.—Ezra 1:1-5; 2:1;  
3:1-5.

The *Watchtower* article provides no evidence that shows 537 BCE is correct. This it cannot do, since no evidence exists for that date, or indeed for any other date of that event. So it simply makes an unsubstantiated assertion. It is certainly impossible for the cited text at Ezra to provide a BCE date.

It would be just as simple to assert that the first Jews returned in 538 BCE or in 536 BCE, as many do. An alternative date could have been offered by this Critique, and it would have been yet another unsubstantiated assertion. However, this Critique provides additional information to enable a reader make a reasoned decision.

Each major subject canvassed in this Critique commences with a new page. This allows the reader to quickly identify the subject matter, and if need be, provide those pages to a Watchtower apologist.

Version 1

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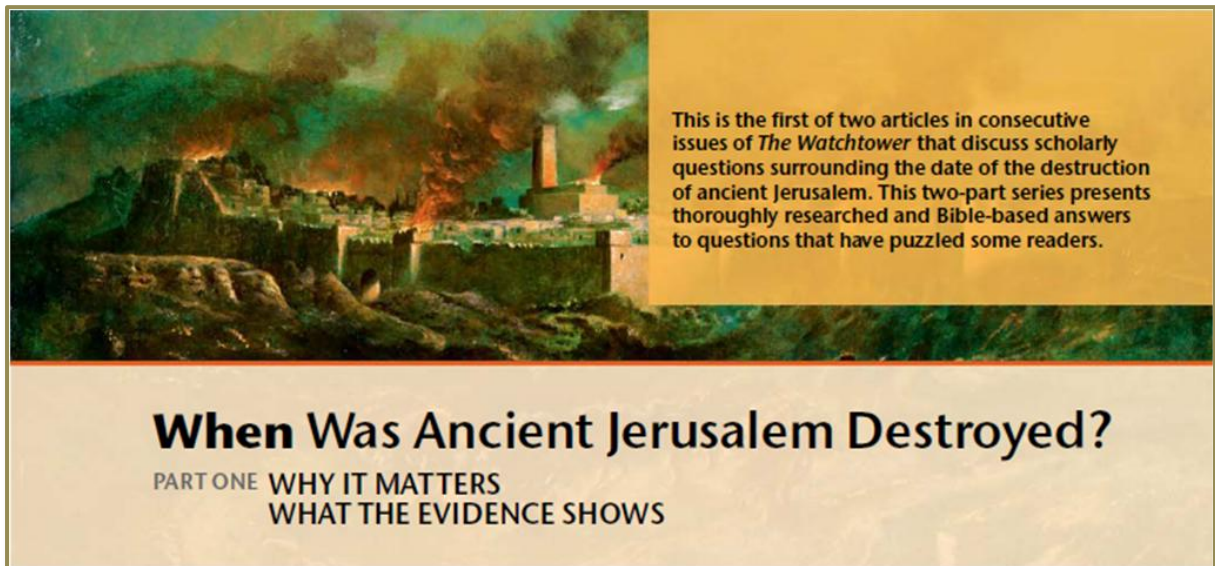
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## Critique of *When Was Ancient Jerusalem Destroyed?: Part 1, Why It Matters; What the Evidence Shows*

After many years of silence on the date and significance of Jerusalem's destruction, the October 1, 2011 *The Watchtower* contained the article: *When Was Ancient Jerusalem Destroyed?* (pages 27-31).



*The Watchtower*, October 1, 2011, page 27

### WHY IT MATTERS

Although the *Watchtower* article's heading claims Part 1 addresses *Why it Matters*, the article completely fails to address the issue. The article focuses on the date of Jerusalem's destruction but it does not discuss its significance. This subject is deeply significant for the Watchtower Society (WTS) since they use the date of Jerusalem's destruction in the process of providing itself with its reason for existing and for the source of its authority and control.

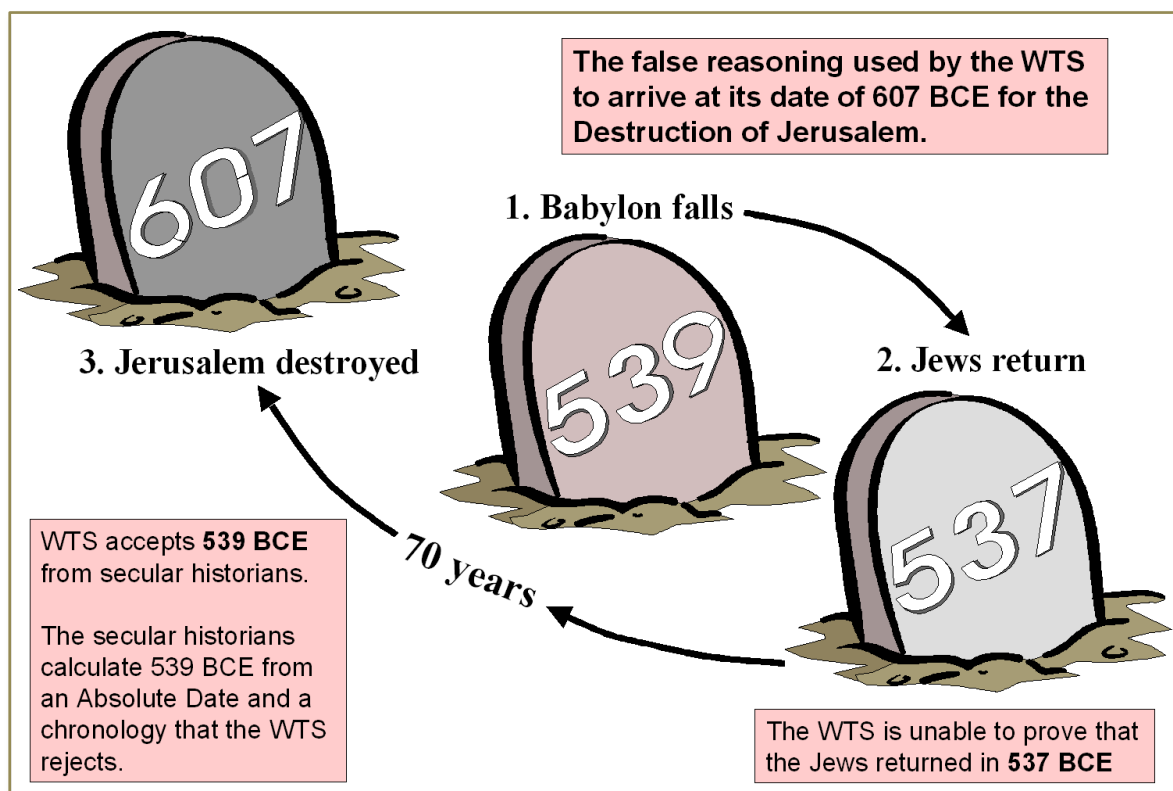
Having decided on 607 BCE as its date for Jerusalem's destruction, the WTS selectively jumps to isolated texts in Luke, Revelation, Daniel, Ezekiel, and Matthew to show that God's kingdom government was set up in 1914 CE and that Jesus anointed them in 1919 as its sole earthly representative.

If 607 BCE is not the date of Jerusalem's destruction by Nebuchadnezzar, and if the "70 years" did not start two months after that event, then the claims made by the WTS for itself are eliminated. That is the real reason this matters to them.

## HOW THE *WATCHTOWER* ARRIVES AT 607 BCE FOR JERUSALEM'S DESTRUCTION

To arrive at the 607 BCE date, the Watchtower Society (WTS):

1. Accepts that Babylon fell to the Persians in 539 BCE.
2. Assumes that the first Jewish returnees assembled in 537 BCE to dedicate the temple site at Jerusalem.
3. Assumes that this event marked the conclusion of the Seventy Years spoken of by Jeremiah.
4. Says that the 70 years therefore commenced in 607 BCE.
5. Assumes that the 70-year period commenced two months after Jerusalem was destroyed, when Jews entered Egypt.



### The false reasoning used by the *Watchtower* to arrive at 607 BCE

Broadly, difficulties faced by the WTS include:

- The starting point of 539 BCE relies on secular records, secular chronologies, classical historians, and secular scholars.
- Although the WTS calculates the date of Babylon's fall from secular sources, such as classical historians, business tablets, and astronomical tablets, it also denigrates those sources.
- Without any evidence (since none exists), the WTS assumes the first Returnees dedicated the temple site in 537 BCE.
- The WTS assumes that this event marked the conclusion of the "Seventy Years".
- The WTS assumes Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar just over 70 years before the Returnees assembled at the destroyed site.
- It assumes that when the Jews entered Egypt following Gedaliah's murder, that this emptied Judah of every person.

- The WTS assumes that the Jews entered Egypt two months after Jerusalem's destruction.
- It assumes that this event marked the start of the "70 Years". There is no explicit Biblical statement to that effect.

Every step in the WTS's "Bible chronology" is concerned with its primary objective of maintaining 1914 CE as the eschatologically significant date. Therefore, rather than seeking evidence and proof, the WTS seeks support for the conclusion it commences with.

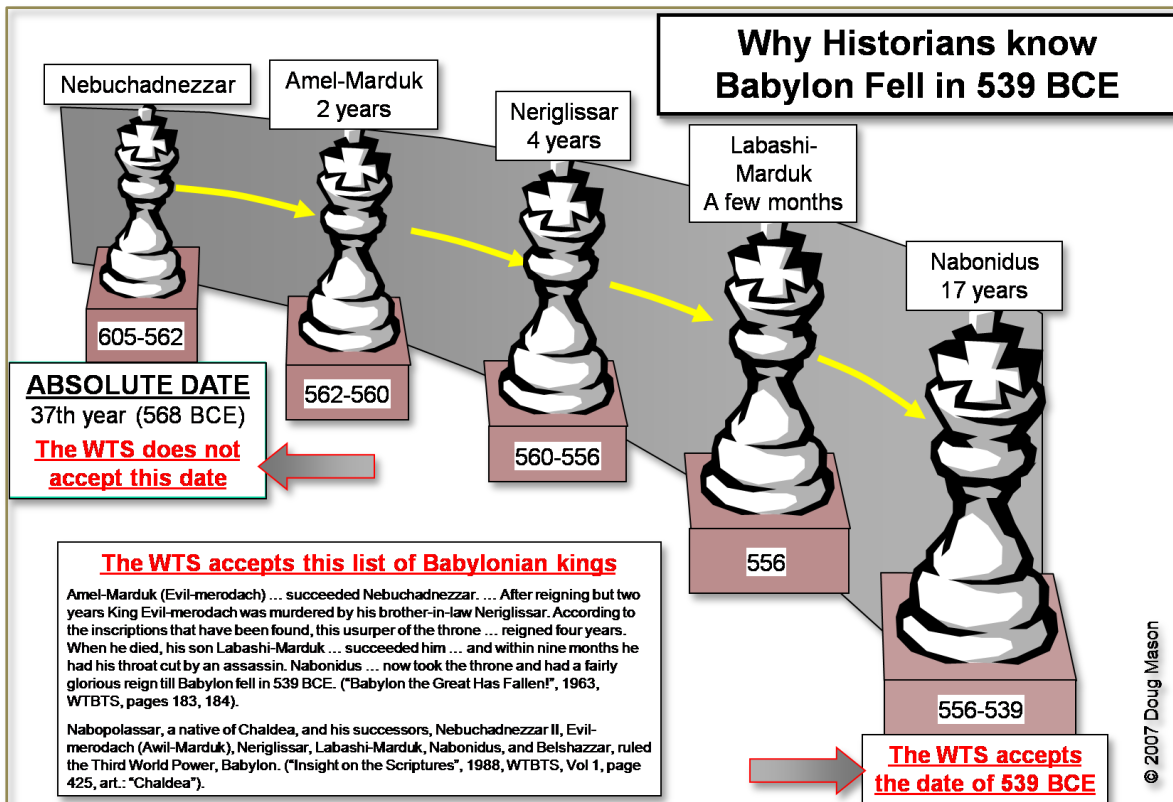
### **A difference of about 20 years**

The *Watchtower* article recognises that the commonly-held date for the destruction of 587/586 BCE is about 20 years later than its date of 607 BCE. The WTS says this difference results from the WTS accepting the inspired word of God (termed "Bible chronology") while everyone else others depends on uninspired secular records.

So why do Jehovah's Witnesses hold to a date that differs from widely accepted chronology by 20 years? In short, because of evidence within the Bible itself.

*(Note that this is the format used in this Critique to provide the citations from The Watchtower article.)*

## THE STARTING DATE OF 539 BCE



Scholars provide 539 BCE for the Fall of Babylon using the chronology that the *Watchtower* does not accept. Further related statements from Watchtower Society (WTS) articles are available at:

[http://www.jwstudies.com/WTS\\_support\\_for\\_the\\_Babylonian\\_king-list.pdf](http://www.jwstudies.com/WTS_support_for_the_Babylonian_king-list.pdf)

The *Watchtower* article acknowledges that 539 BCE is calculated from other sources.

The date 539 B.C.E. when Cyrus II conquered Babylon is calculated using the testimony of:

It is impossible for the Bible to provide BCE dates. They have to come from secular sources, which are denigrated as “uninspired” by the WTS. While the date for Babylon’s fall is generally agreed with by scholars, the WTS undermines its position when it denigrates the sources it uses to calculate that date.

### **The Watchtower relies on the testimony of “ancient historical sources”**

To create its foundation date for the Fall of Babylon, the WTS says it relies on **classical historians** and on **cuneiform tablets**.

■ **Ancient historical sources and cuneiform tablets:** Diodorus of Sicily (c. 80-20 B.C.E.) wrote that Cyrus became king of Persia in “the opening year of the Fifty-fifth Olympiad.” (*Historical Library*, Book IX, 21) That year was 560 B.C.E. The Greek historian Herodotus (c. 485-425 B.C.E.) stated that Cyrus was killed “after he had reigned twenty-nine years,” which would put his death during his 30th year, in 530 B.C.E. (*Histories*, Book I, Clío, 214) **Cuneiform tablets** show that Cyrus ruled Babylon for nine years before his death. Thus, nine years prior to his death in 530 B.C.E. takes us back to 539 B.C.E. as the year Cyrus conquered Babylon.



An *Olympiad* is a period of 4 years. Their first recorded use was some 400 years after the first Games were held to mark the start of an Olympiadic period. Each year during a four-year Olympiad is designated accordingly. The expression “Ol. 55, 1” means “the first year of the 55th Olympiad”.

Citing Diodorus and others as his authorities, Africanus places the first year of Cyrus in Ol. 55, 1. ... Therefore the synchronism exists: Cyrus year 1 = Ol. 55, 1 = 560/559 BC. ...

In that same passage ... Africanus brings his reckoning to the first year of Cyrus with the words: “to the first year of the reign of Cyrus when there was an end to the captivity.” Actually ... [Cyrus] did not take Babylon and free the Jewish captives until 539 BCE. ...

Fortunately, the fragments of Africanus also preserve his dates for the life of Jesus. ... In view of the synchronism previously established for the first year of Cyrus where A.Ad. 4943 = Ol. 55, 1 = 560/559 BC, we can also establish that A.Ad. 5500 = Ol. 194,2 = 3/2 BC, which must be Africanus’s date for the birth of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

The *Watchtower* uses the classical historians including Diodorus and Africanus to provide it the foundation for its dates. Africanus also places the birth of Jesus Christ, which was much closer to his own time, at 3/2 BCE, a date rejected by the WTS.

Information on secular sources relied on by the WTS is available at:

[http://www.jwstudies.com/Insight\\_s\\_reliance\\_on\\_secular\\_sources.pdf](http://www.jwstudies.com/Insight_s_reliance_on_secular_sources.pdf)

### **Complexities in synchronisms**

Ol. 55, 1 ran from **July** 1, 560 to **June** 30, 559 BC (Julian).<sup>2</sup> The Babylonian year (and the Jewish religious year) commenced with Nisan. According to Parker and Dubberstein, Nisan 1, 560 BC fell on **March** 26 (Julian) and Nisan 1, 559 BC fell on **April** 14 (Julian). Thus caution must be observed when converting from one calendar to another, as it is not simply a task of providing the date of a year.

### **Cyrus killed “after he had reigned twenty-nine years”**

The *Watchtower* article says that Cyrus was killed “after he reigned twenty-nine years”, making 530 BCE his final year.

[Eusebius] shows the thirtieth and last year of the reign of Cyrus in relation to Ol. 62, 2. ... By the reckoning of Olympiadic dates which we have accepted as probably used by Eusebius, Ol. 55,1 equals 560 B.C., Ol. 62, 2 equals 531 B.C. ...

For the reign of Cyrus quite precise information is now available from the cuneiform sources and in terms of the Babylonian calendar. The latest date attested in his reign is the twenty-third day of Abu in his ninth year (mentioned on a tablet from Borsippa), which (counting his years of reign in Babylon) is equivalent to Aug 12, 530 B.C. The earliest date attested in the reign of his successor Cambyses is the twelfth day of Ululu in the latter’s accession year, and this is equivalent to Aug 31, 530. It is to be concluded that the death of Cyrus, fighting on the northeastern frontier, was reported in Babylon in August 530 B.C.

According to the *Chronicle*, the reign of Cyrus ended in his thirtieth and last year and this year was related to Ol. 62, 2, i.e., to 531 B.C. If the regnal year of Cyrus was considered to begin in the spring, in line

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<sup>1</sup> Finegan, pages 156, 157

<sup>2</sup> *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, Jack Finegan, page 95 (1998 edition).

with Mesopotamian custom, his year 30 could extend from Mar/Apr 531 to Mar/Apr 530, and it would end a few months ahead of his actual death as just established. But if the regnal year was counted as beginning on the following Oct 1, then year 30 extended from Oct 1, 531, to Sept 30, 530 B.C., and included the time when the death of Cyrus became known in Babylon in August 530 B.C. By the same interpretation, year 1 of Cyrus, related to Ol. 55,1 = 560 B.C., would mean more exactly the year from Oct 1, 560, to Sept 30, 559 B.C.

The biblical references to the first year of Cyrus when he made the proclamation which allowed the Jewish exiles to return from Babylon to Jerusalem (2 Chron 36:22f.; Ezra 1:1ff.) are presumably stated in terms of his reign in Babylon since they deal with an event in that city.<sup>3</sup>

These details indicate the level of uninspired support relied on by *The Watchtower* for its very foundation. It cannot rightly claim that it lays its foundation from inspired sources.

Significantly, the *Watchtower* article also denigrates uninspired classical historians and chronologists, even though it is clear that the information it relies on comes from such people, including Africanus, Diodorus, and Eusebius.

### **“Cuneiform tablets show Cyrus ruled Babylon for nine years”**

As the above passage from Finegan shows, the information relied on by the *Watchtower* for its foundation comes from cuneiform tablets.

Cuneiform tablets show Cyrus ruled Babylon for nine years. (*The Watchtower*, page 28)

This particular information is provided from a listing by Parker and Dubberstein<sup>4</sup>, where they identify the earliest and latest dated cuneiform tablet issued during a king's reign. Tens of thousands of tablets written during the period have been recovered that list business transactions and administration tasks. As shown below, these tablets show that Cyrus ruled Babylon for 9 years, dying in August 530 BCE.

Parker and Dubberstein's listing of the earliest and latest tablets commences with Nabopolassar and continues on through the neo-Babylonian rulers and on. The record for Cyrus, which the *Watchtower* accepts along the way, is an integral element of the list. The balance of the listing includes the following dates for the latest tablets of these kings:

Kandalanu: Oct 30, 626 BC  
Nabopolassar: Aug 15, 605 BC  
Nebuchadnezzar: Oct 8, 562 BC  
Amel-Marduk: Aug 7, 560 BC  
Nergal-shar-usur: Apr 16, 556 BC  
Labashi-Marduk: June 17, 556 BC  
Nabunaid: Oct 29, 539 BCE (Cyrus entered Babylon)

The final page of this Critique provides a part of the listing by Parker and Dubberstein that provides the *Watchtower* with its dates for Cyrus and the length of his reign. That page also shows the dates of the latest tablets for these other neo-Babylonian rulers.

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<sup>3</sup> Finegan, age 178-179

<sup>4</sup> *Babylonian Chronology 626 BC – AD 75*, pages 11-24

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BABYLONIAN CHRONOLOGY, 626 B.C.–A.D. 75

IX/—/17 by Strassmaier on the basis of the giving of the *maššartum* for the IX/—/17 of Nabunaid (lines 2–4). Since a *maššartum* was often given some months in advance (see Strassmaier, *Nabonidus*, Nos. 219, 346, 361) this tablet is useless for exact dating purposes. This fact was recognized by Kugler, *SSB* II 388 f., but not by Clay, *BE* VIII 1, pp. 4 f.

**CYRUS**

*Evidence for Beginning of Reign*

VII/14/acc. (Oct. 10, 539), Sippar is taken by Persian forces.  
 VII/16/acc. (Oct. 12), Babylon falls.  
 VIII/3/acc. (Oct. 29), Cyrus enters Babylon.  
 These dates are from the Nabunaid Chronicle (see under NABUNAIID).  
 VII/—/acc. (not later than Oct. 26, 539) (Strassmaier, *Cyrus*, No. 1).  
 VIII/24/acc. (Nov. 19, 539) (*ibid.* No. 2).  
 X/21/acc. (Jan. 14, 538), Uruk (Tremayne, *RECC*, No. 1).

*Evidence for End of Reign*

IV/7/9 (June 28, 530), Babylon (Strassmaier, *Cyrus*, No. 340).  
 IV/27/9 (July 18, 530), Babylon (*ibid.* No. 341).  
 V/13/9 (Aug. 2, 530), Nippur (Clay, *BE* VIII 1, No. 74).  
 V/23/9 (Aug. 12, 530), Borsippa (*VAS* V 42).  
 Coregency of Cyrus and Cambyses probably began Nisanu 1 (March 26), 530; see Kugler, *SSB* II 397–401, and Dubberstein in *AJS* LV (1938) 417–19. The death of Cyrus while he was fighting on the northeastern front was probably reported in Babylon in August, 530, whereupon Cambyses was recognized as sole king.

**CAMBYSES**

*Evidence for Beginning of Reign*

VI/12/acc. (Aug. 31, 530), Babylon (Strassmaier, *Cambyses*, No. 1).  
 VI/16/acc. (Sept. 4, 530), Babylon (*ibid.*)  
 VI/20/acc. (Sept. 8, 530), Babylon (*ibid.*)

*Evidence for End of Reign*

I/4? and 5/8 (Mar. 30? and 31, 522),  
 I/12/8 (Apr. 7, 522), Uruk (Dougherty, *BE* VIII 1, No. 71).  
 I/10+x/8 (Apr. 5+x, 522), Nippur (Clay, *BE* VIII 1, No. 71).  
 I/23/8 (Apr. 18, 522), Shahrinu (Strassmaier, *Cambyses*, No. 409).  
 For the period from the death of Cambyses to the 2d year of Darius I consult the articles listed in the introduction to this section. Those articles are essential to an understanding of these complex years. As the evidence indicates, Cambyses was still recognized in April, 522. The Behistun inscription, § 11, seems to indicate that he did not die until after July 1, 522 (after IV/9/8). However, his successor, Bardiya, was certainly recognized in Babylonia already in months I and II (see under BARDIYA).

**BARDIYA** (SMERDIS, GAUMATA)

*Evidence for Beginning of Reign*

XII/14/— (Mar. 11, 522), Bardiya revolts in Persia (Behistun, § 11).

**V/23/9 means the 5th month, 23rd day, 9th year of Cyrus' reign**

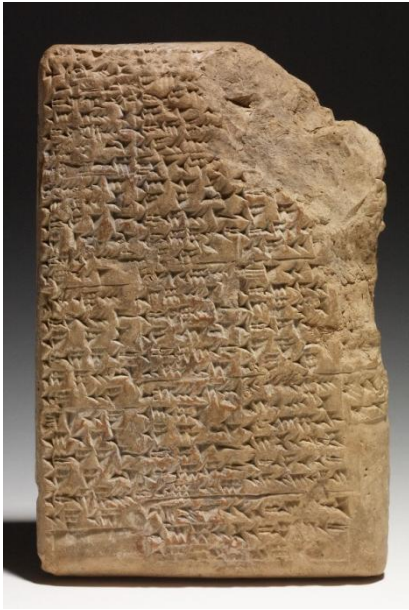
**Parker and Dubberstein, page 14**

**The Watchtower relies on an astronomical tablet for confirmation**

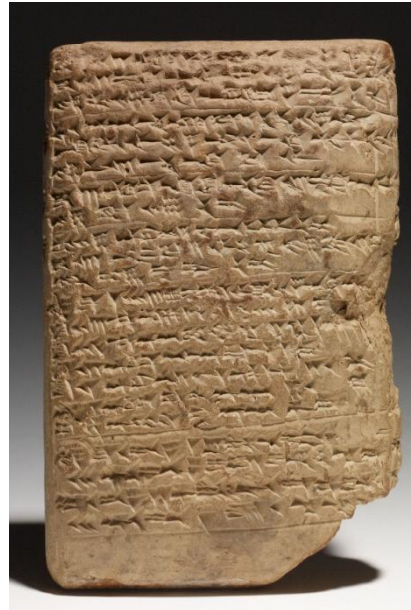
As confirmation support for the secular sources used to provide the dates of Cyrus' reign and death, *The Watchtower* article refers to an astronomical tablet from the Persian ruler Cambyses. He succeeded Cyrus. *The Watchtower* article thus recognises that information from an astronomical tablet can be used to correctly calculate dates in terms of the Julian calendar.

◀ **Confirmation by a cuneiform tablet:** A Babylonian astronomical clay tablet (BM 33066) confirms the date of Cyrus' death in 530 B.C.E. Though this tablet contains some errors regarding the astronomical positions, it contains the descriptions of two lunar eclipses that the tablet says occurred in the seventh year of Cambyses II, the son and successor of Cyrus. These are identified with lunar eclipses visible at Babylon on July 16, 523 B.C.E., and on January 10, 522 B.C.E., thus pointing to the spring of 523 B.C.E. as the beginning of Cambyses' seventh year. That would make his first regnal year 529 B.C.E. So Cyrus' last year would have been 530 B.C.E., making 539 B.C.E. his first year of ruling Babylon.

The code “BM 33066” shows that this tablet is held at the British Museum.

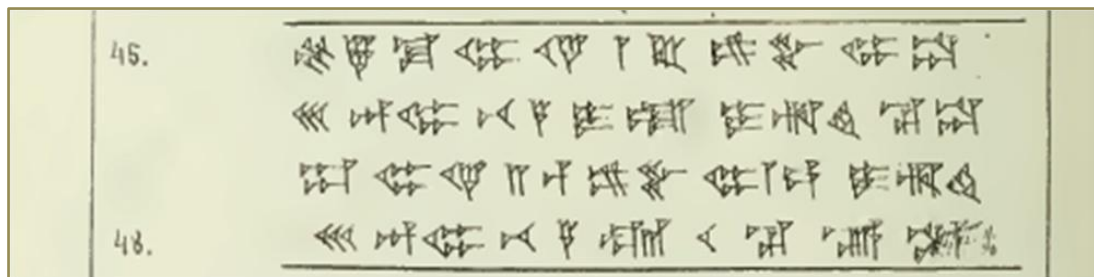


**BM33066 (front)**



**BM33066 (rear)**

The following is the relevant section from BM33066. Detailed information is available at: [http://www.jwstudies.com/539 BCE and an astronomical tablet.pdf](http://www.jwstudies.com/539_BCE_and_an_astronomical_tablet.pdf)



*Inschriften von Cambyses, König von Babylon,*  
by J. N. Strassmaier, Leipzig, 1890, No. 400, lines 45-48

When the *Watchtower* article states: “these [eclipses] are identified with lunar eclipses at Babylon” it is admitting that it relies on the skills and knowledge of the secular sources who provide the Julian dates of the eclipses on these astronomical tablets.

The *Watchtower* article thus absolutely depends on the ability of scholars to compute dates from a lunar eclipse tablet held in the British Museum. The dates computed by these scholars from the other astronomical tablets at that Museum confirm a significant range of dates for this neo-Babylonian period, dates that the WTS rejects.

All of the surviving observations (and predictions) of lunar eclipses from earliest times (731 BC) to 609 BC - as well as many later observations down to 317 BC - are recorded on a series of five British Museum tablets. Their reference numbers are: BM 32238 (= LBAT 1414), BM 45640 + 35115 + 35789 (= LBAT 1415 + 1416 + 1417: three joining pieces) and BM 32234 (= LBAT 1419). ...

**BM 32238** cites eclipses from **731 to 659 BC** (obverse) and from **389 to 317 BC** (reverse). Tablets **BM 45640 + 35115 + 35789** contain data from **703 to 632 BC** (obverse) and from **415 to 360 BC** (reverse), while **BM 32234** extends from **609 to 537 BC** (obverse) and from 519 to 447 BC (reverse).

**Many names of rulers are preserved on these tablets:** e.g. Nabu mukin-zeri (who reigned from 731 to 726 BC), Bel-ibni (702-699 BC), Samassum-ukin (667-647 BC), Kandalanu (647-625 BC), **Nebuchadrezzar II (604-562 BC)**, Xerxes I (485-465 BC) and Philip (323-316 BC).

From the well-defined chronological sequence on this series of texts, **virtually all eclipse dates can be confidently restored.**

**BM 38462** (= LBAT 1420) reports lunar eclipses for **almost every year from the beginning of the reign of Nebuchadrezzar II (604/3 BC) to his 29th year (576/5 BC).** The damaged (but still recognisable) name of **Nebuchadrezzar** is given on the first line of the tablet.<sup>5</sup>

Beginning with Nabonassar, **Babylonian chronology is securely established.**<sup>6</sup>

### **Cyrus' first year of Babylonian rule**

The *Watchtower* article demonstrates its total lack of understanding when it writes: “making 539 B.C.E. his first year of ruling Babylon”, since this is impossible.

Babylon fell to the Persians shortly after Tishri 1, the start of the civil year. Under the conditions of the accession-year system, Cyrus completed the final year of his predecessor Nabonidus and he took the throne of Babylon on the first day of the following year. For a person using the religious Nisan calendar, Cyrus started his first year on the following Nisan 1, equivalent to March 24, 538 BCE. For a person using the Tishri calendar, Cyrus' first year began on the equivalent to September 17, 538 BCE.

According to the cuneiform evidence and the Babylonian calendar, Babylon fell on Tashritu 16 = Oct 12, 539 B.C., and Cyrus entered the city two and one-half weeks later on Arahsamnu 3 = Oct 29. His Babylonian regnal years began, therefore, and his first year, in which he made the proclamation, was 538/537 B.C.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Stephenson, page 149

<sup>6</sup> Stephenson, page 95

<sup>7</sup> Finegan, page 179

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE “SEVENTY YEARS”

It is impossible to overrate the significance to the Watchtower Society (WTS) of its interpretation of Jeremiah’s “Seventy Years”.

The Watchtower Society (WTS) praises its own interpretation of the Bible’s “70 Years” as *Bible Chronology*. They contrast their interpretation with the information provided by secular sources, naming it derogatively, *Secular Chronology*.

The WTS’s interpretation of the 70 years controls its approach to secular sources. While the WTS accepts calculations from secular sources to provide 539 BCE as the date of the Fall of Babylon, its interpretation of the Seventy Years forces the WTS to denigrate those very same sources when they provide information that does not accommodate the WTS’s interpretation of the Seventy Years.

The WTS’s interpretation of the Seventy Years creates its own chronology for the period, including the date of 607 BCE for the destruction of Jerusalem.

### **The WTS confuses threat of destruction with Seventy Years’s servitude**

Fundamentally, the WTS confuses the threatened destruction of Jerusalem with the 70 years of servitude to Babylon by several nations.

The WTS fails to recognise that the threat of destruction was continually being given by prophets ever since Moses when the people were about to enter the Promised Land. Continued obedience would see them flourish, but disobedience would see them obliterated. That fate lay in their hands.

The “Seventy Years”, however, was an unavoidable period of servitude to Babylon experienced by several nations. The only matter that could be controlled was the intensity of that servitude. Willing recognition would result in that nation serving its servitude from within its own borders. Obstinate disobedience would see that nation experience increased intensity of servitude.

Since the “seventy years” do not refer to Jerusalem’s destruction, the period may not be used as a measuring stick in the way that the WTS requires.

What is the significance of the “seventy years”? And how does this time period help us to determine the date of Jerusalem’s destruction?

Further explanations are available at:

[http://www.jwstudies.com/What\\_the\\_Bible\\_really\\_says\\_about\\_Jerusalem\\_s\\_destruction.pdf](http://www.jwstudies.com/What_the_Bible_really_says_about_Jerusalem_s_destruction.pdf)

[http://www.jwstudies.com/Bible\\_Chronology\\_and\\_the\\_Seventy\\_Years.pdf](http://www.jwstudies.com/Bible_Chronology_and_the_Seventy_Years.pdf)

## WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT THE SEVENTY YEARS

### WHO THE “SEVENTY YEARS” AIMED WERE AT

As the text cited in the following passage from *The Watchtower* article clearly states, the “Seventy Years” decree was directly aimed at all of “these nations”.

**“Seventy Years” for Whom?**  
Years before the destruction, the Jewish prophet Jeremiah provided an essential clue to the time frame given in the Bible. He warned “all those living in Jerusalem,” saying: “This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.” (Jeremiah 25:1, 2, 11, *New International Version*) The prophet later added: “This is what Jehovah has said, ‘In accord with the fulfilling of seventy years at Babylon I shall turn my attention to you people, and I will establish toward you my good word in bringing you back to this place.’” (Jeremiah 29:10)

The Seventy Years was a period of servitude to Babylon by several nations, including Judah.

### THE THREATENED DESTRUCTION COULD BE AVOIDED

From the time of Moses through to Jeremiah, Hebrew prophets – their preachers – continually threatened that God would destroy the nation if they did not willingly obey his directives. Obedience would see them survive and flourish.<sup>8</sup>

At an early stage of his work, Jeremiah’s life was threatened when he warned that Jerusalem would be destroyed. He was saved when it was pointed out that he was only repeating the message that had been given by the previous prophets.<sup>9</sup>

#### **Threat for centuries of avoidable destruction**

Moses warned the people that disobedience would cause God to destroy the city, including its temple, and he would remove the people from the land he had given.

If you will not listen to me and carry out all these commands, and if you reject my decrees and abhor my laws and fail to carry out all my commands and so violate my covenant, then I will do this to you: ...

I will turn your cities into ruins (*ḥ”rbâ*) and lay waste (*šāmēm*) your sanctuaries. ... I will lay waste (*šāmēm*) the land, so that your enemies who live there will be appalled (*šāmēm*). I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out my sword and pursue you.

Your land will be laid waste (*š<sup>e</sup>māmâ*), and your cities will lie in ruins (*ḥ”rbâ*). Then the land will enjoy its sabbath (*šabbāt*) [“not in Hebrew”] years all the time that it lies desolate (*šāmēm*) and you are in the country of your enemies; then the land will rest (*šābat*) and enjoy its sabbaths (*šabbāt*). All the time that it lies desolate

<sup>8</sup> For example: Joel 1:2, 6-7, 12, 15; 2:1-3; Isa. 28:13-14; 51:17, 19; Zep. 1:4; 2:1-2; 3:7-8; Hab. 1:5-7; Eze. 5:8, 9, 11, 14

<sup>9</sup> Jer. 25:2-7; 26:8-18

(*šāmēm*), the land will have the rest (*šābat*) it did not have during the sabbaths (*šabbāt*) you lived in it. ...

These are the decrees, the laws and the regulations that the LORD established on Mount Sinai between himself and the Israelites through Moses.<sup>10</sup>

If you ever forget the LORD your God and follow other gods and worship and bow down to them, I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed. Like the nations the LORD destroyed before you, so you will be destroyed for not obeying the LORD your God.<sup>11</sup>

Whenever a prophet gave this warning, he made it clear that God would not carry out his punishment if the people heeded the message. When a nation relented and amended its ways, God would relent and the threatened punishment would be avoided.

If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned.<sup>12</sup>

### THE 70 YEAR SERVITUDE COULD NOT BE AVOIDED

When Babylon became the region's superpower, God's prophet Jeremiah repeated the age-old threat of the city's destruction. Then he gave the additional command that all the nations would serve Babylon for 70 years:

And these nations will *serve* the king of Babylon seventy years. (Jer. 25:11)

God decided to use Babylon as his servant, and all the nations would serve his servant for 70 years. That servitude commenced at the same time for all the nations – at the moment when God decided to use Babylon as his servant implementer.

At the same time, Jeremiah made it clear that when any nation served Babylon willingly, they would remain in their own country. Equating the expression “Seventy Years” with “him, his son and his grandson”, Jeremiah said it was a period of “serving” Babylon which could be served by a nation while remaining in its own land, without any need for destruction.

All nations will **SERVE him and his son and his grandson** until the time for his land comes. ...

**If**, however, any nation or kingdom will **not SERVE** Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon or bow its neck under his yoke, I will punish that nation with the sword, famine and plague, declares the LORD, until I **destroy** it by [Nebuchadnezzar's] hand.

So do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your interpreters of dreams, your mediums or your sorcerers who tell you, “You will not **SERVE** the king of Babylon.” **They prophesy lies to you** that will only serve to remove you far from your lands; I will banish you and you will perish.

**BUT** if **any nation** will bow its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and **SERVE** him, I will let that nation remain in its own land to till it and to live (*yāšab*) there, declares the LORD.

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<sup>10</sup> Lev. 26:3–46

<sup>11</sup> Deut. 8:19–20; See also Deut 28:15–68

<sup>12</sup> Jer. 18:7–8



[Jeremiah] **gave the same message to Zedekiah king of Judah.** I said, “**Bow your neck** under the yoke of the king of Babylon; **SERVE** him and his people, and you will live.

**Why will you and your people die** by the sword, famine and plague with which the LORD has threatened any nation that will not **SERVE** the king of Babylon? **Do not listen to the words of the prophets who say to you, “You will not SERVE the king of Babylon”, for they are prophesying lies to you.**<sup>13</sup>

### **Yoke could be intensified, but not evaded**

At Jeremiah 25, Jeremiah is recorded as telling Judah and its neighbours they would be serve Babylon for 70 years. At Jeremiah 27 to 29, the prophet is confronted by false prophets promising swift release. To Hananiah the false prophet at Jerusalem, Jeremiah showed that the yoke of Babylon was in place and its intensity would only increase if the nation refused to serve Babylon. To the exiles at Babylon, he told them that 70 years had been decreed, so they must not listen to their false prophets who were promising swift release. The servitude was in place and would run its course.

The following quotation indicates that the 70 years of punishment started when God set Nebuchadnezzar against “this land (Judah)” and against “all the surrounding nations”.

The Bible, however, shows that the 70 years were to be a period of severe punishment from God—aimed specifically at the people of Judah and Jerusalem, who were in a covenant to obey him. (Exodus 19:3-6) When they refused to turn from their bad ways, God said: “I will summon . . . Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon . . . against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations.” (Jeremiah 25:4, 5, 8, 9, NIV)

Jeremiah 25:9, which is cited here, says that this would result in **all the nations** being destroyed.

I will bring [Nebuchadnezzar and the nations of the north] against **this land** and its inhabitants and against **all the surrounding nations**. I will **completely destroy them** and make them an object of horror and scorn, and **an everlasting ruin**.

It is absolutely mischievous for the following from the *Watchtower* article to suggest that *Lamentations* says there was to be a 70-year exile **following** the destruction of Jerusalem. Nor was there any need for Jerusalem to be destroyed. These verses indicate that the other nations were to suffer the same degree of punishment as Judah was to receive.

While nearby nations would also suffer Babylon’s wrath, the destruction of Jerusalem and the 70-year exile to follow were called by Jeremiah “the punishment of my people,” for Jerusalem had “sinned greatly.”—Lamentations 1:8; 3:42; 4:6, NIV.

So according to the Bible, the 70 years was a period of bitter punishment for Judah, and God used the Babylonians as the instrument for inflicting this severe chastisement.

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<sup>13</sup> Jer. 27:1-3, 6-14

## CONTRAST OF AVOIDABLE DESTRUCTION WITH UNAVOIDABLE SERVITUDE

The contrast between the threatened destruction of Jerusalem and the unavoidable 70 years of servitude to Babylon is demonstrated at the time when Jeremiah confronted Zedekiah while Babylon was attacking Jerusalem.

Jeremiah pleaded with Zedekiah, telling him that if he willingly went forward in surrender, Zedekiah would be showing his preparedness to serve Babylon, and this would prevent the Lord's threatened destruction of Jerusalem. Jeremiah did not want to see the city destroyed, which could still be avoided.

Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "This is what the LORD God Almighty, the God of Israel, says: 'If you **surrender** to the officers of the king of Babylon, ... this **city will not be burned down**. ...

But if you will not surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon, this city will be handed over to the Babylonians and they will burn it down.'" ...

But if you refuse to surrender, this is what the LORD has revealed to me: ... this city will be burned down."<sup>14</sup>

**Serve** the king of Babylon, and you will live. Why should this city become a ruin (*h'rbâ*)?<sup>15</sup>

Thus the 70 years would run its course. That could not be avoided. The intensity could be controlled and it could be served while the nation remained on its own land.

The centuries-long threatened destruction of Jerusalem and Judah, however, could have been avoided. But Zedekiah did not listen to God's messenger.

## THE START OF THE "SEVENTY YEARS"

The Bible does not state "this is when the Seventy Years" started, showing that those people were not concerned with identifying a specific moment or incident. Locating a precise starting point is a matter of concern only to the Watchtower Society (WTS). It did not matter to the ancient Bible writers; it does not concern modern scholars. Locating the undeniable starting point is therefore for the WTS to prove beyond any doubt. It is a pure red herring for it to ask others to identify their starting point. Others do not care, it is not an issue.

Jeremiah told the several nations that it would be a 70-year period of serving God's servant, Babylon. It could be assumed the period began either when God *decided* to anoint Babylon, when God *actually* anointed Babylon as his servant, when the named nations came under Babylonian domination, or when Babylon became the region's unquestioned super power.

The WTS presumes the expression "Seventy Years" is to be taken literally, with calendrical precision, whereas true Biblical scholarship seeks to determine what the expression meant to the people at the time they wrote it. Did their culture address the expression as idiomatic, representing an idea or a principle, rather than with mathematical precision? This the WTS has to prove, since it is their problem, and no one else's.

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<sup>14</sup> Jer. 38:17-18, 21, 23

<sup>15</sup> Jer 27:17

**When Did “the Seventy Years” Start?**

The inspired historian Ezra, who lived after the 70 years of Jeremiah’s prophecy were fulfilled, wrote of King Nebuchadnezzar: “He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power. The land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah.”—2 Chronicles 36:20, 21, *NIV*.

Thus, the 70 years were to be a period when the land of Judah and Jerusalem would enjoy “sabbath rests.” This meant that the land would not be cultivated—there would be no sowing of seed or pruning of vineyards. (Leviticus 25:1-5, *NIV*)

Although the above citation from the *Watchtower* is headed, “When did ‘the Seventy Years’ start?” it actually opens with the statement by the Chronicler that the 70 years of servitude ended when Persia replaced Babylon. The passage says the nations were to be *servants* to Nebuchadnezzar and his descendants until “the kingdom of Persia came to power”. The very moment that happened, the people were no longer serving Babylon.

That passage also says that the land rested *until* the seventy years came to its end; it does not say that the land rested *during* the full seventy years. All that Leviticus required was for the people living on the land to live from what sprang spontaneously, “no sowing ... no pruning” - but they did not leave the land.

Long before Jerusalem was destroyed, while people were still living on the land, they already considered the land to be without “men and animals” – because the Babylonians were in control.<sup>16</sup> Further information is available at pages 66 - 70 of:

[http://www.jwstudies.com/They\\_would\\_not\\_listen\\_Version\\_1.pdf](http://www.jwstudies.com/They_would_not_listen_Version_1.pdf)

## THE END OF THE “SEVENTY YEARS”

The Scriptures consistently repeat that the Seventy Years ended at the very moment Babylon’s power ended. That happened on the night the Persians and Medes took the city (October 539 BCE, Julian).

That is not surprising; the nations were commanded to *serve* Babylon for 70 years and that *servitude* ended at the moment Babylon ceased being the region’s super power. The Seventy Years could not end one day earlier or one day later than the night when the Babylonian king was slain and his kingdom taken.

The Bible consistently says that the Seventy Years was a period when of servitude to Babylon and it ended the moment Babylon’s kingdom ended.

All nations will serve him and his son and his grandson until the time for his land comes; **then many nations and great kings will subjugate him.**<sup>17</sup>

“This is what these words mean: *Mene*: **God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end.** *Peres* : Your

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<sup>16</sup> Jer. 32:43; 33:10–12

<sup>17</sup> Jer. 27:7

**kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.” That very night** Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, and Darius the **Mede took over the kingdom**, at the age of sixty-two.<sup>18</sup>

[Nebuchadnezzar] carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became **servants to him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power.**<sup>19</sup>

**When Did “the Seventy Years” End?**

The prophet Daniel, who lived until “the kingdom of Persia came to power,” was on the scene in Babylon, and he calculated when the 70 years were due to end. He wrote: “I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.”—Daniel 9:1, 2, *ESV*.

Ezra reflected on the prophecies of Jeremiah and linked the end of “the seventy years” to the time when “the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation.” (2 Chronicles 36:21, 22, *NIV*) When were the Jews released? The decree ending their exile was issued in “the first year of Cyrus the king of Persia.”

Cyrus was able to make his proclamation because the 70 years of servitude to Babylon had ended. He could not have released all the nations’ captives while the kingdom of Babylon was still subjugating the region.

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<sup>18</sup> Dan. 5:26, 28, 30-31

<sup>19</sup> 2 Chr. 36:20

## “FOR BABYLON”

Instead of saying 70 years “at Babylon,” many translations read “for Babylon.” (NIV) Some historians therefore claim that this 70-year period applies to the Babylonian Empire. According to secular chronology, the Babylonians dominated the land of ancient Judah and Jerusalem for some 70 years, from about 609 B.C.E. until 539 B.C.E. when the capital city of Babylon was captured.

The passage that the *Watchtower* is concerned about reads, according to the NIV:

The God of Israel says: “Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them,” declares the LORD. This is what the LORD says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place.”<sup>20</sup>

At chapter 28, Jeremiah confronted the false prophet Hananiah, who had predicted the yoke of servitude to Babylon would cease within two years with the return of the recently deported king Jehioachin and all the exiles:

“for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.”<sup>21</sup>

Jeremiah had previously introduced the yoke of 70 years servitude to Babylon, and Hananiah acknowledged it was in place. At chapter 29, Jeremiah turns his attention to the false prophets at Babylon, who were saying the same as Hananiah was. To counter the false prophets at Babylon, Jeremiah told them they would be waiting a long time as the decreed 70 years had not been completed. This shows that the 70 year yoke of servitude was already in place, otherwise the prophets at Jerusalem and at Babylon could not make a promise of a swift release.

The idea of 70 years “at” Babylon is meaningless, for many Jews chose to remain there after the kingdom of Babylon was replaced by Persia. Jewish descendants were still returning to Yehud 200 years after the Babylonian empire had ceased.

All that Jeremiah’s command regarding the Seventy Years required was that the nations, including Judah, serve Babylon. When the kingdom of Babylon ceased in 539 BCE, the nations ceased serving Nebuchadnezzar, his son and his grandson.

When the Jews at Babylon received the letter from Jeremiah, they understood his statement, since they said it meant they would be there for a “long time”.

He has sent this message to us in Babylon: **It will be a long time.** Therefore build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce.<sup>22</sup>

It is thus correct to say that the period was “for” Babylon, and therefore, as is shown in the following, the WTS’s *New World Translation* in Swedish and in Danish renders the expression as “for” Babylon.

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<sup>20</sup> Jer. 29:8-10

<sup>21</sup> Jer. 28:4

<sup>22</sup> Jer. 29:28

Ny Verden-Oversættelsen  
af  
De Hellige Skrifter

Studieudgave med noter og henvisninger

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WATCH TOWER BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY  
OF PENNSYLVANIA

*New World Translation* er indtil 1993 trykt i  
et samlet oplag på 68.100.000 eksemplarer,  
alle udgaver iberegnet

**JEREMIAS 28:13–29:16**

hustruer og bliv fædre til sønner og døtre;<sup>a</sup> og tag hustruer til jeres sønner, og giv jeres døtre til mænd, at de kan føde sønner og døtre; og bliv mange dér, og bliv ikke færre. 7 Endvidere, søg fred for den by hvortil jeg har ladet jer gå i landflygtighed, og bed for den til Jehova, for i dens fred vil I få fred.<sup>b</sup> 8 For således har Hærstyrkers Jehova, Israels Gud, sagt: „Lad ikke jeres profeter, som er iblandt jer, og jeres spåmænd bedrage jer,<sup>c</sup> og hør ikke efter de drømme som de<sup>d</sup> drømmer.“ 9 For 'det er løgn de profeterer for jer i mit navn. Jeg har ikke sendt dem,'<sup>e</sup> lyder Jehovas udsagn.““

10 „For således har Jehova sagt: 'Først når halvfjerds år er udløbet for Babylon vil jeg vende min opmærksomhed mod jer,<sup>f</sup> og jeg vil over for jer stadfæste mit gode ord ved at føre jer tilbage til dette sted.'<sup>g</sup>

Nya världens översättning  
av  
Den heliga skrift

Studieutgåva med fotnoter och parallellhänvisningar

**JEREMIA 29:8–25**

den, ty i dess frid skall ni få frid.<sup>a</sup> 8 Ty detta är vad härarnas Jehova, Israels Gud, har sagt: ”Låt inte era profeter, som är mitt ibland er, och era spåmän bedra er,<sup>b</sup> och lyssna inte till de drömmar som de<sup>c</sup> drömmer.“ 9 Ty 'lögn är vad de profeterar för er i mitt namn. Jag har inte sänt dem',<sup>d</sup> lyder Jehovas uttalande.”“

10 ”Ty detta är vad Jehova har sagt: 'När sjuttio år har gått för<sup>e</sup> Babylon skall jag vända min uppmärksamhet till er,<sup>f</sup> och jag skall gentemot er befästa mitt goda ord genom att föra er tillbaka till denna plats.'<sup>g</sup>

The Danish (left) and Swedish (right) *New World Translation* render Jer. 29:10 as “for” Babylon

## WHEN DID THE JEWS ENTER EGYPT?

The *Watchtower* wishes to commence the “Seventy Years” at the moment that the party of Jews entered Egypt. For some strange reason it journeys to that date via a date for Jerusalem’s destruction. An easier path for the *Watchtower* would have been to argue that the “Seventy Years” began when Jews entered Egypt, which it would date as 607 BCE, and then state that Jerusalem fell earlier, perhaps in 611 BCE.

They razed the city, including its sacred temple, and they took many of its inhabitants captive to Babylon. Within two months, “all the people [who had been left behind in the land] from the least to the greatest, together with the army officers, fled to Egypt for fear of the Babylonians.” (2 Kings 25:25, 26, NIV) Only then, in the seventh Jewish month, Tishri (September/October), of that year could it be said that the land, now desolate and unworked, began to enjoy its Sabbath rest.’

The events listed as taking place from the time of Jerusalem’s destruction until the Jews’ entry into Egypt require far more than two months. For example, it would have taken longer than two months for the information about Gedaliah to reach Jews in the neighbouring countries of Moab, Ammon, and Edom, pack their families, return to the villages and towns, and then travel to Gedaliah.<sup>23</sup>

The above citation from page 27 of the October 1 2011 *Watchtower* article refers to 2 Kings 25:25, 26 this way:

Within two months, “all the people [who had been left behind in the land] from the least to the greatest, together with the army officers, fled to Egypt for fear of the Babylonians.” (2 Kings 25:25, 26, NIV)

However, the verses at 2 Kings 25:25-26 actually state (*New World Translation*):

“And it came about in the seventh month that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah the son of Elishama of the royal offspring came, and also ten men with him, and they got to strike down Gedaliah, so that he died, and also the Jews and the Chaldeans that *happened to be with him in Mizpah*. After that all the people, from small to great, and the chiefs of the military forces rose up and came into Egypt; for they had become afraid because of the Chaldeans.”

The imposition by the *Watchtower* of “*within* two months”, “who had been left behind *in the land*”, and “*of that year*” result from prejudice.

The Bible does not specify how long Gedaliah worked as the Governor before he was murdered. Many scholars, including Jewish scholars, believe Gedaliah ruled for 4 years.

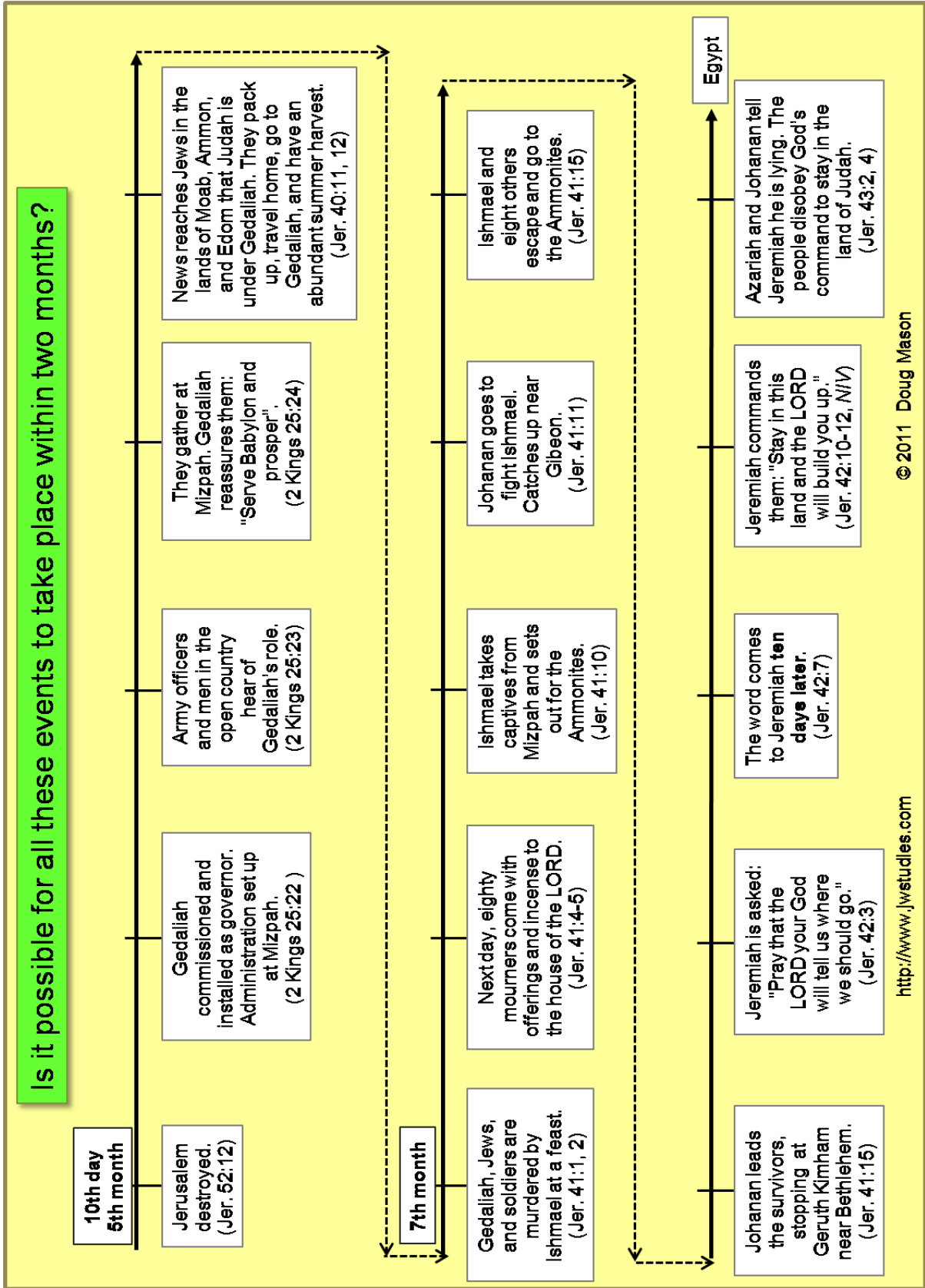
The Bible states the people who went with Johanan were the survivors from *Mizpah*.<sup>24</sup>

The expression “seventh month” provides no solid evidence, since it does not specify the year. This means The *Watchtower* is unable to get the solid answer it needs.

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<sup>23</sup> Jer. 40:11-12

<sup>24</sup> Jer. 41:16





[Gedaliah] was murdered as part of a conspiracy led by a Judean royalist party under the leadership of Ishmael, son of Nethaniah, son of Elishama, a member of the royal family. **The date of this conspiracy is unknown.** However, Jeremiah 52:30 mentions another Judean deportation to Babylonia in the twenty-third year of Nebuchadnezzar (582/581 BCE), and thus it seems reasonable to assume that it occurred after Gedaliah's murder, which certainly would have been interpreted by the Babylonians as signalling a new rebellion. The account of the plot and its aftermath in Jeremiah 41—43 implies that this was indeed the case.<sup>25</sup>

**Two months is hardly enough** to allow for the dust to settle after the destruction and mayhem of the Babylonian campaign, some administrative apparatus to be set up at Mizpah, the conspiracy to develop in Ammon (Jer 40:13-16), people to dribble back from other regions, some of them quite distant (Jer 40:7-8, 11-12), and the last harvest of the agrarian year to be gathered in (Jer 40:12). It therefore **seems preferable to connect Ishmael's terrorist act with the deportation mentioned in Jer 52:30, dated to the 23d year of Nebuchadnezzar.**<sup>26</sup>

Another problem for the [Watchtower] Society is *Ezekiel 33:21-27*. A messenger reached Ezekiel with the news of Jerusalem's destruction in late December (the 10th month), and he reported that there were people living in the ruins. Since the city was destroyed in early August, this suggests a transit time between Jerusalem and Babylon of about four months; the same length of time is indicated in *Ezra 7:9* as what was involved in a journey between Babylon and Judah.

The problem is this: Yahweh gives the prophet Ezekiel an oracle for the messenger to take back to the people living in the ruins. Yahweh states:

“The people living in those ruins in the land are saying, ‘Abraham was only one man, yet he possessed the land. But we are many, surely the land has been given to us as our possession’ “ (v. 23).

This clearly states that as late as December, (1) there were still people living in the ruins, (2) they believed themselves to be still possessing the land, and (3) they were not an insignificant number but “many”. How could Yahweh say this to Ezekiel, if by that time the land had been emptied of people? According to the Society, the ‘seventy years’ of the land lying desolate began in the middle of Tishri (early October):

\*\*\* w72 6/1 p. 351 Questions From Readers \*\*\*

The murder of Gedaliah in the month of Tishri (September/October) (“at the seventh new moon,” Byington translation) prompted those Jews left remaining in the land of Judah to flee. (Jer. 41:1, 2; 43:2-7) By the time the fearful Jews fled to Egypt it must have been at least the middle of Tishri, to allow enough time for the events mentioned

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<sup>25</sup> *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books*, page 483, Arnold and Williamson, editors. See also pages 703-704.)

<sup>26</sup> *Bethel in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, Blenkinsopp, in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, page 97, editors Lipschits and Blenkinsopp

in the Bible as taking place between the assassination and the flight. (Compare Jeremiah 41:4, 10–42:7.) This would place the start of the Gentile Times about Tishri 15, 607B.C.E.

Note that Yahweh gives Ezekiel an oracle for the messenger to deliver to the people living in the ruins: “Therefore say to them” (v. 25), “say this to them” (v. 27). So Yahweh expects that the people would still be living there four months later, around April of the following year. And the oracle itself presumes that the desolation still lay in the future:

“As surely as I live, those who are left in the ruins will fall by the sword, those out in the country I will give to the wild animals to be devoured, and those in strongholds and caves will die of a plague. I will make the land a desolate waste” (v. 27-28).

Unless the Society wants to say that Yahweh had no idea what was going on in Judah and was completely ignorant of what happened in Judah during the time the messenger travelled to Babylon, they cannot claim that a period of total desolation (i.e. with the land being uninhabited) was already in progress.<sup>27</sup>

There is no explicit statement in the Scriptures that identify the moment that the Seventy Years began. The best that the *Watchtower* magazine can offer is that the event at Jeremiah 44:1, 2 “*evidently* marked” the starting point of the 70 Years.

Certainly nothing *definitely*, only *hopefully*.

To the Jewish refugees in Egypt, God said through Jeremiah: “You have seen all the disaster that I brought upon Jerusalem and upon all the cities of Judah. Behold, this day they are a desolation, and no one dwells in them.” (Jeremiah 44:1, 2, *English Standard Version*) So this event evidently marked the starting point of the 70 years.

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<sup>27</sup> Posts by “Leoloia” at <http://www.jehovahs-witness.net/watchtower/bible/214629/1/Did-Jews-exit-Judah-2-months-after-Jerusalem's-destruction>

## WHEN DID THE FIRST JEWS RETURN?

The Scriptures do not state that the physical return of some Jewish captives, or their return to their towns and villages, or their later assembly at the dedication of the temple marked the ending of the Seventy Years. It has already been shown that the Seventy Years ended on the night that the kingdom was handed over to the Medo-Persians.

Given the criteria set by the WTS, it is impossible for them to prove that 537 BCE is the date. This is shown in the Paper: *When Did the Jews Return to Jerusalem?*<sup>28</sup>

It is very easy to make unsubstantiated assertions, which is exactly what the *Watchtower* does.

Thus, by the fall of  
537 B.C.E., the Jews had returned to Jerusalem to restore true worship.—Ezra 1:1-5; 2:1; 3:1-5.

The article provides no evidence that shows 537 BCE is correct. This it cannot do, since no evidence exists in support of that date, or for any other date. It is certainly impossible for those texts at Ezra to provide any BCE date.

It is just as simple to assert that the first Jews returned in 538 BCE or in 536 BCE, as many do. But these dates have no evidence as support either. The Bible writers were so uninterested in identifying the date that they provide insufficient information for a conclusive decision. It was of no interest to them.

The writer of 2 Chronicles and the writer of Ezra state that Cyrus released all captives some time during his first year. Babylon fell after the start of the civil year, which began Tishri 1 (September 27, 539 BCE, Julian). This means his First Year began on either the following Nisan 1 (March 24, 538 BCE) or on Tishri 1 (September 17, 538 BCE). Some Bible writers use the Nisan calendar while others use the Tishri calendar. Evidence from Nehemiah strongly suggests that the writer of Ezra-Nehemiah used the Tishri calendar.

Chronicles and Ezra do not state whether the decree was made by Cyrus early during his first year, or at its end. If he made it on March 24, 538, perhaps the people took off immediately for the 4-month journey, settled in their towns and then walked to Jerusalem to reach there by Tishri 1 (September 17, 538 BCE); maybe their release enabled them to meet at Jerusalem the following Tishri (October 5, 537 BCE). Perhaps Cyrus made his declaration at the very end of his first year, so that the Returnees did not get to Jerusalem until 536 BCE. No one knows, and the writers of Chronicles and Ezra show no interest in identifying the year.

Ezra's reference to the month of Tishri has to be seen through his fundamentalist religious focus. The seventh month of Tishri marks the start of the civil year when several major religious celebrations take place, such as Yom Kippur.

Tishrei is the month richest with Jewish holidays. During this month individuals and the world are judged. Tishrei also marks the harvest season and the beginning of the rain season.<sup>29</sup>

Ezra's deep religious focus is demonstrated in the immediate context, through the names of the people who made the journey, authenticating their genealogy, identifying their religious roles, specifying their offerings towards the temple work, their sacrifices, and the several significant religious feasts that occur during that month of Tishri. The only timing provided by Ezra was to the first day of the seventh month (Tishri), and that happened because of the religious significance of that day and of that month, not because it marked the end of Babylon's regional dominance.

<sup>28</sup> Available at: [http://www.jwstudies.com/When\\_Did\\_the\\_Jews\\_Return\\_to\\_Jerusalem.pdf](http://www.jwstudies.com/When_Did_the_Jews_Return_to_Jerusalem.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.hillel.org/jewish/rituals/roshchodesh/tishrei.htm>

## COUNTING 70 YEARS

To understand what the ancient Hebrews meant, it is important to grasp their concept of numbers in narratives, and in this instance, the message of “seventy”. Those Scriptures in the direct context of Jeremiah’s message understood the expression “70 years” being the same as:

All nations will serve **him and his son and his grandson** until the time for his land comes.<sup>30</sup>;

He has sent this message to us in Babylon: **It will be a long time.** Therefore build houses and settle down.”<sup>31</sup>

According to Bible chronology, then, the 70 years was a literal period of time that ended in 537 B.C.E. Counting back 70 years, the start date of the period would be 607 B.C.E.

It is critical that a document be read through the eyes of the culture of the community that created or edited it. The idioms and ideas of a modern culture must never be impressed upon material produced by a culture that existed thousands of years ago.

The Bible must always be read through Jewish eyes. The Hebrew writings from the neo-Babylonian era must be read through their ancient Jewish eyes.

In their narratives, the Hebrews treated numbers quite differently to the way the modern Western community does. Hebrew mysticism ascribes spiritual meaning to particular numbers, such as for the numbers “7” and “10”. These spiritual meanings are intensified when those numbers are combined, such as a sum or as a product.

While contemporary Western culture applies mathematical precision to numbers, this was not always the way numbers were always used in those cultures. Each letter of the Hebrews’ 22-letter alphabet was assigned as a number. Each Hebrew word therefore has a numerical value.

To make a number, letters were selected until the required numerical value was reached. The order of the individual letters (numbers) did not matter, as long as their sum gave the required value. In other words, the position of a letter (number) in a string was of no concern or interest. In modern Western practice, the value of a numeral depends on its position in a string. For example, the numeral “1” has a different value when it is used in the number “100”. But in the Hebrew culture, “1” was always “1” no matter what its position was in the string.

### Numerical Values of Words

Each letter in the alefbet has a numerical value. These values can be used to write numbers, as the Romans used some of their letters (I, V, X, L, C, M) to represent numbers. Alef through Yod have the values 1 through 10. Yod through Qof have the values 10 through 100, counting by 10s. Qof through Tav have the values 100 through 400, counting by 100s. Final letters have the same value as their non-final counterparts.

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<sup>30</sup> Jer. 27:7

<sup>31</sup> Jer. 29:28

100	ק	10	י	1	א
200	כ	20	כ, כ	2	ב
300	ש	30	ל	3	ג
400	ת	40	ד, מ	4	ד
		50	ו, נ	5	ה
		60	ס	6	ו
		70	ע	7	ז
		80	פ, ק	8	ח
		90	צ, י	9	ט

The number 11 would be rendered Yod-Alef, the number 12 would be Yod-Bet, the number 21 would be Kaf-Alef, the word Torah (Tav-Vav-Resh-He) has the numerical value 611, etc. The only significant oddity in this pattern is the number 15, which if rendered as 10+5 would be a name of G-d, so it is normally written Tet-Vav (9+6). **The order of the letters is irrelevant to their value; letters are simply added to determine the total numerical value.**

The number 11 could be written as Yod-Alef, Alef-Yod, Heh-Vav, Dalet-Dalet-Gimmel or many other combinations of letters.

Because of this system of assigning numerical values to letters, every word has a numerical value. There is an entire discipline of Jewish mysticism known as *Gematria* that is devoted to finding hidden meanings in the numerical values of words. For example, the number 18 is very significant, because it is the numerical value of the word Chai, meaning life. Donations to Jewish charities are routinely made in denominations of 18 for that reason.<sup>32</sup>

It is thus most important to seek to understand ancient Jewish mysticism as it is associated with numbers.

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/Judaism/alephbet.html>. (hint: Search the www for *Gematria*.)

## SOURCES FOR JERUSALEM'S DESTRUCTION IN 587/586 BCE

The *Watchtower* wishes to distinguish between its interpretation of the Scriptures, using its term *Bible Chronology*, and the Secular Chronology. Nevertheless, the foundation of the *Watchtower's* chronology and BCE dates totally depends on these secular sources. The *Watchtower* article clearly identifies this.

- Starts its dates with data from Classical historians (such as Olympiadic dates from Diodorus, as cited by Africanus);
- The WTS then relies on the list of Babylonian tablets that are used to create the Babylonian chronology, which provide the WTS with the length of Cyrus' reign over Babylon;
- Confirms the dates with calculations made by secular scholars of an astronomical tablet;
- Uses the secular chronology to link that tablet to the Fall of Babylon.

When the *Watchtower* denigrates such sources, it eliminates its own foundation.

The difficulty for the *Watchtower* is to *prove* that its date *is* correct without the use of secular sources, which of course it cannot do.

### **False assertion on sources used to support 587 BCE**

Quite falsely, the *Watchtower* asserts that to hold 587 BCE for the date of Jerusalem's destruction "many authorities ... lean on two sources ... classical historians and the canon of Ptolemy.

But if the evidence from the inspired Scriptures clearly points to 607 B.C.E. for Jerusalem's destruction, why do many authorities hold to the date 587 B.C.E.? They lean on two sources of information—the writings of classical historians and the canon of Ptolemy. Are these sources more reliable than the Scriptures? Let us see.

This is a complete distortion and misrepresentation of the facts, a complete lie. No authority today leans on just these two sources. The following represent some of the sources.


- Tens of thousands of economic, administrative, and legal clay tablets written at the time of the neo-Babylonian era. Each is dated according to the day and year of the current ruler. Using the earliest and latest dated business tablets, the chronology of the time can be recreated. In its book, *Insight on the Scriptures*<sup>33</sup> the WTS accepts the date for the start of Cyrus' rule from the list of earliest and latest tablets produced by Parker and Dubberstein<sup>34</sup> (see also the final page of this Critique.)
- Astronomical tablets, some of which the *Watchtower* relies on. Those tablets that the WTS accepts appear to be those that produce the WTS's desired outcome.
- Chronicles, which are dated in terms of a king's rule, requiring relation to the accepted secular chronology.
- The Babylonian chronological tablets known as the Adda-guppi stelae. These are discussed later in this Critique under: "Information 'left out'".

These sources agree with the chronology of the *Royal Canon* of Ptolemy. His *Canon* leaves out Labashi-Marduk, who ruled during part of three months as shown by the economic tablets (and in agreement with the Uruk King List). The *Canon* only reckons whole years and it leaves out brief reigns that did not affect the overall chronology.

<sup>33</sup> Volume 1, page 453, art. "Chronology"

<sup>34</sup> [http://www.jwstudies.com/Insight\\_s\\_reliance\\_on\\_secular\\_sources.pdf](http://www.jwstudies.com/Insight_s_reliance_on_secular_sources.pdf) pages 24, 27, 28

The author of the *Watchtower* article dishonestly leaves out these facts and focuses only on trying to discredit Berossus and Ptolemy. Scholars today agree that the *Royal Canon* is reliable from beginning to end, because of its agreement with the original cuneiform tablets.

<p><b>A QUICK SUMMARY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Secular historians usually say that Jerusalem was destroyed in 587 B.C.E.</li><li>■ Bible chronology strongly indicates that the destruction occurred in 607 B.C.E.</li><li>■ Secular historians mainly base their conclusions on the writings of classical historians and on the canon of Ptolemy.</li><li>■ The writings of classical historians contain significant errors and are not always consistent with the records on clay tablets.</li></ul> <p>from <i>The Watchtower</i>, Oct. 1, 2011, p. 31.</p>		<p><b>A QUICK REBUTTAL</b></p> <p><b>No. Secular historians base their conclusions on the thousands of dated cuneiform clay tablets which establish the length of reign of each of the neo-Babylonian kings.</b></p> <p><b>Errors in the writings of classical historians such as Josephus and Berossus are irrelevant because the chronology of the neo-Babylonian kings is confirmed by the thousands of dated clay tablets.</b></p>
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**The Watchtower is disingenuous when they claim that secular historians mainly base their conclusions on the writings of classical historians and on the canon of Ptolemy.**

**From 1959 until as recently as November 1, 2011, the Watchtower Bible & Tract Society has repeatedly cited and quoted from Yale Professor Raymond Philip Dougherty's 1929 book, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar*.**

**Professor Dougherty's book includes charts comparing the king lists of Berossus, Polyhistor, Ptolemy, etc., just as the 10/1/2011 Watchtower does on page 29; however, Professor Dougherty also included a king list based on the dated cuneiform tablets.**

**Professor Dougherty strongly emphasizes on page 10 of *Nabonidus and Belshazzar* that the "ultimate criterion in the determination of Neo-Babylonian chronological questions" is the "unimpeachable standard" of the dated cuneiform documents.**

**Having quoted from Professor Dougherty's 1929 book for more than fifty years from 1959 to 2011, the Watchtower Society is fully aware that secular historians do *not* mainly base their conclusions on the writings of classical historians and on the canon of Ptolemy.**

**Marjorie Alley, 9/2/2011**

Post at <http://www.jehovahs-witness.net> by "Alleymom"<sup>35</sup>

The absolute chronology of the Babylonian first group of kings is easy to establish because ... Ptolemy quotes the report of an eclipse in the time of king Mardokempados [the Biblical Merodach-Baladan II, Isaiah 39:1].

Even more important, this absolute chronology has been independently confirmed by cuneiform texts from Babylon which

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.jehovahs-witness.net/watchtower/bible/215282/6/WT-Nov-1-2011-public-When-Was-Ancient-Jerusalem-Destroyed-Part-2>

contain astronomical observations. These number more than 1000 pieces of day-to-day astronomical observations of positions and phases of the Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, beginning around 650 B.C. and continuing, in increasingly dense numbers, into the first century before the beginning of our era.

**Thanks to these astronomical diaries, numerous overlaps with the royal list in Theon's *Handy Tables* have been established, always in agreement.**

In other cases, the lengths of the reigns of individual kings in Theon's royal list can be confirmed by the careful study of the dates given in contemporaneous economic and administrative texts found in Babylonia; this is possible because for parts of the period covered by the royal list, we have so many of these texts that they average out to one every few days.

In this way – namely, by using Theon's royal list, Babylonian astronomical diaries, and Babylonian dated tablets – **one is able to establish with confidence the absolute chronology back to the middle of the eighth century B.C.**, i.e. the reign of king Nabonassar of Babylon.<sup>36</sup>

Beginning with Nabonassar, Babylonian chronology is securely established.<sup>37</sup>

### **Classical historians**

The *Watchtower* totally depends on Classical historians for its foundation date of 539 BCE. But the WTS is intent on destroying the reliability of that source.

**Classical Historians—How Accurate?**  
Historians who lived close to the time when Jerusalem was destroyed give mixed information about the Neo-Babylonian kings.

If their information is unreliable, the WTS is in deep trouble, since Classical Historians provide the WTS with information that enables it to arrive at 539 BCE as the date of Babylon's fall.

The *Watchtower* article calls into question the "historical conclusions" of those Classical Historians who cited Berossus. This presumably means the WTS considers these sources as unreliable.

And what about the other classical historians who, for the most part, based their chronology on the writings of Berossus? Can their historical conclusions really be called reliable?

### **Authentic Citations of Berossus**

Berosus is quoted by a number of sources, *including* the following:

- **Abydenus**, a disciple of Aristotle, the Greek philosopher and scientist of the 4th century BC. In that case, being younger than Aristotle, he must have been a contemporary of Berossus. His

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<sup>36</sup> A. J. Sachs, 'Absolute dating from Mesopotamian records,' *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, Ser. A, Vol. 26, 1971, p. 20. Emphasis added.

<sup>37</sup> *Historical Eclipses and Earth's Rotation*, F. Richard Stephenson, page 95, Cambridge University Press, 1997, 2008



original writings have not survived, but he is quoted by Eusebius and Syncellus.

- **Apollodorus**, 2nd century BC. He was a student of Aristarchus of Alexandria, but he left that city about 146 BC, perhaps for Pergamon, and then he went to Athens. His original writings have not survived, but he is quoted by Eusebius and Syncellus.
- **Alexander Polyhistor** (c.105 - 35 BC), Greek philosopher, geographer and historian. He was imprisoned by the Romans in the war of Sulla against Mithridates of Pontus and brought as a slave to Rome for employment as a tutor. Then he was released and lived in Italy as a Roman citizen. His original writings have not survived, but he is quoted by Eusebius, Syncellus, Josephus, Atheneus and Clement of Alexandria.
- **Flavius Josephus**, the Jewish priest and historian (37/38 - 100 AD). Quotes from Alexander Polyhistor.
- **Athenaeus** (fl. 200 AD). Greek grammarian and author. Quotes from Alexander Polyhistor.
- **Clement** (c.150 - c.215 AD). Bishop of Alexandria. Quotes from Alexander Polyhistor.
- **Eusebius Pamphilius** (264 - c.338 AD). Bishop of Caesarea. Quotes from Abydenus, Apollodorus and Alexander Polyhistor.
- **Syncellus** (early 9th century AD). Byzantine monk and chronographer, otherwise known as "George the Syncellus". Quotes from Abydenus, Apollodorus and Alexander Polyhistor.

*Note:* It's possible that Syncellus might have been quoting from Eusebius on some occasions, rather than directly from Abydenus and Polyhistor, but generally there are **three generations of documents**. The first generation is the work of **Berosus** himself, the second is **Abydenus and Polyhistor**, and the third is **Josephus, Athenaeus, Clement, Eusebius and Syncellus**.<sup>38</sup>

So, the *Watchtower* discounts these sources. Which is a great pity for the organisation, since the article says its primary authority for its initial neo-Babylonian dates are classical historians. The *Watchtower* article lists Diodorus and Herodotus as its originating sources, and the *Insight* volume says it commences its dates from:

the historian Diodorus, as well as Africanus and Eusebius.<sup>39</sup>

How does the *Watchtower* get its dates if it does not trust classical sources? If it trusts some dates from some classical sources but not others, how does it know which ones? If it trusts parts of some classical historians, how does it decide which parts and from which historians?

It is more than probable that the WTS accepts those dates that enable it to arrive at its predetermined significant date of 1914 CE.

### Canon of Ptolemy

The *Canon* (Royal King-list) of Ptolemy appears in his *Handy Tables*. Ptolemy's king-list is of concern to the *Watchtower* because it contradicts the WTS. Information on the *Canon* is provided in the following Sections of this Critique.

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<sup>38</sup> <http://www.annomundi.com/history/berosus.htm>

<sup>39</sup> *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol 1, page 454.

## CHRISTOPHER WALKER ON PTOLEMY'S CANON

Thus, Christopher Walker of the British Museum says that Ptolemy's canon was "an artificial scheme designed to provide astronomers with a consistent chronology" and was "not to provide historians with a precise record of the accession and death of kings."<sup>5</sup>

5. *Mesopotamia and Iran in the Persian Period*, pages 17-18.

Although the article's endnote says these words come from pages 17 and 18 of Christopher Walker's presentation, they are actually two parts of a single sentence on page 18. The original sentence reads:

Ptolemy's *Canon* was an artificial scheme designed to provide astronomers with a consistent chronology **into which astronomical observation records might be fitted**, not to provide historians with a *precise* record of the accession and death of kings.

Walker continues, but the *Watchtower* decided it would not:

Nevertheless it has served as the backbone of the chronology of the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid periods, and served reliably. ... There is no difficulty in correlating Ptolemy's chronology with the vast accumulation of data now available from cuneiform sources.<sup>40</sup>

### Ptolemy's Royal King-list (*Canon*)

#### **Babylonian and Achaemenid chronology according to Ptolemy**

Prior to the discovery and interpretation of the Mesopotamian cuneiform inscriptions, the fundamental source for the chronology, both relative and absolute, of the later Babylonian and Achaemenid kings (747-324 BC) was the king-list known as *Canon Basileon*, compiled by the astronomer Claudius Ptolemaeus (Ptolemy) of Alexandria (*fl. c.* AD 130-175) perhaps borrowing from the work of earlier astronomers of Alexandria. It was published in his *Handy Tables*, and survives in a considerably augmented form in Byzantine versions of Theon of Alexandria's revision of the *Handy Tables*. ...

Ptolemy's *Canon* was compiled for astronomical purposes, to achieve consistency in citing and manipulating original astronomical data. So it deliberately uses two chronological conventions: the Egyptian year of 365 days and the era of Nabonassar (Babylonian Nabu-nasir). ...

In his great astronomical treatise, the *Almagest*, Ptolemy explains that he uses the era of Nabonassar, 'For that is the era beginning from which the ancient observations are, on the whole, preserved down to our time' (*Almagest* III 7; Toomer 1984: 166). This corresponds with the fact that the earliest surviving Neo-Babylonian astronomical record apparently refers to the accession year of Nabu-nasir. This text records four lunar eclipses actually observed in the years 747-746 BC.

... Ptolemy uses in the *Almagest* ten different Babylonian lunar eclipse records, covering the time-span 721-382 BC. However he records that

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<sup>40</sup> *Archaemenid Chronology and the Babylonian Sources*, Christopher Walker (British Museum) in: *Mesopotamia and Iran in the Persian Period: Conquest and Imperialism*, 539-331 BC, page 18, John Curtis, ed. British Museum Press.

his predecessor Hipparchus (*fl. c.* 150-125 BC) had also made use of Babylonian lunar eclipse observations and had described them as being 'from the series brought over from Babylon'. These include the only eclipse record cited by Ptolemy for which we have an equivalent record surviving from Babylonia, the lunar eclipse of 16 July 523 BC (14/iv/7 Cambyses; Strassmaier 1890: no. 400); it is at first sight embarrassing that in this case Ptolemy gives (according to modern calculation) an inaccurate time for the eclipse and the Babylonians an inaccurate estimate of the eclipse magnitude, but the Cambyses test is now understood to contain a series of predictions rather than observations.

Ptolemy's *Canon* was an artificial scheme designed to provide astronomers with a consistent chronology into which astronomical observation records might be fitted, not to provide historians with a precise record of the accession and death of kings. Nevertheless it has served as the backbone of the chronology of the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid periods, and served reliably. Re-adjusted to the Julian calendar, allowing for Ptolemy's assumptions, and taking account of two short periods of confusion which Ptolemy describes as 'having no king', and of the inclusion in Babylonian king-lists of certain short-lived usurpers, there is no difficulty in correlating Ptolemy's chronology with the vast accumulation of data now available from cuneiform sources. ...

#### **The Babylonian astronomical sources**

It may be more than coincidence that there is a surviving source which in a single format could have provided Hipparchus and Ptolemy with all the accurate observations and chronology which they needed: the Babylonian eclipse lists. ...

Some of the texts are effectively astronomical Diaries for a single day; others are evidently excerpted from the Diaries, and list (often describing in detail) all observed lunar and solar eclipses within the period which they individually cover, together with the dates (and often times) of eclipse 'possibilities' ...

Although many of the texts are poorly written and may represent little more than rough notes or memoranda, some of the tablets are beautifully written archival or library copies. ...

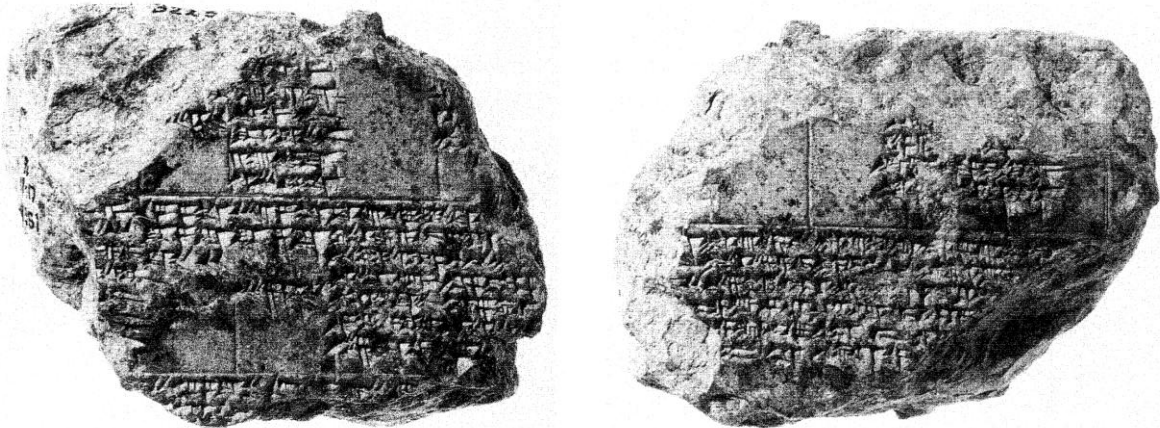
Among the remaining tablets formatted in Saros cycles one group stands out: Sachs *et al.* 1955: nos. 1414, 1415+ and 1419, ...

Each tablet had part of twelve Saros cycles on the obverse and part of twelve more on the reverse. ... In all probability each tablet dealt with five eclipses, with a final tablet covering eclipses 36-38. The chronological range of the series is proven by Sachs *et al.* 1955: no. 1414; although it is only the bottom left-hand corner of a tablet, its first preserved eclipse possibility (eclipse 35) is datable to 9 April 731 EC (in year 1 of Ukin-zer) and its last to 13 December 317 BC (in year 7 of Philip Arrhidaeus). **While it would be presumptuous to suggest that these tablets represent Hipparchus' and Ptolemy's original Babylonian source, their source must have been something similar.**

Two other features of this particular series of tablets are of interest. The times of eclipses are given, and, on each occasion in the

preserved text where it is noted that an eclipse was not observed at Babylon, a precise time is given for the luni-solar opposition (syzygy); in many cases this time corresponds closely to the time of an eclipse observable elsewhere on the earth's surface. The earliest attested predictions appear to be rounded (perhaps to the nearest hour); nevertheless we appear to be **dealing with a surprisingly sophisticated eclipse theory** already in the eighth or seventh century BC.

**In addition, the tablets apparently gave details, at the appropriate points, of the death of the reigning king. Such details are a useful supplement to the deductions which one can make from changes in the dating of contemporary economic texts.**<sup>41</sup>



6-7 The lunar eclipse table fragment BM 32234 (Sachs *et al.* 1955: no. 1419). Parts of five columns survive on each side. The numbering of the columns reflects the proposed overall scheme of 24 cycles. The eclipse possibilities are identified by month and year of the Babylonian or Achaemenid king and by day, month and year in the Julian calendar. Each column is eighteen years later than the previous column, and reading down the columns each eclipse possibility is six months later than the previous possibility.

Obverse				
viii	ix	x	xi	xii
[...]	22/iii/591 BC	2/iv/573 BC	13/iv/555 BC	23/iv/537 BC
[...]	xii/13 Nebuchadnezzar II	xii/31 Nebuchadnezzar II	i/1 Nabonidus	ii/2 Cyrus
4/ix/609 BC	15/ix/591 BC	25/ix/573 BC	6/x/555 BC	17/x/537 BC
vi/17 Nabopolassar	vi/14 Neb II	vi/32 Neb II	vii/1 Nabonidus	vii/2 Cyrus
[...]	12/iii/590 BC	22/iii/572 BC	3/iv/554 BC	[...]
[...]	xii/14 Neb II	xii/32 Neb II	xiib/1 Nabonidus	[...]
Reverse				
xiii	xiv	xv	xvi	xvii
[...]	[...]	[...]	5/vi/465 BC	[...]
[...]	[...]	[...]	iii/21 Xerxes	[...]
28/x/519 BC	7/xi/501 BC	19/xi/483 BC	29/xi/465 BC	11/xii/447 BC
vii/3 Darius I	viii/21 Darius I	viii/3 Xerxes	viii/21 Xerxes	ix/18 Artaxerxes II

*Achaemenid Chronology and the Babylonian Sources (in Mesopotamia and Iran in the Persian Period: Conquest and Imperialism 539-331 BC)*, page 20, Christopher Walker

<sup>41</sup> Walker, pages 17-21

## LEO DEPUYDT ON PTOLEMY'S CANON

"It has long been known that the Canon is *astronomically* reliable," writes Leo Depuydt, one of Ptolemy's most enthusiastic defenders, "but this does not automatically mean that it is *historically* dependable." Regarding this list of kings, Professor Depuydt adds: "As regards the earlier rulers [who included the Neo-Babylonian kings], the Canon would need to be compared with the cuneiform record on a reign by reign basis."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup>. *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, Volume 47, 1995, pages 106-107.

No stage of any study should be considered automatic or presumed. Everything needs to be proven and studied objectively, without prejudice, without looking for support of a position already held. That is a lesson the WTS needs to learn

The outcome of the objective study of references, such as provided throughout this Critique, shows that any comparison of Ptolemy's list of neo-Babylonian kings fully accords with the cuneiform records.

It is with interest to note that the *Watchtower* article does not provide the name of the article by Leo Depuydt: *More Valuable than All Gold: Ptolemy's Royal Canon and Babylonian Chronology*. At these pages from Leo Depuydt cited in the above quotation by the *Watchtower*, he writes:

### A. *Is the Canon True?*

**It is assumed here that the Canon is true. No one has, to my knowledge, refuted any aspect of the Canon on good grounds. ...** It has long been known that the Canon is *astronomically* reliable. Observations dated according to it can all be authenticated. But this does not automatically mean that it is *historically* dependable. ...

In his work on the chronology of the Ptolemaic Dynasty in Egypt, Skeat states that the Canon is "**absolutely accurate—a fact which historians have been curiously unwilling to recognise**". **Only an examination of a much larger scope than the present paper might be able to allay all doubts regarding the Canon, or at least reveal what it is that we owe exclusively to the Canon and to no other source.**

In the meantime, **one important item of evidence in favor of the Canon's reliability** is that the Egyptian date of the eclipse of 16 July 523 BCE mentioned in the *Almagest* at V 14, namely Month 7 Day 17 Year 7 of Cambyses, can be matched with the Babylonian date of an eclipse mentioned in the cuneiform tablet Camb. 400, namely Month 4 Day 16 Year 7 of Cambyses.

Both texts mention that the eclipse began about an hour before midnight and what its characteristics were. The fact that this Greco-Egyptian date from the *Almagest*, which dates according to the Canon, can be matched with a Babylonian date in a Babylonian document adds little for the astronomer, but **a great deal for the historian.**

It does much to guarantee that the portion of the Canon from the Persian period onward is reliable. As regards the earlier rulers, the Canon would need to be compared with the cuneiform record on a

reign by reign basis, considering all the dates in the literary and non-literary sources, to establish if, and where, the Canon conflicts with cuneiform sources. Agreement **seems to be the rule, but this would have to be confirmed.**<sup>42</sup>

That dating by scholars of the tablet from Cambyses' 7th year is relied on by the WTS as support for its calculation for 539 BCE.

***Hipparchus (Second Century BCE)***

The great astronomer Claudius Ptolemaeus (ca 100-ca. 170 CE), a Greek-speaking Egyptian who probably spent most of his life in Alexandria, uses Babylonian observations. How did this information travel from Babylon to Alexandria, shifting from clay to papyrus, from tablet to roll, from Babylonian to Greek language, and from lunisolar calendar to Egyptian civil calendar? ...

It has even been suggested, as a probable historical scenario, that Hipparchus "must have visited Babylon, have persuaded one or more of the astronomer scribes there to communicate to him enough of their records and methods for him to grasp the extent of the first and basic principles of the second, and have spent enough time there to have his informant extract and translate for him a considerable number of observations" (Toomer 1988, 359).

Most of Hipparchus's work is lost, but Ptolemy uses it while giving due credit. Since some of Ptolemy's Babylonian observations are explicitly attributed to Hipparchus, Hipparchus may well have been the source of all of them. ...

For the purpose of establishing the exact Egyptian date for each Babylonian date, meticulous records of the lengths of Babylonian lunar months dating back to the beginning of Nabonassar's reign must have been available. ... Since Ptolemy's Babylonian observations, presented in Greco-Egyptian garb, have all been verified, the transmission must have been flawless. Meticulous cuneiform records of the required information do in fact survive.

This possible scenario makes the *Canon* as much Ptolemy's work as a list of rulers compiled from various sources in a modern textbook can be considered the work of that book's author. The Canon just happens to be preserved in Ptolemy's *Handy Tables* in the layout in which Ptolemy chose to present it.<sup>43</sup>

***Ptolemy (Second Century CE)***

Ptolemy's "Mathematical Composition," better known as the *Almagest*, a work "superior to any ancient scientific textbook" contains all the tables necessary for computation. Ptolemy later combined these tables into a separate work, "Handy Tables," adding the Canon and other auxiliary tables. The Canon is sometimes erroneously considered part of the *Almagest*. ...

Studying the *Canon's* Babylonian segment has been facilitated also by Parker's and Dubberstein's *Babylonian Chronology* (1956), where it is confirmed that the Canon is, with the help of classical sources,

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<sup>42</sup> *More Valuable than All Gold: Ptolemy's Royal Canon and Babylonian Chronology* (Journal of Cuneiform Studies, Vol. 47, 1995) pages 106, 107, Leo Depuydt. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1359818>

<sup>43</sup> Depuydt, pages 102, 103

“[t]he general basis for the chronology of the period here treated” (1956, 10).<sup>44</sup>

## **Tables**

**Table 1** [following page] features an adaptation from the Greek manuscript sources of the Canon's ancient Near Eastern segment. It begins with Year 1 of Nabonassar's reign, the Canon's beginning, and ends with Year 22 of Cleopatra VII's reign. Roman and Byzantine emperors follow this segment, beginning with Augustus, who annexed Egypt in 30 BCE.

For what has been touted as “perhaps the most important single document for establishing the chronology of ancient history”, the Canon may not seem impressive at first sight. Yet it forms the backbone of the chronology of the period covered in [the following Table]. ...

The Canon's **first column** contains the names of rulers. The **second and third columns** contain the lengths of their reigns in **integer** numbers of Egyptian years. ...

*Column 2* converts the lengths of the reigns into integer numbers of Egyptian years.

*Column 3* adds up the numbers of the regnal years in column 2.

Column 3 led a life of its own as the Era of Nabonassar, called thus after the Canon's first king. Another era derived from the Canon is that of Philip, counting from Philip's Year 1, Year 425 of Nabonassar.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Depuydt, pages 103, 106

<sup>45</sup> Depuydt, pages 97, 99, 100

TABLE 1  
Ptolemy's Canon of Kings: The Ancient Near Eastern Segment

	<i>Nationality</i>	<i>King's name</i>	<i>Years reigned</i>	<i>Total from beginning</i>
1	Babylonian	Nabonassar	14	14
2	Babylonian	Nabu-nadin-zeri (Nadinu)	2	16
3	Chaldaeian; Assyrian	Mukin-zeri and Pul	5	21
4	Assyrian	Ululayu	5	26
5	Chaldaeian	Merodach-baladan	12	38
6	Assyrian	Sargon II	5	43
7		First Kingless Period	2	45
8	Babylonian	Bel-ibni	3	48
9	Assyrian	Ashur-nadin-shumi	6	54
10	Babylonian	Nergal-ushezib	1	55
11	Chaldaeian	Mushezib-Marduk	4	59
12		Second Kingless Period	8	67
13	Assyrian	Esarhaddon	13	80
14	Assyrian	Shamash-shuma-ukin	20	100
15	Chaldaeian <sup>p</sup>	Kandalanu	22	122
16	Chaldaeian <sup>p</sup>	Nabopolassar	21	143
17	Chaldaeian <sup>p</sup>	Nebuchadrezzar	43	186
18	Chaldaeian <sup>p</sup>	Amel-Marduk	2	188
19	Chaldaeian <sup>p</sup>	Neriglissar	4	192
20	Chaldaeian <sup>p</sup>	Nabonidus	17	209
21	Persian	Cyrus	9	218
22	Persian	Cambyses	8	226
23	Persian	Darius I	36	262
24	Persian	Xerxes I	21	283
25	Persian	Artaxerxes I	41	324
26	Persian	Darius II	19	343
27	Persian	Artaxerxes II	46	389
28	Persian	Artaxerxes III	21	410
29	Persian	Arses	2	412
30	Persian	Darius III	4	416
31	Macedonian	Alexander the Great	8	424
32	Macedonian	Philip Arrhidaeus	7	7
33	Macedonian	Alexander IV	12	19
34	Egyptian-Macedonian	Ptolemy I Soter	20	39
35	Egyptian-Macedonian	Ptolemy II Philadelphus	38	77
36	Egyptian-Macedonian	Ptolemy III Euergetes	25	102
37	Egyptian-Macedonian	Ptolemy IV Philopator	17	119
38	Egyptian-Macedonian	Ptolemy V Epiphanes	24	143
39	Egyptian-Macedonian	Ptolemy VI Philometor	35	178
40	Egyptian-Macedonian	Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II	29	207
41	Egyptian-Macedonian	Ptolemy IX Soter II	36	243
42	Egyptian-Macedonian	Ptolemy XII Neos Dionysus	29	272
43	Egyptian-Macedonian	Cleopatra VII Philopator	22	294
(44)	Roman	Augustus	43	337)



TABLE 2  
The Canon's Babylonian Segment:  
Julian Equivalents of the Egyptian Years

<i>Era of Nabonassar</i>	<i>Canon's Regnal Year</i>	<i>Extension of Wandering Year (Annus Vagus)</i>	<i>Era of Nabonassar</i>	<i>Canon's Regnal Year</i>	<i>Extension of Wandering Year (Annus Vagus)</i>
1	Nabonassar 1	26 Feb 747-25 Feb 746	44	1st Kingless Period 1	15 Feb 704-14 Feb 703
2	Nabonassar 2	26 Feb 746-25 Feb 745	45	1st Kingless Period 2	15 Feb 703-14 Feb 702
3	Nabonassar 3	26 Feb 745-24 Feb 744	46	Bel-ibni 1	15 Feb 702-14 Feb 701
4	Nabonassar 4	25 Feb 744-24 Feb 743	47	Bel-ibni 2	15 Feb 701-13 Feb 700
5	Nabonassar 5	25 Feb 743-24 Feb 742	48	Bel-ibni 3	14 Feb 700-13 Feb 699
6	Nabonassar 6	25 Feb 742-24 Feb 741	49	Ashur-nadin-shumi 1	14 Feb 699-13 Feb 698
7	Nabonassar 7	25 Feb 741-23 Feb 740	50	Ashur-nadin-shumi 2	14 Feb 698-13 Feb 697
8	Nabonassar 8	24 Feb 740-23 Feb 739	51	Ashur-nadin-shumi 3	14 Feb 697-12 Feb 696
9	Nabonassar 9	24 Feb 739-23 Feb 738	52	Ashur-nadin-shumi 4	13 Feb 696-12 Feb 695
10	Nabonassar 10	24 Feb 738-23 Feb 737	53	Ashur-nadin-shumi 5	13 Feb 695-12 Feb 694
11	Nabonassar 11	24 Feb 737-22 Feb 736	54	Ashur-nadin-shumi 6	13 Feb 694-12 Feb 693
12	Nabonassar 12	23 Feb 736-22 Feb 735	55	Nergal-ushezib 1	13 Feb 693-11 Feb 692
13	Nabonassar 13	23 Feb 735-22 Feb 734	56	Mushezib-Marduk 1	12 Feb 692-11 Feb 691
14	Nabonassar 14	23 Feb 734-22 Feb 733	57	Mushezib-Marduk 2	12 Feb 691-11 Feb 690
15	Nabu-nadin-zeri 1	23 Feb 733-21 Feb 732	58	Mushezib-Marduk 3	12 Feb 690-11 Feb 689
16	Nabu-nadin-zeri 2	22 Feb 732-21 Feb 731	59	Mushezib-Marduk 4	12 Feb 689-10 Feb 688
17	Mukin-zeri (and Pul) 1	22 Feb 731-21 Feb 730	60	2d Kingless Period 1	11 Feb 688-10 Feb 687
18	Mukin-zeri (and Pul) 2	22 Feb 730-21 Feb 729	61	2d Kingless Period 2	11 Feb 687-10 Feb 686
19	Mukin-zeri (and Pul) 3	22 Feb 729-20 Feb 728	62	2d Kingless Period 3	11 Feb 686-10 Feb 685
20	(Mukin-zeri and) Pul 4	21 Feb 728-20 Feb 727	63	2d Kingless Period 4	11 Feb 685-9 Feb 684
21	(Mukin-zeri and) Pul 5	21 Feb 727-20 Feb 726	64	2d Kingless Period 5	10 Feb 684-9 Feb 683
22	Ululayu 1	21 Feb 726-20 Feb 725	65	2d Kingless Period 6	10 Feb 683-9 Feb 682
23	Ululayu 2	21 Feb 725-19 Feb 724	66	2d Kingless Period 7	10 Feb 682-9 Feb 681
24	Ululayu 3	20 Feb 724-19 Feb 723	67	2d Kingless Period 8	10 Feb 681-8 Feb 680
25	Ululayu 4	20 Feb 723-19 Feb 722	68	Esarhaddon 1	9 Feb 680-8 Feb 679
26	Ululayu 5	20 Feb 722-19 Feb 721	69	Esarhaddon 2	9 Feb 679-8 Feb 678
27	Merodach-baladan 1	20 Feb 721-18 Feb 720	70	Esarhaddon 3	9 Feb 678-8 Feb 677
28	Merodach-baladan 2	19 Feb 720-18 Feb 719	71	Esarhaddon 4	9 Feb 677-7 Feb 676
29	Merodach-baladan 3	19 Feb 719-18 Feb 718	72	Esarhaddon 5	8 Feb 676-7 Feb 675
30	Merodach-baladan 4	19 Feb 718-18 Feb 717	73	Esarhaddon 6	8 Feb 675-7 Feb 674
31	Merodach-baladan 5	19 Feb 717-17 Feb 716	74	Esarhaddon 7	8 Feb 674-7 Feb 673
32	Merodach-baladan 6	18 Feb 716-17 Feb 715	75	Esarhaddon 8	8 Feb 673-6 Feb 672
33	Merodach-baladan 7	18 Feb 715-17 Feb 714	76	Esarhaddon 9	7 Feb 672-6 Feb 671
34	Merodach-baladan 8	18 Feb 714-17 Feb 713	77	Esarhaddon 10	7 Feb 671-6 Feb 670
35	Merodach-baladan 9	18 Feb 713-16 Feb 712	78	Esarhaddon 11	7 Feb 670-6 Feb 669
36	Merodach-baladan 10	17 Feb 712-16 Feb 711	79	Esarhaddon 12	7 Feb 669-5 Feb 668
37	Merodach-baladan 11	17 Feb 711-16 Feb 710	80	Esarhaddon 13	6 Feb 668-5 Feb 667
38	Merodach-baladan 12	17 Feb 710-16 Feb 709	81	Shamash-shuma-ukin 1	6 Feb 667-5 Feb 666
39	Sargon II 1	17 Feb 709-15 Feb 708	82	Shamash-shuma-ukin 2	6 Feb 666-5 Feb 665
40	Sargon II 2	16 Feb 708-15 Feb 707	83	Shamash-shuma-ukin 3	6 Feb 665-4 Feb 664
41	Sargon II 3	16 Feb 707-15 Feb 706	84	Shamash-shuma-ukin 4	5 Feb 664-4 Feb 663
42	Sargon II 4	16 Feb 706-15 Feb 705	85	Shamash-shuma-ukin 5	5 Feb 663-4 Feb 662
43	Sargon II 5	16 Feb 705-14 Feb 704	86	Shamash-shuma-ukin 6	5 Feb 662-4 Feb 661

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TABLE 2, *cont.*

<i>Era of Nabonassar</i>	<i>Canon's Regnal Year</i>	<i>Extension of Wandering Year (Annus Vagus)</i>	<i>Era of Nabonassar</i>	<i>Canon's Regnal Year</i>	<i>Extension of Wandering Year (Annus Vagus)</i>
87	Shamash-shuma-ukin 7	5 Feb 661-3 Feb 660	132	Nabopolassar 10	24 Jan 616-23 Jan 615
88	Shamash-shuma-ukin 8	4 Feb 660-3 Feb 659	133	Nabopolassar 11	24 Jan 615-23 Jan 614
89	Shamash-shuma-ukin 9	4 Feb 659-3 Feb 658	134	Nabopolassar 12	24 Jan 614-23 Jan 613
90	Shamash-shuma-ukin 10	4 Feb 658-3 Feb 657	135	Nabopolassar 13	24 Jan 613-22 Jan 612
91	Shamash-shuma-ukin 11	4 Feb 657-2 Feb 656	136	Nabopolassar 14	23 Jan 612-22 Jan 611
92	Shamash-shuma-ukin 12	3 Feb 656-2 Feb 655	137	Nabopolassar 15	23 Jan 611-22 Jan 610
93	Shamash-shuma-ukin 13	3 Feb 655-2 Feb 654	138	Nabopolassar 16	23 Jan 610-22 Jan 609
94	Shamash-shuma-ukin 14	3 Feb 654-2 Feb 653	139	Nabopolassar 17	23 Jan 609-21 Jan 608
95	Shamash-shuma-ukin 15	3 Feb 653-1 Feb 652	140	Nabopolassar 18	22 Jan 608-21 Jan 607
96	Shamash-shuma-ukin 16	2 Feb 652-1 Feb 651	141	Nabopolassar 19	22 Jan 607-21 Jan 606
97	Shamash-shuma-ukin 17	2 Feb 651-1 Feb 650	142	Nabopolassar 20	22 Jan 606-21 Jan 605
98	Shamash-shuma-ukin 18	2 Feb 650-1 Feb 649	143	Nabopolassar 21	22 Jan 605-20 Jan 604
99	Shamash-shuma-ukin 19	2 Feb 649-31 Jan 648	144	Nebuchadrezzar 1	21 Jan 604-20 Jan 603
100	Shamash-shuma-ukin 20	1 Feb 648-31 Jan 647	145	Nebuchadrezzar 2	21 Jan 603-20 Jan 602
101	Kandalanu 1	1 Feb 647-31 Jan 646	146	Nebuchadrezzar 3	21 Jan 602-20 Jan 601
102	Kandalanu 2	1 Feb 646-31 Jan 645	147	Nebuchadrezzar 4	21 Jan 601-19 Jan 600
103	Kandalanu 3	1 Feb 645-30 Jan 644	148	Nebuchadrezzar 5	20 Jan 600-19 Jan 599
104	Kandalanu 4	31 Jan 644-30 Jan 643	149	Nebuchadrezzar 6	20 Jan 599-19 Jan 598
105	Kandalanu 5	31 Jan 643-30 Jan 642	150	Nebuchadrezzar 7	20 Jan 598-19 Jan 597
106	Kandalanu 6	31 Jan 642-30 Jan 641	151	Nebuchadrezzar 8	20 Jan 597-18 Jan 596
107	Kandalanu 7	31 Jan 641-29 Jan 640	152	Nebuchadrezzar 9	19 Jan 596-18 Jan 595
108	Kandalanu 8	30 Jan 640-29 Jan 639	153	Nebuchadrezzar 10	19 Jan 595-18 Jan 594
109	Kandalanu 9	30 Jan 639-29 Jan 638	154	Nebuchadrezzar 11	19 Jan 594-18 Jan 593
110	Kandalanu 10	30 Jan 638-29 Jan 637	155	Nebuchadrezzar 12	19 Jan 593-17 Jan 592
111	Kandalanu 11	30 Jan 637-28 Jan 636	156	Nebuchadrezzar 13	18 Jan 592-17 Jan 591
112	Kandalanu 12	29 Jan 636-28 Jan 635	157	Nebuchadrezzar 14	18 Jan 591-17 Jan 590
113	Kandalanu 13	29 Jan 635-28 Jan 634	158	Nebuchadrezzar 15	18 Jan 590-17 Jan 589
114	Kandalanu 14	29 Jan 634-28 Jan 633	159	Nebuchadrezzar 16	18 Jan 589-16 Jan 588
115	Kandalanu 15	29 Jan 633-27 Jan 632	160	Nebuchadrezzar 17	17 Jan 588-16 Jan 587
116	Kandalanu 16	28 Jan 632-27 Jan 631	161	Nebuchadrezzar 18	17 Jan 587-16 Jan 586
117	Kandalanu 17	28 Jan 631-27 Jan 630	162	Nebuchadrezzar 19	17 Jan 586-16 Jan 585
118	Kandalanu 18	28 Jan 630-27 Jan 629	163	Nebuchadrezzar 20	17 Jan 585-15 Jan 584
119	Kandalanu 19	28 Jan 629-26 Jan 628	164	Nebuchadrezzar 21	16 Jan 584-15 Jan 583
120	Kandalanu 20	27 Jan 628-26 Jan 627	165	Nebuchadrezzar 22	16 Jan 583-15 Jan 582
121	Kandalanu 21	27 Jan 627-26 Jan 626	166	Nebuchadrezzar 23	16 Jan 582-15 Jan 581
122	Kandalanu 22	27 Jan 626-26 Jan 625	167	Nebuchadrezzar 24	16 Jan 581-14 Jan 580
123	Nabopolassar 1	27 Jan 625-25 Jan 624	168	Nebuchadrezzar 25	15 Jan 580-14 Jan 579
124	Nabopolassar 2	26 Jan 624-25 Jan 623	169	Nebuchadrezzar 26	15 Jan 579-14 Jan 578
125	Nabopolassar 3	26 Jan 623-25 Jan 622	170	Nebuchadrezzar 27	15 Jan 578-14 Jan 577
126	Nabopolassar 4	26 Jan 622-25 Jan 621	171	Nebuchadrezzar 28	15 Jan 577-13 Jan 576
127	Nabopolassar 5	26 Jan 621-24 Jan 620	172	Nebuchadrezzar 29	14 Jan 576-13 Jan 575
128	Nabopolassar 6	25 Jan 620-24 Jan 619	173	Nebuchadrezzar 30	14 Jan 575-13 Jan 574
129	Nabopolassar 7	25 Jan 619-24 Jan 618	174	Nebuchadrezzar 31	14 Jan 574-13 Jan 573
130	Nabopolassar 8	25 Jan 618-24 Jan 617	175	Nebuchadrezzar 32	14 Jan 573-12 Jan 572
131	Nabopolassar 9	25 Jan 617-23 Jan 616	176	Nebuchadrezzar 33	13 Jan 572-12 Jan 571

TABLE 2, *cont.*

<i>Era of Nabonassar</i>	<i>Canon's Regnal Year</i>	<i>Extension of Wandering Year (Annus Vagus)</i>	<i>Era of Nabonassar</i>	<i>Canon's Regnal Year</i>	<i>Extension of Wandering Year (Annus Vagus)</i>
177	Nebuchadrezzar 34	13 Jan 571-12 Jan 570	222	Cambyses 3	2 Jan 526-1 Jan 525
178	Nebuchadrezzar 35	13 Jan 570-12 Jan 569	223	Cambyses 5	2 Jan 525-31 Dec 524
179	Nebuchadrezzar 36	13 Jan 569-11 Jan 568	224	Cambyses 6	1 Jan 524-31 Dec 524
180	Nebuchadrezzar 37	12 Jan 568-11 Jan 567	225	Cambyses 7	1 Jan 523-31 Dec 523
181	Nebuchadrezzar 38	12 Jan 567-11 Jan 566	226	Cambyses 8	1 Jan 522-31 Dec 522
182	Nebuchadrezzar 39	12 Jan 566-11 Jan 565	227	Darius I 1	1 Jan 521-30 Dec 521
183	Nebuchadrezzar 40	12 Jan 565-10 Jan 564	228	Darius I 2	31 Dec 521-30 Dec 520
184	Nebuchadrezzar 41	11 Jan 564-10 Jan 563	229	Darius I 3	31 Dec 520-30 Dec 519
185	Nebuchadrezzar 42	11 Jan 563-10 Jan 562	230	Darius I 4	31 Dec 519-30 Dec 518
186	Nebuchadrezzar 43	11 Jan 562-10 Jan 561	231	Darius I 5	31 Dec 518-29 Dec 517
187	Amel-Marduk 1	11 Jan 561-9 Jan 560	232	Darius I 6	30 Dec 517-29 Dec 516
188	Amel-Marduk 2	10 Jan 560-9 Jan 559	233	Darius I 7	30 Dec 516-29 Dec 515
189	Neriglissar 1	10 Jan 559-9 Jan 558	234	Darius I 8	30 Dec 515-29 Dec 514
190	Neriglissar 2	10 Jan 558-9 Jan 557	235	Darius I 9	30 Dec 514-28 Dec 513
191	Neriglissar 3	10 Jan 557-8 Jan 556	236	Darius I 10	29 Dec 513-28 Dec 512
192	Neriglissar 4	9 Jan 556-8 Jan 555	237	Darius I 11	29 Dec 512-28 Dec 511
193	Nabonidus 1	9 Jan 555-8 Jan 554	238	Darius I 12	29 Dec 511-28 Dec 510
194	Nabonidus 2	9 Jan 554-8 Jan 553	239	Darius I 13	29 Dec 510-27 Dec 509
195	Nabonidus 3	9 Jan 553-7 Jan 552	240	Darius I 14	28 Dec 509-27 Dec 508
196	Nabonidus 4	8 Jan 552-7 Jan 551	241	Darius I 15	28 Dec 508-27 Dec 507
197	Nabonidus 5	8 Jan 551-7 Jan 550	242	Darius I 16	28 Dec 507-27 Dec 506
198	Nabonidus 6	8 Jan 550-7 Jan 549	243	Darius I 17	28 Dec 506-26 Dec 505
199	Nabonidus 7	8 Jan 549-6 Jan 548	244	Darius I 18	27 Dec 505-26 Dec 504
200	Nabonidus 8	7 Jan 548-6 Jan 547	245	Darius I 19	27 Dec 504-26 Dec 503
201	Nabonidus 9	7 Jan 547-6 Jan 546	246	Darius I 20	27 Dec 503-26 Dec 502
202	Nabonidus 10	7 Jan 546-6 Jan 545	247	Darius I 21	27 Dec 502-25 Dec 501
203	Nabonidus 11	7 Jan 545-5 Jan 544	248	Darius I 22	26 Dec 501-25 Dec 500
204	Nabonidus 12	6 Jan 544-5 Jan 543	249	Darius I 23	26 Dec 500-25 Dec 499
205	Nabonidus 13	6 Jan 543-5 Jan 542	250	Darius I 24	26 Dec 499-25 Dec 498
206	Nabonidus 14	6 Jan 542-5 Jan 541	251	Darius I 25	26 Dec 498-24 Dec 497
207	Nabonidus 15	6 Jan 541-4 Jan 540	252	Darius I 26	25 Dec 497-24 Dec 496
208	Nabonidus 16	5 Jan 540-4 Jan 539	253	Darius I 27	25 Dec 496-24 Dec 495
209	Nabonidus 17	5 Jan 539-4 Jan 538	254	Darius I 28	25 Dec 495-24 Dec 494
210	Cyrus 1	5 Jan 538-4 Jan 537	255	Darius I 29	25 Dec 494-23 Dec 493
211	Cyrus 2	5 Jan 537-3 Jan 536	256	Darius I 30	24 Dec 493-23 Dec 492
212	Cyrus 3	4 Jan 536-3 Jan 535	257	Darius I 31	24 Dec 492-23 Dec 491
213	Cyrus 4	4 Jan 535-3 Jan 534	258	Darius I 32	24 Dec 491-23 Dec 490
214	Cyrus 5	4 Jan 534-3 Jan 533	259	Darius I 33	24 Dec 490-22 Dec 489
215	Cyrus 6	4 Jan 533-2 Jan 532	260	Darius I 34	23 Dec 489-22 Dec 488
216	Cyrus 7	3 Jan 532-2 Jan 531	261	Darius I 35	23 Dec 488-22 Dec 487
217	Cyrus 8	3 Jan 531-2 Jan 530	262	Darius I 36	23 Dec 487-22 Dec 486
218	Cyrus 9	3 Jan 530-2 Jan 529	263	Xerxes I 1	23 Dec 486-21 Dec 485
219	Cambyses 1	3 Jan 529-1 Jan 528	264	Xerxes I 2	22 Dec 485-21 Dec 484
220	Cambyses 2	2 Jan 528-1 Jan 527	265	Xerxes I 3	22 Dec 484-21 Dec 483
221	Cambyses 3	2 Jan 527-1 Jan 526	266	Xerxes I 4	22 Dec 483-21 Dec 482

## WHAT THE CUNEIFORM RECORDS SHOW

What is this “cuneiform record” that enables us to measure the historical accuracy of Ptolemy’s canon? It includes the Babylonian chronicles, lists of kings, and economic tablets—cuneiform documents written by scribes who lived during, or near, Neo-Babylonian times.<sup>7</sup>

**7.** Cuneiform is a form of writing in which a scribe pressed various signs into the surface of a soft clay tablet using a sharp stylus with a wedge-shaped point.

One source consistently referred to by the ETS is *Nabonidus and Belshazzar* by Raymond Dougherty. The WTS’s long-standing reliance on his work is continued as recently as in the November 1, 2011 issue of *The Watchtower*.

gaps in the history documented by the Babylonian chronicles suggest that we may not have a continuous chronological record.<sup>10</sup>

**10.** Consider the example of Neriglissar. A royal inscription regarding him states that he was “the son of Bêl-shum-ishkun,” the “king of Babylon.” (Italics ours.) Another inscription calls Bêl-shum-ishkun the “wise prince.” The original word rendered “prince,” *rubû*, is a title also meaning “king, ruler.” Since there is an obvious discrepancy between the reign of Neriglissar and his predecessor, Amel-Marduk, could this “king of Babylon,” Bêl-shum-ishkun, have ruled for a time between the two? Professor R. P. Dougherty acknowledged that “the evidence of Neriglissar’s noble ancestry cannot be disregarded.”—*Nabonidus and Belshazzar—A Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, by Raymond P. Dougherty, published 1929, page 61.

*The Watchtower*, November 1, 2011, pages 24, 28

Dougherty is thus referred to in the November 1 issue of the *Watchtower* in support of its contention there are gaps in the secular neo-Babylonian chronology. As shown here from his book, Dougherty strongly defends the chronology accepted by scholars.

### 1. Neo-Babylonian Kings according to Cuneiform Texts<sup>27</sup>

<i>Nabû-apal-uşur</i>	21 years	626/625-605 B. C.
<i>Nabû-kudurri-uşur</i> <sup>28</sup>	43 years	605-562 B. C.
<i>Amêl-Marduk</i>	2 years	562-560 B. C.
<i>Nergal-şar-uşur</i>	4 years	560-556 B. C.
<i>Lâbâşi-Marduk</i>	A few months	556 B. C.
<i>Nabû-nâ'id</i>	17 years	556-539 B. C.

*Nabonidus and Belshazzar*, page 7, Raymond Dougherty

*5. Neo-Babylonian Kings according to Ptolemy<sup>32</sup>*

Ναβοπολλασσάρου	<i>Nabopolassar</i>	21 years
Ναβοκολασσάρου	<i>Nabocolassar</i>	43 years
Ίλλοαρουδάμου	<i>Iloaroudam</i>	2 years
Νηρικασολασσάρου	<i>Nericasolassar</i>	4 years
Ναβοναδίου	<i>Nabonad</i>	17 years

*Nabonidus and Belshazzar, page 9, Raymond Dougherty*

Raymond Dougherty made these comments on these lists.

Of the above Neo-Babylonian king-lists, the first is based upon more than two thousand dated cuneiform documents. It must therefore be accepted as the ultimate criterion in the determination of Neo-Babylonian chronological questions, the majority of which are connected with events which took place in the sixth century B.C. Judged by this unimpeachable standard, the writings of Herodotus of the fifth century B.C. and those of Xenophon of the first part of the fourth century B. C. are lacking in true historical perspective so far as an orderly enumeration of Neo-Babylonian kings is concerned. ...

It is not until the third century B.C. that the Berossus list, with a real Babylonian background and therefore of appreciable<sup>46</sup> accuracy, appears. Polyhistor of the first century B.C. names all the kings except Lâbâshi-Marduk and states accurately how long each king reigned, barring the period assigned to Amêl-Marduk. Ptolemy of the second century A.D. differs from Polyhistor only in giving the correct number of years for Amêl-Marduk's reign.<sup>47</sup>

How does Ptolemy's list compare with that cuneiform record?

Ptolemy lists only four kings between the Babylonian rulers Kandalanu and Nabonidus. However, the Uruk King List—a part of the cuneiform record—reveals that *seven* kings ruled in between. Were their reigns brief and negligible? One of them, according to cuneiform economic tablets, ruled for seven years.<sup>8</sup>

In general, Ptolemy's canon is regarded as accurate. But in view of its omissions, should it really be used to provide a definite historical chronology?

**8.** Sin-sharra-ishkun ruled for seven years, and 57 economic tablets of this king are dated from his accession year through year seven. See *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, Volume 35, 1983, pages 54-59.

<sup>46</sup> Note that Dougherty speaks of *appreciable* accuracy, not of a *precise* accuracy.

<sup>47</sup> *Nabonidus and Belshazzar – A Study of the Closing Events of the Neo-Babylonian Empire*, page 10, Raymond Dougherty

For the neo-Babylonian period, Ptolemy omitted the brief reign of Labashi-Marduk, who reigned for less than a year between Neriglissar and Nabonidus. Ptolemy used the list of kings to provide a framework for his objective, his astronomical model. He was thus not interested in Labashi-Marduk's reign since it did not extend beyond the boundaries of a calendar year.<sup>48</sup>

The Babylonian memorial for Nabonidus' mother Adda-guppi also omits Labashi-Marduk. She had reasons for doing so: she was banished from his court since she was a priest of the God Sin; she would thus have considered him a pretender; and her son Nabonidus was likely involved in the murder of Labashi-Marduk. Since he ruled for less than a year, the length of his reign does not affect the overall chronology produced for Adda-guppi; nor does the omission of Labashi-Marduk affect the overall chronology produced by Ptolemy. He used Hipparchus as his source.

### **Information “left out”**

There is also strong evidence from cuneiform documents that prior to the reign of Nabopolassar (the first king of the Neo-Babylonian period), another king (Ashur-etel-ilani) ruled for four years in Babylonia. Also, for more than a year, there was no king in the land.<sup>9</sup> Yet, all of this is left out of Ptolemy's canon.

**9.** The economic tablet C.B.M. 2152 is dated in the fourth year of Ashur-etel-ilani. (*Legal and Commercial Transactions Dated in the Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian and Persian Periods—Chiefly From Nippur*, by A.T. Clay, 1908, page 74.) Also the Harran Inscriptions of Nabonidus, (H1B), I, line 30, has him listed just before Nabopolassar. (*Anatolian Studies*, Vol. VIII, 1958, pages 35, 47.) For the kingless period, see Chronicle 2, line 14, of *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, pages 87-88.

The issue at hand concerns the rulers from Nebuchadnezzar through to Nabonidus, so problems with rulerships before Nabopolassar are irrelevant. They do not prove or disprove the dates of Nebuchadnezzar nor of the destruction of Jerusalem.

While the *Watchtower* stands on its high moral ground about things being *left out* by Ptolemy, it stands accused of doing the very same thing, but far more seriously. When the *Watchtower* paragraph indignantly complains “all of this is left out”, **it refers to endnote number 9**, which includes this:

The **Harran Inscriptions of Nabonidus**, (H1B), I, line 30, has [Ashur-etelilani] listed just before Nabopolassar. (*Anatolian Studies*, Vol. VIII, 1958, pages 35, 47)

Note the page numbers referred to from the *Watchtower* article. Pages 35 and 36 of *Anatolian Studies* list “four monuments of the reign of Nabonidus ... found at (or near) Harran”. Page 46 to 53 of *Anatolian Studies* provide a transliteration and an English translation of that Babylonian document. It is an undamaged record by “the lady Adda-guppi, mother of Nabium-na'id, king of Babylon” (lines 1 – 2, page 47).

The *Watchtower* refers to line 30 at page 47 of *Anatolian Studies* but it “leaves out” exactly what that line states, it “leaves out” undamaged line 29, and it “leaves out” undamaged lines 31 to 33. The following are lines 29 to 33 that are “left out” by the *Watchtower*:

---

<sup>48</sup> Ptolemy converted the dates of the Babylonian Nisan (March/April) calendar to the Egyptian calendar beginning in Toth (January/February).

29. From the 20th year of Aššurbanipal, king of Assyria, that I was born (in)  
30. until the 42nd year of Aššurbanipal, the 3rd year of Aššur-etillu-ili,  
31. his son, the 21st year of Nabopolassar, the 43rd year of Nebuchadrezzar,  
32. the 2nd year of Awēl-Marduk, the 4th year of Neriglissar,  
33. in 95 years of the god Sin, king of the gods of heaven and earth,

*Anatolian Studies*, Vol. VIII, 1958, page 47

Additionally, column II, lines 26 to 28 of *Anatolian Studies* state:

26. From the time of Aššurbanipal, king of Assyria, until the 9th year  
27. of Nabu-na'id king of Babylon, the son, offspring of my womb  
28. 104 years of happiness, with the reverence which Sin, king of the gods,

*Anatolian Studies*, Vol. VIII, 1958, page 49

Further, lines 40 to 43 of column II state:

40. endure not, (but) let him worship thy great godhead. In the 21 years  
41. of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, in the 43 years of Nebuchadrezzar,  
42. son of Nabopolassar, and 4 years of Neriglissar, king of Babylon,  
43. (when) they exercised the kingship, for 68 years  
44. with all my heart I revered them, I kept watch over them,

*Anatolian Studies*, Vol. VIII, 1958, page 51

*Anatolian Studies* provides the following summary of these lines:

#### CHRONOLOGY AND HISTORY

##### (1) *The Last Kings of Assyria*

The inscription H 1 (of the royal Mother) gives, in its present more complete form (B),<sup>1</sup> no less than three arithmetical summaries covering the end of Assyrian rule and almost the whole of the Chaldaean dynasty in Babylonia :

Col. I, 29-35.

The narrator was born in the 20th year of Assurbanipal.

She survived the 42nd year of Aššurbanipal,

3rd ,, ,, Aššur-etillu-ili, his son,

21st ,, ,, Nabopolassar,

43rd ,, ,, Nebuchadrezzar •

2nd ,, ,, Evil-Merodach,

4th ,, ,, Neriglissar.

A total of 95 years.

Col. II, 26-8.

She lived from the time <sup>2</sup> of Aššurbanipal to the 9th year of Nabonidus her son, 104 years.

Col. II, 40-3.

She served the kings of Babylon during

21 years of Nabopolassar,

43 ,, ,, Nebuchadrezzar,

4 ,, ,, Neriglissar.

A total of 68 years, before her son's accession.

*Anatolian Studies*, Vol. VIII, 1958, page 69

It is pure hypocrisy for the *Watchtower* article to complain about information being “left out” when it does the same thing, leaving out directly relevant information.

## ROBERT R NEWTON ON NEO-BABYLONIAN DATES

In 1977, Robert R Newton published his book, *The Crime of Claudius Ptolemy*. He received advice from an active Jehovah's Witness during its preparation. The following letters from Newton show his unquestioned support for the conventional chronology of the neo-Babylonian era, along with his support for the accepted dating of the astronomical tablet for Nebuchadnezzar's 37th year.



THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY  
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January 4, 1978

Mr. D. Mason

Kilsyth  
Victoria, Australia 3137

Dear Mr. Mason:

Thank you for your letter about the review of The Crime of Claudius Ptolemy in Scientific American. I have studied Babylonian chronology only from the standpoint of the astronomical observations that can be dated by the use of that chronology, and I have not studied it in general. Therefore I cannot give an answer to some of your questions.

Note → In context, my statement about Babylonian chronology applied only to chronology before the reign of Nebuchnezzar. The dates of Nebuchnezzar are well established by astronomical observations that were made during his reign and that were dated by using his regnal years. I have shown this point in my book Ancient Planetary Observations and the Validity of Ephemeris Time, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland 21218, 1976.

I can now respond to your questions, using the same letters to identify them that you used.

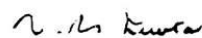
Note → (a) In the period before Nebuchnezzar, there are no absolute Babylonian dates known, to the best of my knowledge. There are many such dates known in and after his reign.

(b) Since Babylonian chronology is not my field, I am not acquainted with the Adad Guppi Stele that you mention.

(c) I do not know how certain the dates of the destruction of Jerusalem and the deposing of Zedekiah are, but my work has no bearing upon the question. So far as my work is concerned, the situation about dating those events is unchanged.

(d) I believe that the date of 539 B.C. for the capture of Babylon is well established, but my work has no impact upon the dating of this event, since it is after the reign of Nebuchnezzar.

Sincerely yours,

  
R. R. Newton

RRN/mjo





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Johns Hopkins Road, Laurel, Maryland 20810  
Telephone (301) 953-7100 and 792-7800

January 23, 1978

Mr. Doug Mason

Kilsyth, Victoria,  
Australia 3137

Dear Mr. Mason:

P. V. Neugebauer and E. F. Weidner in "Ein astronomischer Beobachtungstext aus dem 37. Jahre Nebukadnezars II. (-567/-566)" (Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Königlichen Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig, Philologie-Historie Klasse, Band 67, Heft 2, pp. 29-89, 1915) have published a text which, as the title implies, gives a large number of astronomical observations from a year that is dated as the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar. I have summarized these observations in Tables IV.3 through IV.10, beginning on page 131, of Ancient Planetary Observations and the Validity of Ephemeris Time. These are the observations with a "Tentative Julian Date" in -567 or -566.

The analysis of these data is summarized in Chapters X and XIV, on the assumption that the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar was the Babylonian year that began in the spring of -567. I don't believe that I say so anywhere in the book, but I have tested other possible years and can find no other year that fits the data. Thus I take it to be well established that -567 is Nebuchadnezzar's 37th year and hence that -603 is his first year. ← Note

Existing documents give ample evidence about the reign of his predecessor Nabopolassar, and I think there can be no substantial question that Nabopolassar's first year began in the spring of -624.

By the way, there is a difference between the accession year of a Babylonian king and his first year. In Babylonian usage, the first year was considered to be the year after his accession.

The best source for the Babylonian dates that can be accurately correlated with our calendar is by R. A. Parker and W. H. Dubberstein, Babylonian Chronology, 626 B.C. - A.D. 75, Brown University Press, Providence, Rhode Island, U.S.A., 1956. This lists the day on which each Babylonian month began within the indicated years. The year 626 B.C. (-625) is the accession year of Nabopolassar, and it is the earliest Babylonian year that we can date accurately. Many scholars claim that they can date earlier years, but I believe that they have no sound basis for their claims.

Sincerely yours,

*R. R. Newton*  
R. R. Newton

RRN/mjo

## THE WATCHTOWER'S "CONCLUSIONS"

### The Conclusion Based on This Evidence

To sum up: The Bible clearly states that there was an exile of 70 years. There is strong evidence—and most scholars agree—that the Jewish exiles were back in their homeland by 537 B.C.E. Counting back from that year would place Jerusalem's destruction in 607 B.C.E. Though the classical historians and the canon of Ptolemy disagree with this date, valid questions can be raised about the accuracy of their writings. Really, those two lines of evidence hardly provide enough proof to overturn the Bible's chronology.

- The Bible says there was to be a 70-year period when Judah *and the surrounding nations* were to **serve** Babylon. The Bible never says the Judah (or the surrounding nations) would be exiled for 70 years. The prophet said that the nation which was prepared to serve Babylon would do so while remaining on its own land.
- There is no statement in Scripture that says the Seventy Years ended when the Jews returned to their land. There is nothing that says the Seventy Years ended for the other nations when Jews returned to their land.
- There is no evidence that Jewish exiles returned in 537 BCE. If there was any evidence, the *Watchtower* article would have presented it.
- The WTS accepts 539 BCE as the date of Babylon's fall, relying solely on the evidences provided by classical historians, the chronology of the period, and on the ability of scholars to calculate astronomical data. The astronomical tablet relied on by the WTS is the most problematic. It contains admitted errors, and is likely a prediction rather than the record of an observation.
- If all that the WTS needs is "most scholars agree" to accept 537 BCE as the date Jews returned, then there is a strong argument for 587/586 BCE date of Jerusalem's destruction, since there is universal agreement on that date. Scholars do not agree on the date of the Jews' return.
- Scripture says that the 70 years would be spent serving Babylon, and that the power and dominion of Babylon would be removed at the end. This took place on the night that the city fell in October 539 BCE.
- The WTS says that their 70 Years started when several murderous Jews and their entourage entered Egypt, not when Jerusalem was destroyed. The WTS is incapable of proving that these Jews entered Egypt two months after Jerusalem's destruction. The numerous events listed in the Bible as taking place between the destruction of Jerusalem and the exit of those Jews requires a far longer period, and is likely linked to the return of Nebuchadnezzar 4 years after Jerusalem's destruction.
- It is a lie to say that the conventional date of Jerusalem's destruction is based solely on calculations from Ptolemy's list of kings (*Royal Canon*) and classical sources. There is a wide range of contemporary data, including tens of thousands of commercial and administration tablets.
- If questions must be raised on the validity of the records provided by classical historians and by Ptolemy's list of kings, the WTS cannot arrive at 539 BCE for the Fall of Babylon.

# Babylonian Chronology: First and Last dates (Babylonian Chronology. 626 B.C. - A.D. 75, by Parker and Dubberstein)

13 KINGS' REIGNS	14 BABYLONIAN CHRONOLOGY, 626 B.C.-A.D. 75	15 KINGS' REIGNS
<p><b>LABASHI-MARDUK</b> <i>Evidence for Beginning of Reign</i> I/23/acc. (May 3, 556). Uruk (unpub. text NBC 4534, <i>ibid.</i>). II/12/acc. (May 22, 556). Sippar? (Evets, <i>op. cit.</i>, Laborosoarchod, No. 2). <i>Evidence for End of Reign</i> III/9/acc. (June 17, 556) (Strassmaier in <i>Actes du huitième Congrès international des orientalistes, tenu en 1889 à Stockholm et à Christiania</i>, 2. partie [Leide, 1893] section sémitique [B] at end, No. 15). III/12/acc. (June 20, 556). Sippar? (Evets, <i>op. cit.</i>, Laborosoarchod, No. 1). Labashi-Marduk seems to have been recognized as king only in May and June, 556, and even then possibly not throughout Babylonia (see under NABUNAD). Berossus (frag. 14) <i>anad Josephus Against Apion</i> 1. 20 states that Labashi-Marduk ruled nine (<i>enue)</i> months. If Berossus' own manuscript used a numeral instead of the spelled-out number, confusion between <math>\theta</math> (9) and <math>\beta</math> (2) could easily have arisen; hence the original text may have said 2 months.</p> <p><b>NABUNAD</b> <i>Evidence for Beginning of Reign</i> II/15/acc. (May 25, 556). NA.SU.SA.KUNA (Clay, <i>BE</i> VIII 1, No. 39). III/1/acc. (June 9, 556). Sippar? (<i>VAS</i> VI 65; see Kugler, <i>SSB</i> II 405-8). III/18/acc. (June 26, 556). Sippar (Strassmaier, <i>Nabonidus</i>, No. 1). III/23/acc. (July 1, 556). Uruk (Dougherty, <i>REN</i>, No. 1). III/26/acc. (July 4, 556). Sippar (Strassmaier, <i>Nabonidus</i>, No. 2). Nabunad must have been a contender for the throne almost from the death of Nergal-shar-usur. By the end of June, 556, he was sole ruler of Babylonia.</p> <p><i>Evidence for End of Reign</i> VI/3/17 to VI/28/17 (Aug. 31 to Sept. 25, 539), chiefly from Babylon and Sippar (Strassmaier, <i>Nabonidus</i>, Nos. 1046-52). VI/6/17 (Sept. 3, 539). Uruk (Contenau, <i>TCL</i> XII 121; line 19 reads VI/6/18, but in line 1 the date is given as VI/6/17; year 18 is impossible, so we assume either a scribal error or an error by Contenau). VI/25/17 (Sept. 22, 539) (unpub. text <i>MLC</i> 1011, Goetze, <i>op. cit.</i> p. 44). VII/4/17 (Sept. 30, 539). Larsa (unpub. text <i>YBC</i> 7385, <i>ibid.</i>). VII/8/17 (Oct. 4, 539). Uruk (Dougherty, <i>REN</i>, No. 189). VII/17/17 (Oct. 13, 539). Uruk (Dougherty, <i>GCCI</i> I 390). The Nabunaid Chronicle (last published by Smith, <i>BHT</i>, pp. 98-123 and Pls. XI-XIV) iii 14-18 states that Sippar fell to Persian forces VII/14/17 (Oct. 10, 539), that Babylon fell VII/16/17 (Oct. 12), and that Cyrus entered Babylon VII/3/17 (Oct. 29). This fixes the end of Nabunaid's reign and the beginning of the reign of Cyrus. Interestingly enough, the last tablet dated to Nabunaid from Uruk is dated the day after Babylon fell to Cyrus. News of its capture had not yet reached the southern city some 125 miles distant. Strassmaier, <i>Nabonidus</i>, No. 1054, has the date VIII/10/17; but the month sign is shaded, and in view of known facts this date cannot be accepted. No. 1055 is dated to 3 Goetze (<i>op. cit.</i> p. 44) doubts the correctness of the date.</p>	<p>IX/—/17 by Strassmaier on the basis of the giving of the <i>mašīartum</i> for the months in advance (see Strassmaier, <i>Nabonidus</i>, Nos. 219, 346, 361) this tablet is useless for exact dating purposes. This fact was recognized by Kugler, <i>SSB</i> II 388 f., but not by Clay, <i>BE</i> VIII 1, pp. 4 f.</p> <p><b>CYRUS</b> <i>Evidence for Beginning of Reign</i> VII/14/acc. (Oct. 10, 539). Sippar is taken by Persian forces. VII/16/acc. (Oct. 12). Babylon falls. VIII/3/acc. (Oct. 29). Cyrus enters Babylon. These dates are from the Nabunaid Chronicle (see under NABUNAD). VII/—/acc. (not later than Oct. 26, 539) (Strassmaier, <i>Cyrus</i>, No. 1). VIII/24/acc. (Nov. 19, 539) (<i>ibid.</i> No. 2). X/21/acc. (Jan. 14, 538). Uruk (Tremayne, <i>RECC</i>, No. 1). <i>Evidence for End of Reign</i> IV/7/9 (June 28, 530). Babylon (Strassmaier, <i>Cyrus</i>, No. 340). IV/27/9 (July 18, 530). Babylon (<i>ibid.</i> No. 341). V/13/9 (Aug. 2, 530). Nippur (Clay, <i>BE</i> VIII 1, No. 74). V/23/9 (Aug. 12, 530). Borsippa (<i>VAS</i> V 42). Coregency of Cyrus and Cambyses probably began Nisanu 1 (March 26), 530; see Kugler, <i>SSB</i> II 397-401, and Dubberstein in <i>AYS</i> LV (1938) 417-19. The death of Cyrus while he was fighting on the northeastern front was probably reported in Babylon in August, 530, whereupon Cambyses was recognized as sole king.</p> <p><b>CAMBYES</b> <i>Evidence for Beginning of Reign</i> VI/12/acc. (Aug. 31, 530). Babylon (Strassmaier, <i>Cambyses</i>, No. 1). VI/16/acc. (Sept. 4, 530). Babylon (<i>ibid.</i> No. 2). VI/20/acc. (Sept. 8, 530). Babylon (<i>ibid.</i> No. 3). <i>Evidence for End of Reign</i> I/4; and 5/8 (Mar. 30; and 31, 522). Sippar (<i>ibid.</i> Nos. 407 and 408). I/12/8 (Apr. 7, 522). Uruk (Dougherty, <i>GCCI</i> II 106). I/10+4/8 (Apr. 5+x, 522). Nippur (Clay, <i>BE</i> VIII 1, No. 71). I/23/8 (Apr. 18, 522). Shahrinu (Strassmaier, <i>Cambyses</i>, No. 409). For the period from the death of Cambyses to the 2d year of Darius I consult the articles listed in the introduction to this section. Those articles are essential to an understanding of these complex years. As the evidence indicates, Cambyses was still recognized in April, 522. The Behistun inscription, § 11, seems to indicate that he did not die until after July 1, 522 (after IV/9/8). However, his successor, Bardiya, was certainly recognized in Babylonia already in months I and II (see under BARDIYA). <b>BARDIYA</b> (SMERDIS, GAUMATA) <i>Evidence for Beginning of Reign</i> XII/14/— (Mar. 11, 522). Bardiya revolts in Persia (Behistun, § 11).</p>	<p>I/19/1 (Apr. 14, 522). Hubadisha? (Strassmaier in <i>ZA</i> IV 123-25 and 148 f., No. 2). I/—/acc. (II began Apr. 25, 522). Babylon (<i>ibid.</i> pp. 123 and 147 f., No. 1). III/6/acc. (May 30, 522). Babylon (<i>VAS</i> IV 85). III/23/1 (June 16, 522). Sippar (Strassmaier in <i>ZA</i> IV 125 f. and 149, No. 3). IV/9/— (July 1, 522), entire empire seized by Bardiya (Behistun, § 11). On the confusion of accession year and year 1 in this reign see Cameron in <i>AYS</i> LVIII (1941) 314 f.</p> <p><i>Evidence for End of Reign</i> VI/20/1 (Sept. 9, 522). Babylon (Strassmaier in <i>ZA</i> IV 127 f. and 151 f., No. 8). VII/1/1 (Sept. 20, 522). Babylon (<i>ibid.</i> pp. 128 and 152, No. 9). VII/10/— (Sept. 29, 522). Bardiya killed by Darius (Behistun, § 13). <b>NEBUCHADNEZZAR III</b> (NIDINTU-BEL) <i>Evidence for Beginning of Reign</i> VII/14/— (Oct. 3, 522). Sippar (Strassmaier, <i>Nabuchodonosor</i>, No. 1, gives as 4th month; G. G. Cameron in <i>AYS</i> LVIII 317 f. suggests as probable an emendation to 7th; a recent collation by Sachs approves 7th as certain). VII/17/— (Oct. 6, 522). Babylon (Strassmaier, <i>Nabuchodonosor</i>, No. 3). VII/20/— (Oct. 9, 522). Babylon (<i>ibid.</i> No. 4). <i>Evidence for End of Reign</i> IX/7/— (Nov. 24, 522). Borsippa (K-rückmann, <i>NBRIT</i>, No. 6). IX/20/— (Dec. 7, 522). Babylon (Strassmaier, <i>Nabuchodonosor</i>, No. 9). IX/21/— (Dec. 8, 522). Babylon (<i>ibid.</i> No. 10). IX/26/— (Dec. 13, 522). Darius defeats Nebuchadnezzar III at the Tigris River (Behistun, § 18). X/2/— (Dec. 18, 522). Darius defeats Nebuchadnezzar at the Euphrates River near Zazannu. Shortly thereafter he captures and kills Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon (Behistun, §§ 19 and 20).</p> <p><b>DARIUS I</b> <i>Evidence for Beginning of Reign</i> X/6, 24, 25 and XI/6/acc. (Dec. 22, 522, and Jan. 9, 10, and 21, 521). Babylon (F. H. Weissbach, <i>Babylonische Miszellen</i> [Leipzig, 1903] Pl. 15, No. 3). These four dates are mentioned in the text, which is not dated but was probably written in month XI. Hence this text does not prove conclusively that Darius already held Babylon on December 22, 522. XI/20/acc. (Feb. 4, 521). Sippar (Strassmaier, <i>Darius</i>, No. 1). XI/25/acc. (Feb. 9, 521). Kutha (unpublished text, Oriental Institute A 729). Darius I continued to be recognized as king in Babylonia until VI/1/1 (Sept. 8, 521). Then came the revolt of Nebuchadnezzar IV. <i>Evidence for Beginning of Reign</i> VI/17/1 (Aug. 26, 521). Sippar (Strassmaier, <i>Darius</i>, No. 17). VI/18/1 (Aug. 27, 521). Sippar (<i>ibid.</i> No. 18). VI/1/1 (Sept. 8, 521) Sippar (<i>ibid.</i> No. 19).</p>

This publication by Parker and Dubberstein is cited by *Insight* as authoritative, and page 14 is specifically referred to.