

USSHER EXPLAINED AND CORRECTED

By Rodger C. Young

In 1650 and 1654 James Ussher, archbishop of Armagh in Ireland, published the two parts of his history of the world, extending from Creation until the time of the Roman emperor Vespasian. Both parts were in Latin. An English translation was made available in 1658, two years after Ussher's death. Bishop William Lloyd put Ussher's chronology, with some of his own modifications, in the margins of a 1701 edition of the Bible. For many years the King James Version was printed with these dates. This led many to believe that Ussher's dates were "the" Bible chronology, a position which is defended by some writers to this day.

We shall follow Ussher on the road of time to see how he handled the Bible's chronological data, starting with Creation, which he placed in 4004 BC, down to the Hebrew kingdom period. At that point we shall leave the good archbishop and his traveling companions as they journey farther on to the time of the end of the Jewish commonwealth at the hand of the Romans.

From Adam to the Exodus

Rapid progress can be made on the road from Adam to the Flood. Using the genealogical list in Genesis 5 as it appears in the Hebrew (Masoretic) text as his guide, Ussher calculated the date of the Flood as AM (*Anno Mundi*: year of the world) 1656, 2349 BC. After the Flood, the ages of the patriarchs at the birth of their son (not necessarily the firstborn¹) give AM 1878, 2126 BC for the birth of Terah, father of Abram (Abraham). A rough place in the road then appears. Genesis 11:26 says that after 70 years, Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Did Terah's wife have triplets, or did he have three wives who gave birth to three individuals in one year? How does this fit with Stephen's statement in Acts 7:4 that Abram, at age 75 (Gn 12:4) left Haran after the death of his father (at age 205), making Terah 130 years old when Abram was born? Ussher wisely decided that Abram, although named first, was not the first of the three sons to be born, thereby placing Abram's birth in Terah's 130th year, AM 2008.

After this there are good highway markers down to the entry of Jacob into Egypt. Isaac was born when Abram was 100, Jacob when Isaac was 60, and Jacob's descent into Egypt was at age 130 (Gn 21:5, 25:26, 47:9), in AM 2298. At this marker there is a fork in the road: how long were Jacob's descendants in Egypt? Exodus 12:40–41 says that the sojourning of the descendants of Israel who dwelt in Egypt was 430 years. At first reading, this would suggest 430 years from the time

Jacob's family entered Egypt. In Galatians 3:16–17, however, Paul says that the giving of the Law, which happened in the year of the Exodus, was 430 years after the promise to Abraham, or possibly after the confirmation of the promise. If the starting point of the 430 years is the original promise to Abraham, this reduces the time Israel spent in Egypt to 215 years (the Short Sojourn). If the 430 years measure from the giving of the Law back to when the promise was previously confirmed (προκεκυρωμένην, Gal 3:17) by its repetition to Jacob (Gn 46:2–4, 1 Chr 16:16, 17; Ps 105:9, 10), then the Exodus must be placed 430 years after Jacob's descent (the Long Sojourn).

The controversy of the Long Sojourn vs. the Short Sojourn continues to our day, and it is not our purpose to resolve it, but to follow Ussher on the fork he took. He decided on the Short Sojourn and the Exodus in AM 2513. Ussher gives the BC date for the Exodus as 1491 BC, but it must be remembered that his BC dates are measured upward from the chronology of the divided kingdom, while his AM dates are measured downward from Creation. If Ussher's dates for the kingdom period need adjustment, then his BC dates for the Exodus and all prior periods will also need adjustment.

The Divided Kingdom

After the Exodus and the subsequent 40 years of wilderness wandering, there is a text that allows an overflight of the hilly country and chronology of the Judges period. In 1 Kings 6:1, the beginning of construction of the Jerusalem temple is dated in the 480th year of the Exodus era, which was also the fourth year of King Solomon. For Israel, the departure from Egypt started a new era in their history. Events were dated from this event in Exodus 16:2, 19:1, Numbers 1:1, 9:1, 10:11, 33:38, Deuteronomy 1:3, and finally 1 Kings 6:1. When 1 Kings 6:1 relates that it was the 480th year of the "going-out" (Exodus), it means that 479 years passed from the departure from Egypt to the beginning of construction on Solomon's Temple. This date, spring of 967 BC as derived from the modern biblical-based chronology, is in quite exact agreement with the date that archival records of Tyre gave for that island city sending material to Solomon for building the Temple, as detailed in my article "Solomon and the Kings of Tyre" (*Bible and Spade*, Summer 2017).

967 BC, however, is 45 years later than Ussher's date for the start of Temple construction. Explaining the difference requires entering the forest of chronological data for the divided kingdom. Here it is regrettable that, instead of



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James Ussher (1581–1656) is mostly remembered for his *Annals of the World*, a history spanning from Creation to the first century AD, although he authored other scholarly works and was influential in the political and religious world of his time. The chronology of Ussher's *Annals*, with slight modifications, was published for many years in the margin of the King James Bible. This led many to think that Ussher's dates were part of, or a necessary inference from, the sacred text, to the exclusion of any other attempt to determine biblical dates.

continuing the yearly calendar of the Exodus era, the court recorders of Judah and Israel measured time by the reigns of their kings. Their records, preserved in the books of Kings and 2 Chronicles, provide the length of reign for each king, along with a cross-synchronization to the year of reign of the monarch in the rival kingdom. Consequently we enter not just a forest, but a thicket of numbers for the period of the divided monarchies. While these numbers give the impression that they were meant to be understood as providing precise chronological data, they have nevertheless proved difficult to put together into a coherent chronology.

To illustrate the problem, near the beginning of the period of interest (the divided monarchy), there are synchronizations of four of the northern kings with their rival, Asa of Judah. In 1 Kings 15:25, Nadab of Israel is said to have begun his reign in the second year of Asa. He reigned for two years, and was killed by Baasha in year three (not year four) of Asa (1 Kgs 15:28). Baasha's 24-year reign ended when he was succeeded by his son Elah in year 26 (not year 27 = 3 + 24) of Asa (1 Kgs 15:33, 16:8). To continue the confusion, Elah, after a reign of two years, was

killed by Zimri in Asa's 27th year (1 Kgs 16:10), and Zimri died after a reign of seven days, still in year 27 of Asa (1 Kgs 16:15).

These interesting data present a choice to the interpreter. Either they represent repeated mistakes by the writer(s) of 1 Kings, or they reveal a pattern that calls for further investigation. That pattern is explained by discoveries that show how the kings of the ancient Near East numbered the years of their regency. For some kings, the calendar year in which the king took office was counted twice: once for the new king and once for the king who died in that year. This may sound reasonable, but it introduces the problem that when reign lengths are added to give a span of time, one year must be subtracted from the total for each king to give the correct sum.

In contrast, a more reasonable method for anyone adding together reign lengths is to reckon the first partial year as the king's "accession year" and not add it into the total of years. In modern terms, it could be called "year zero." With this method, years of several kings can be added together without having to subtract a year all along the line to get a correct total. This "accession year" method is contrasted with the "non-accession" method mentioned in the preceding paragraph. Assuming that Israel was using non-accession counting for its kings explains the four synchronizations between Israel and the reign of Asa.

This conclusion was established by Valerius Coucke in his studies of biblical chronology published in the 1920s.² It was independently discovered by Edwin Thiele, who was not aware of Coucke's work when he first published his chronology of the kingdom period in 1944.³ Proof of Coucke and Thiele's conclusion was shown when Thiele listed the lengths of reigns of the first seven kings of Israel down to the death of Ahab. If it was assumed that both kingdoms were using accession reckoning, the sum of years for Israel came out six years longer than the sum for Judah.⁴ When non-accession reckoning was assumed for Israel, the numbers matched exactly, showing that Judah was using accession reckoning and Israel was using non-accession reckoning, at least for the initial period of the divided monarchies.

Such a success would have given Thiele or anyone else encouragement to continue their investigation. Before going on, however, an important observation should be made: Jeroboam, first ruler over the northern ten tribes, is shown to be an innovator. He had changed from the Judean system by reckoning his reign according to the non-accession method used in Egypt, where he had fled for refuge after fleeing from Solomon (1 Kgs 11:40), rather than the accession method used in Judah. Another of Jeroboam's innovations was the institution of a religious festival on the 15th day of the eighth month (1 Kgs 12:32) to rival the Feast of Tabernacles on the 15th day of the seventh month of the Mosaic legislation. Jeroboam's willingness to change accepted practice needs to be taken into account, instead of assuming that chronological methods were necessarily the same in both kingdoms. A further novelty was his starting the regnal year in Nisan instead of in Tishri as in the southern kingdom. This six-month offset explains what would otherwise be minor mismatches in synchronizing links between the two kingdoms. Since the month in which the year began is a controversial subject, the



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Edwin R. Thiele (1895–1986) determined the various principles used by the recorders of Israel and Judah in recording the lengths of reigns of their kings. He used these principles to construct the pattern of biblical dates for the Hebrew kingdom period. Having established the pattern, he then tried to match it against certain accepted dates in Assyrian history, only to find that there were small discrepancies with dates accepted by most Assyriologists. Further research showed it was the commonly accepted Assyrian dates, not the biblical data, that needed adjustment. The majority of Assyriologists have now accepted corrections that were originally derived from Thiele's careful study of the biblical data. Egyptologists use Thiele's dates for Rehoboam, son of Solomon, along with the synchronism of 2 Chronicles 12:2, to refine the chronologies of Egypt's 21st and 22nd Dynasties.

demonstration that Judah's regnal year started in Tishri will be deferred to a later section.

Doubtless encouraged by his success in understanding the early years of the divided monarchy, Thiele went on to construct the chronology of the kingdom period down to its end at the hand of the Babylonians. It is important to see how he did this. He avoided the temptation to start with accepted dates in Assyrian or Babylonian history and then derive a biblical chronology from those dates. Instead, he began with the biblical data and sought to determine if they fit into a pattern that was harmonious, without assigning the pattern to any dates from secular history. In Thiele's own words,

... no dates were used in the early pattern that I produced. In this way I eliminated the inclination, as certain fairly well established dates in Hebrew history were being approached, to endeavor to modify the pattern one way or another to cause it to conform to preconceived ideas of what it ought to be at those points. ... The aim was to produce a system, if possible, in which the reigns of the kings were arranged in harmony with the data on both the synchronisms and the lengths of reign. Then, on the completion of such a pattern, I meant to test the results by a comparison with the established dates of contemporary history.⁵

All biblical chronologies must tie into a fixed point in order to establish absolute (BC) dates. Those of Ussher and Thiele are no exceptions. Thiele chose the Battle of Qarqar, at which Shalmaneser III listed Ahab of Israel as one of his opponents in Shalmaneser's sixth year. Shalmaneser's Black Obelisk also portrays the receipt of tribute from Jehu of Israel 12 years later, nicely corroborating the 12 years by Israel's non-accession counting from the death of Ahab until the beginning of the reign of Jehu in Thiele's chronology, assuming that Ahab died shortly after the Battle of Qarqar.⁶

At the time Thiele began his investigations, the majority of Assyriologists accepted 854 BC as the date of the Battle of Qarqar. When Thiele used this date for the battle and Ahab's subsequent death at Ramoth-Gilead in the same year, he found that the chronology he had derived from biblical reign lengths and synchronisms did not match the important synchronism between Hezekiah's 14th year and the invasion of Sennacherib, which was quite firmly fixed by Assyrian data as occurring in 701 BC. Many would, at that point, say that the biblical data were not exact. For Thiele it seemed hard to believe that the consistent pattern he had discovered in the biblical data could be in error by as much as one year. He therefore investigated the reasons that Assyriologists assigned 854 BC to the Battle of Qarqar. He found a minority opinion, espoused by some European scholars, that the battle was in 853, not 854. After a study of various copies of the Assyrian Eponym Canon from which this date was derived, as well as the Khorsabad King List that had recently been published, he established the shorter chronology as the correct one, and published the revised Assyrian Eponym Canon—the very backbone of Assyrian chronology—in all three editions of *Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*. Thiele's revision of the Assyrian Eponym Canon is now accepted by virtually all Assyriologists.

There were other changes in Assyrian and Babylonian dates that Thiele found were required if those dates were to match the chronology he derived from the Bible. These are explained in a survey article by his colleague Kenneth Strand. One change explained by Strand is that Thiele's biblical chronology required that Samaria and its king Hoshea fell to the Assyrians in 723 BC. Strand summarized the situation that confronted Thiele as follows:

When Thiele entered into his chronological chart the date for the fall of Samaria and the dethronement of Hoshea, the Hebrew Northern Kingdom's last monarch, he was surprised to find that in his sequential pattern of biblical dates the year turned out to be 723 B.C., not 722 or 721. Virtually every important scholar who dealt with the history of the ancient Near East believed, on the basis of Assyrian records, that Sargon II, who acceded to the Assyrian throne toward the end of December 722, was the monarch who defeated Hoshea and brought the northern Hebrew nation to its end. ... And once more he [Thiele] turned his attention to the pertinent Assyrian data, noting also that at least one prominent Assyriologist, Albert T. Olmstead, had already adopted 723 as the correct date.⁷



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The Iran Stela. When virtually all Assyriologists were sure that Tiglath-Pileser III received tribute from Menahem of Israel in 738 BC, it must have seemed very bold, even foolhardy, for Edwin Thiele to claim that this date could not be correct because it did not agree with the biblical data. Thiele had such confidence in the historical accuracy of the Bible's numbers for the kingdom period that he concluded that the Assyrian tribute list from which Assyriologists drew their conclusion about the tribute must be a summary list, rather than a year-by-year account. The publication of the text of the Iran Stela, eight years after Thiele's death, vindicated Thiele's contention that Tiglath-Pileser registered Menahem's tribute in a summary list. The tribute therefore could have been given any time between 745 BC and 742/41 BC, Thiele's year for Menahem's death. These dates, however, along with the years of reign of Tiglath-Pileser (745 to 727 BC), are incompatible with Ussher's years for Menahem, 772 to 761 BC, partly because of Ussher's unwarranted interregnum between Pekah and Hoshea, last kings of Israel.



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Valerius Coucke (1888–1951) was a Belgian scholar, priest, and professor at the Grootseminarie Brugge (Grand Séminaire de Bruges) in the 1920s. From the biblical data, Coucke derived the same basic principles that Thiele developed some years later without having read Coucke—coregencies and rival reigns, accession and non-accession years, Nisan regnal years for Israel and Tishri years for Judah, and a switch of Judah to non-accession years in the ninth century BC. Coucke determined that the kingdom divided in the year beginning in Nisan of 931 BC, in exact agreement with Thiele's date, although Coucke's method of determining the date was radically different from Thiele's. Coucke's years for Solomon, one year earlier than Thiele's, have been verified by their agreement with the Jubilee and Sabbatical cycles.²¹ His date for the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians, summer of 587 BC, is in agreement with all the biblical texts involved,²² in contrast to the dates of Thiele (586 BC) and Ussher (588 BC).

Thiele's conclusion in this regard, against the opinion of almost all Assyriologists, was validated fourteen years later, when, in 1958, Hayim Tadmor published a study of Sargon's annalistic records that showed that he did not engage in any military activity in the west (i.e. toward Israel) until 720 BC.⁸

What needs to be recognized is that Thiele was correcting Assyrian dates with eminent scholarship that has been recognized as such by the Assyrian academy, and these corrections were based on the biblical data.

Another challenge to Thiele's chronology came from the date of tribute of Menahem of Samaria to Tiglath-Pileser III (2 Kgs 15:19–20). Thiele's dates for Menahem, 752 to 742/41, were not consistent with the date that most Assyriologists gave for the tribute, 738 BC. The Assyriologists' date was based on an inscription from late in Tiglath-Pileser's reign that listed tributary kings, including Menahem, just before an entry relating events in the monarch's ninth year, 737 BC. The assumption was made that the tributes were all given in the preceding year. But this would not necessarily follow if the list was a summary list, such as were common in the ancient Near East. Thiele, still confident in his chronology based on the Bible, maintained that the list of tribute payers must be a

summary list, so that Menahem's tribute was made before his death in 742/41 BC. Thiele's position was vindicated with the publication of the Iran Stela of Tiglath-Pileser in 1994, eight years after Thiele's death in 1986. The Iran Stela has a tribute list similar to the one published earlier, and in this case it is definitely a summary list, meaning that the date of the tribute could be any time between the first year of Tiglath-Pileser, 745 BC, and the year before the Iran Stela was erected in 737 BC. Additional evidence that at least some of the tribute should be dated earlier than 738 came from the mention of tribute from Tuba'il (=Ithobaal II) of Tyre. Hayim Tadmor argued that Tuba'il's successor was on the throne of Tyre in 738 BC, implying that the tribute from Tyre, and probably from Menahem also, was earlier than 738.⁹ Once again, Thiele's biblical chronology went against the accepted view of most Assyriologists, and when new evidence appeared, it vindicated Thiele.

The research of Thiele has been dealt with at some length because it presents a challenge to the chronology of Archbishop Ussher. The chief modern proponents of the Ussherian chronology are Larry and Marion Pierce, who have published a beautiful edition of Ussher's *Annals of the World*, with editing of the 17th-century English of the original version and explanatory discourses,¹⁰ and Floyd Nolen Jones, who collaborated with the Pierces but who also published his own work, *The Chronology of the Old Testament*,¹¹ that revises slightly Ussher's chronology. Since Ussher's dates increasingly diverge from those of Thiele for the period just preceding the fall of Samaria and earlier, it was incumbent on Ussher's modern advocates to address Thiele's scholarship. How they did this is very unfortunate, as shown in the following quotes.

First, from Floyd Nolen Jones:

"[Thiele] did not honor the Hebrew Scriptures. He did not even come close. Careful study reveals that his faith and loyalty were totally to the Assyrian Eponym List (to be addressed presently). When the Hebrew Text did not directly fit into the Assyrian chronological scheme, it was contorted and disfigured until it apparently confirmed."¹²

"That Thiele placed the Assyrian data as his infallible guide over the Scriptures is his own choosing . . . it is a decision for which he and all others who follow his example must give an account . . ."¹³

"Dr. Thiele . . . held to the Assyrian data as his certain guide rather than the Scriptures (though all the while professing to honor them) . . ."¹⁴

"Thiele's chronology tortures and contorts the Hebrew record in order to make it fit the Assyrian framework."¹⁵

". . . the lengths Thiele went, as well as all who have walked in his footsteps, in unashamedly perverting Scripture."¹⁶

"The net result of all this is that some have reduced the actual length of the Kingdom of Judah's existence by 30 years, and as much as 44 (E.R. Thiele) and even as much as 53 years (William F. Albright). These men, including Christian scholars, feel completely justified in this wicked practice . . ."¹⁷

And, from Larry Pierce:

"We will show how Thiele has massaged the biblical data to make it fit with the current understanding of Assyrian chronology."¹⁸

"The latest reconstruction by Thiele is but one of many attempts in the last 100 years to adjust the biblical account to match the current conjectured chronology of the Assyrians. Thiele very creatively manipulated the biblical data to eliminate about 40 years of history."¹⁹

"For Thiele used the supposed dates from Assyrian chronology, which allegedly intersect with the biblical chronology, to force-fit the biblical data into the mould of secular chronology."²⁰

It is almost incredible that such statements could be made in light of the background to Thiele's work that was documented above. Dr. Jones and the Pierces show familiarity with Thiele's writings, quoting him frequently, sometimes out of context. Thiele was not infallible; his failure to recognize a coregency between Hezekiah and Ahaz led him into his greatest error, but many reviewers of *Mysterious Numbers* pointed out that such a coregency was entirely consistent with the basic principles that guided him. His error with respect to Hezekiah, however, can never justify the quotes just cited in misguided attempts to justify the Ussherian system. Is it too much to ask for a public recantation of these statements so they will no longer mislead those who have not read Thiele?

The Assyrian Data

The Iran Stela serves another purpose in understanding Ussher's chronology. As mentioned above, Thiele's dates for Menahem are 752 to 742/41, allowing the tribute to Tiglath-Pileser to have been given at any time from 745, the Assyrian's accession year, to 742/41. Ussher's dates for Menahem are 772 to 761; Jones varies only slightly, 772 to 762. These dates are inconsistent with Menahem giving tribute to Tiglath-Pileser, although the tribute is mentioned both in the Bible (2 Kgs 15:19) and in Assyrian inscriptions. How do Ussher's defenders explain the contradiction?

Jones maintains that the "Pul" who received tribute from Menahem in 2 Kings 15:19 was not Tiglath-Pileser, but Asshur-Dan III, whose dates of reign are 772-755 BC. His justification is that these dates agree with Ussher's years for Menahem. He is unable to cite any Babylonian or Assyrian text where Asshur-Dan III was called Pul. In contrast, Babylonian and Phoenician inscriptions show that Pul was another name for Tiglath-Pileser III.²³ Jones also maintains that, because the annals ascribed to Tiglath-Pileser were found in a jumbled state, the inscription mentioning Menahem's tribute may have come from Asshur-Dan III. He writes: "Thus, there is no Assyrian historical text which says or even infers that Tiglath-pileser collected tribute from Menahem of Israel, although almost all scholarly sources proclaim that he so did."²⁴

The falseness of Jones's statement has already been established: the Iran Stela, which contains information similar to the annals found at Tiglath-Pileser's palace in Calah, names Tiglath-Pileser as receiving tribute from Menahem of Samaria. The text of the Iran Stela was published in 1994. Dr. Jones therefore had adequate time to retract his statement about Tiglath-Pileser before he issued the revised edition of *The Chronology of the Old Testament* in 2005. Such an admission of error is not found in the revised edition.

Jones devotes considerable effort to discredit any and all of the Assyrian data from the time of Tiglath-Pileser and earlier. He disparages the Assyrian Eponym Canon and its year-by-year account. His tirade against all Assyrian data, pp. 145–160 of *Chronology of the OT*, should be compared with Thiele's reasoned and well-documented discussion of the multiple sources that corroborate the accuracy of the Assyrian Eponym Canon in the period of most interest for verifying or contradicting Ussher's chronology, i.e. the eighth and ninth centuries BC.²⁵ The tribute of Menahem to Tiglath-Pileser makes havoc of Jones's whole endeavor, because if Ussher's dates for Menahem are twenty years too early, as has been proved by Menahem's contact with Tiglath-Pileser III, then Jones's (and Ussher's) reconstruction of the dates of the earlier monarchs, both Assyrian and Hebrew, collapses.

Dr. Jones and the Pierces have made further extensive attempts to denigrate any Assyrian data that contradict Ussher's chronology, such as the presence of Ahab as a foe of Shalmaneser III at the Battle of Qarqar and the tribute from Jehu in Shalmaneser's 18th year, as recorded on the Black Obelisk. Ussher's dates for Ahab, 918 to 897 BC, are too early for the accepted dates for Shalmaneser, 859 to 824 BC, so Ussher's advocates cast doubt on both the legitimacy of these contacts and the conventional dates for Shalmaneser. Extensive space will not be devoted here to defending the scholarship that has established the Assyrian dates. Attention will be focused, instead, on explaining why Ussher's dates for Israel's monarchic period ended up progressively earlier than those of Thiele and modern scholarship. In that endeavor, it will be shown even if all the Assyrian data were ignored, Ussher's chronology of the eighth and ninth centuries BC requires an interpretation of certain biblical texts that cannot be sustained.

Before those texts are examined, some general comments on Ussher's method are in order. Ussher was not hostile to "secular" data. His *Annals* has more material taken from classical writers than from the Bible. Moses and the events of the Exodus occupy 26 pages in the Pierce edition. The history of our Lord takes up 21 pages. Compare this to the coverage given to Alexander the Great: 87 pages. Ussher, in common with other scholars of his age, was able to read the classic Greek and Latin histories and biographies in their original language, and he endeavored to make this information available to the English-speaking world, much as Rollin did for the French-speaking world. The biblical history was important to him, of course, and he fully included the Bible's history as part of his writing. But as suggested by the page count above, he was interested in far more history than was contained in the sacred record.

For a chronology of world history, the Bible offers a framework that extends back to the beginning, whereas most Greek and Latin authors could only extend their chronologies back to the 13th or 12th century BC (Trojan War), with uncertainty prevailing before that time. Further, the great decipherments that were to allow reading of Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, and other texts from the ancient Near East had not yet taken place, and so the archaeological findings that have informed our knowledge of ancient times were unavailable to Ussher. For the early periods before Herodotus and other Greek historians, he therefore quite naturally used the Bible to construct a chronology for those times. In this, he was following in the footsteps of Eusebius of Caesarea (ca. AD 260–340) and Julius Africanus (ca. AD 160–240), who also used the Bible's chronological data to give a framework for their histories of the world. All three of these Christian historians extensively used material from "pagan" (i.e. non-Christian and non-Jewish) writers in their histories.

Would Ussher have used findings from ancient Assyrian inscriptions if they were available to him? We would like to think so, especially if they helped resolve problems that he struggled with in putting together his biblical chronology. Some of the problems are reflected in the minor inconsistencies in his work; these will be discussed in the next section. Two problems, however, were major. Since the resolution of Ussher's minor problems gets somewhat technical, that section can be skipped over by anyone who is not interested in the fine details of how ancient recorders measured the years of their kings. The major problems can be understood without reference to these fine details. They will be discussed in the section labeled "Ussher's Gaps."

Tishri Years and Other Small Matters

Apparently influenced by a statement in the Babylonian Talmud that regnal years were measured from Nisan,²⁶ Ussher used Nisan 1 as the beginning of the year for both Hebrew kingdoms. Nisan is a lunar month that began, as far as can be determined, at the first new moon after the spring equinox. The Talmud, and the Mishnah upon which it is based, were compiled several hundred years after the last native king had ruled in Judah. Ussher acknowledged that there was a tradition of an older year that began in the lunar month Tishri that started after the fall equinox and which Josephus said was used for affairs other than the observance of the religious festivals (Josephus, *Antiq.* 1.1.3/1.81). Ussher's AM years start with Tishri.

Along with the AM year, Ussher added precision to his dates as follows. If he thought an event happened in the fall, an "a" was suffixed to the AM date; for winter, "b"; for spring, "c"; and for summer, "d". He also gave the BC year, so that his heading for the day that Israel left Egypt in the Exodus is 2513c AM, 3223 JP, 1491 BC. This means that it was the 2513th year as measured from Ussher's date of creation (1a AM, 4004 BC), the spring, Julian year 3223 (a year used by astronomers), and in 1491 BC. When the suffix to the AM is "a" for fall, the BC year and the AM year add to 4005. For the other suffixes (winter, spring, summer), Ussher's BC year and AM year always add to 4004.

Although Ussher started the regnal years of the divided kingdom on 1 Nisan, he continued to measure AM dates from the alternate ancient year starting in Tishri. This produces a peculiarity in Ussher's system for the kingdom period. Suppose that a king died in the winter season of 810 BC, a few days or up to 3 months before the first of Nisan. Ussher would write the date heading as 3194b AM, 810 BC. However, the regnal year for that king would have started in Nisan of the preceding year, 811 BC. This is the way Hebrew court recorders would view the year, having no knowledge of course of our modern January-based calendar. A more accurate way to express this would be to write the year of the king's death as 811n, where the "n" indicates measurement according to a Nisan-based year that began in 811 BC. This more exact notation allows easier calculation of the years between events and comparison of Ussher's numbers with reign lengths and synchronisms given in the Bible. Tables 1 and 2 use this convention, giving Ussher's dates for the divided kingdom in terms of the Nisan-based years that he assumed for both realms, along with his AM dates.

The last two columns of the tables are for comparing Ussher's reign lengths with those given in the Bible. The differences are numerous. Differences marked with an asterisk represent cases where, if Ussher had understood non-accession reckoning (which he did not), his reign lengths and those of the Bible would be reconciled. In the rightmost column for the Bible's reign lengths, a number followed by another number in parentheses indicates that the figure is by non-accession counting; it has already been remarked that this was the case for the first kings of Israel, thereby reconciling their dates with those of their rivals in Judah.

Coucke and Thiele independently determined that Judah was following a Tishri-based calendar while Israel started its calendar year in Nisan. Modern studies that build on this principle have been able to resolve the small errors that occur in any study which insists that both kingdoms used the same calendar. Thiele used two examples to show that Judah's regnal calendar started in Tishri. The second example is the easier to explain. Josiah, in his 18th year of reign, began a project to cleanse the Temple. Accounting practices were set up; workmen were hired, and dressed stone and timber were cut and gathered. These were not the activities of just two or three days, or even two or three weeks. In the process of cleansing the Temple, the Book of the Law was found, after which Josiah summoned the elders of Judah and Jerusalem from throughout the land—an activity that would have taken several days or some weeks. After the elders met together, Josiah again sent messages throughout the kingdom commanding the people to come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover; it was still his 18th year (2 Kgs 23:23). These

Ussher's Dates for the Kings of Judah

<i>King</i>	<i>Reigned (AM years)</i>	<i>Reigned (Nisan years)</i>	<i>Length of reign (Ussher)</i>	<i>Length of reign (Bible)</i>
Solomon cor. Solomon sole	2989c–2990a 2990a–3029b	1015n–1015n 1015n–976n	6 mo 39*	not given 40 (total?) ²⁷
Rehoboam	3029b–3046c	976n–958n	--18--	17
Abijah	3046c–3049b ²⁸	958n–956n	--2--	3
Asa	3049b–3090b	956n–915n	41	41
Jehoshaphat	3090b–3115c	915n–889n	--26--	25 (24)
Jehoram vic. Jehoram cor. Jehoram sole	3106d–3112c 3112c–3115c 3115c–3119c	898n–892n 892n–889n 889n–885n	6 vic 3 cor 7 with cor*	-- -- 8 (7)
Ahaziah cor. Ahaziah sole	3118d–3119c 3119c–3120c	886n–885n 885n–884n	1 cor 1	1 (0)
Athaliah	3120c–3126c	884n–878n	6*	7 (6)
Joash	3126c–3165c	878n–839n	39*	40 (39)
Amaziah	3165c–3194c	839n–810n	29	29
Uzziah	3194c–3246a	810n–759n	51*	52 (51)
Jotham	3246a–3262b	759n–743n	16	16 (15)
Ahaz	3262b–3287b	743n–727n	16	16
Hezekiah cor. Hezekiah sole	3277c–3278b 3278b–3306c	727n–727n 727n–698n	9 mo cor 29	29
Manasseh	3306c–3361c	698n–643n	55	55 (54)
Amon	3361c–3363c	643n–641n	2	2
Josiah	3363c–3394c	641n–610n	31	31
Jehoahaz	3394c–3394d	610n–610n	3 mo	3 mo
Jehoiakim	3394d–3405c	610n–599n	11	11
Jehoiachin	3405c–3405d	599n–599n	3 mo 10 d	3 mo 10 d
Zedekiah	3405d–3416d	599n–588n	11	11 (10)

Table 1. In column 4, the length of reign is calculated based on Ussher's beginning and ending dates for the king. In the same column, an asterisk represents values that could be reconciled by the non-accession counting used in the ancient Near East, but of which Ussher had no knowledge. Ussher's years of reign that cannot be reconciled with the Bible's exact dates are shown in bold between dashes.

activities could fit into Josiah's 18th year if the year started in Tishri, but they could not fit into the short time from Nisan 1 to the start of Passover, 13 days later, if his 18th year began on Nisan 1. Ussher realized this was impossible, and so he moved the start of Temple cleansing back one year, into the 17th year of Josiah. But this contradicts 2 Kings 22:3, whereas a Tishri regnal year for Judah explains the relevant texts instead of contradicting them as in Ussher's system.³³

Another demonstration that Israel and Judah were using different starting months for the reigns of their kings follows from the statistics for Abijah in the southern kingdom. As demonstrated above, Judah was using accession years during this time while Israel was using non-accession years. According to 1 Kings 15:1, 2, 9, Abijah began to reign in the 18th year of Jeroboam, reigned three years, and then died in the 20th year of Jeroboam. Abijah's reign must have included three start-of-year dates; otherwise he would not have been given three years of reign. During those three years Jeroboam only crossed over two start-of-year dates in progressing from his 18th to his 20th year. It makes no difference that Israel's

Ussher's Dates for the Kings of Israel

<i>King</i>	<i>Reigned (AM years)</i>	<i>Reigned (Nisan years)</i>	<i>Length of reign (Ussher)</i>	<i>Length of reign (Bible)</i>
Jeroboam I	3029b–3050d	976n–954n	22	22 (21)
Nadab	3050d–3051d	954n–953n	1*	2 (1)
Baasha	3051d–3074d	953n–930n	23*	24 (23)
Elah	3074d–3075d	930n–929n	1*	2 (1)
Zimri	3075d–3075d	929n–929n	7 days	7 days
Tibni rival	3075d–3079d	929n–925n	4	not given
Omri rival	3075d–3079d	929n–925n	4*	12 (11)
Omri sole	3079d–3086d	925n–918n	7*	total
Ahab	3086d–3107d	918n–897n	21*	22 (21)
Ahaziah cor. Ahaziah sole	3106d–3107d 3107d–3108b	898n–897n 897n–897n	1 cor 0	-- 2 (1)
Joram	3108b ²⁹ –3120b	897n–885n	12	12 (11)
Jehu	3120b–3148c	885n–856n	--29-- ³⁰	28 (27)
Jehoahaz	3148c–3165c	856n–839n	17	17 (16)
Jehoash cor. Jehoash sole	3163b–3165c 3165c–3179c	842n–839n 839n–825n	3 cor --17 total--	-- 16
Jer II cor. Jer II sole	3168c–3179c 3179c–3220	836n–825n 825n–784n	11 41	not given 41 (40)
Interregnum	3220–3232a	784n–773n	--11--	
Zechariah	3232a–3232c	773n–772n	6 mo	6 mo
Shallum	3232c–3232c	772n–772n	1 mo	1 mo
Menahem	3232c–3243c	772n–761n	--11-- ³¹	10
Pekahiah	3243c–3245c	761n–759n	2	2
Pekah	3245c–3265c	759n–739n	20	20
Interregnum	3265c–3274b	739n–731n	--8--	
Hoshea	3274b–3283b	731n–722n ³²	9	9

Table 2. For an explanation of the conventions used, see the text and the caption for Table 1. The consistent one-year discrepancies in the first rows of column 4 are reconciled by taking into account Israel's non-accession reckoning for its first kings. Not realizing this, Ussher thought that the Bible's numbers were only approximate.

years were by non-accession reckoning; it is still two years from Jeroboam's 18th year to his 20th whichever of the two methods is used. Abijah celebrated three first-of-Tishri anniversaries, giving him three years of reign, but he only saw two firsts-of-Nisan during that time, dying in the six-month period before Jeroboam's 21st year anniversary on Nisan 1. The Bible is exact here, as it is everywhere in the chronology of the kingdom period. Such accuracy could not have been made up by a late-date editor. Those who do not recognize that the two kingdoms did not start the regnal year in the same month always produce chronologies that are in error for the reign of Abijah.³⁴

There is one argument for a Nisan-based year for Judah that initially appears compelling: it is that the Bible usually gives the number of the month instead of the month name, and the numbering always implies that Nisan was the first month. Although it is true that month numbers start with Nisan, that does not rule out different starting months for other activities. (The Talmud, *Rosh HaShanah* 2a, lists four "new years," each starting in a different month.) We might imagine that the same

argument about months always numbering from Nisan could be used by someone in our own day who has read the Bible but who is ignorant of modern Jewish practice. This imaginary scholar would say that it is impossible that the Jewish community starts the year in Tishri, because their sacred book requires that Nisan is the first month, as plainly stated in Exodus 12:2. So it would be "proven" that the Jewish New Year is observed on Nisan 1, not on Rosh HaShanah, Tishri 1.

In 153 BC, Roman consuls began to take office on January 1 instead of in the spring on March 1, which was when the calendar year began.³⁵ This eventually led to January 1 being recognized as the beginning of the Roman year. As a consequence, September, the seventh month (Latin *septem*, seven) became the ninth month; October (*octo*, eight) became the 10th month, November (*novem*, nine) the 11th, and December (*decem*, ten) the 12th. We can be sure that the Romans continued to use the old month numbers because this usage has continued to our present day. Anyone who thinks that month numbering always has to coincide with the realities of the calendar should stop calling the ninth month September.

Ussher realized that Abijah presented a challenge to his chronology. In an attempt to get Abijah's three years of reign to harmonize with his starting in Jeroboam's 18th year and dying in Jeroboam's 20th, he stated that Abijah began "in the beginning of the eighteenth year of Jeroboam's reign" and that he ended "at the very end of the twentieth year of Jeroboam's reign." Ussher was trying to squeeze three years into two. By attempting to do so here and elsewhere, he showed that he thought that the Bible's chronological figures were only approximate. However, this is not the way court records were kept in the ancient

Near East, where years of reign were used for legal contracts and other matters and therefore had to be precise. It is difficult to conceive that the Author of the Bible would go to such lengths in giving us the abundant and complex chronological data for the kingdom period while at the same time His figures were not as accurate, according to Ussher, as those of Israel's contemporaries in the surrounding nations. Accepting a Tishri-based regnal year for Judah eliminates such inaccuracies and shows that the Bible's figures are indeed exact.

It is difficult to conceive that the Author of the Bible would go to such lengths in giving us the abundant and complex chronological data for the kingdom period while at the same time His figures were not as accurate, according to Ussher, as those of Israel's contemporaries in the surrounding nations.

Ussher's Gaps

Ussher's First Gap: After Jeroboam II of Israel

By a careful study of all the biblical data for Judean and Israelite kings in the eighth century BC, Thiele concluded that there was a coregency between Uzziah of Judah and his father Amaziah. In the third edition of *Mysterious Numbers*, Thiele determined that the coregency lasted 24 years, whereas he had determined 23 years in the second edition. Twenty-three years is the number calculated by McFall and myself, and this number will be used in what follows.

Coregencies were well known in the ancient Near East and the possibility that a given reign length or synchronism is measured from the start of a coregency, rather than from the start of a sole reign, should always be taken into consideration, unless something like assassination by a usurper rules against it. When Rehoboam was not firmly established on the throne at the death of Solomon, the ensuing disaster served as a warning to all subsequent Judean monarchs that they needed to clearly establish the authority of an heir-designate before their own death.

In addition to the general wisdom of this policy, the state of affairs described in 2 Kings 14:8–14 presented an urgent reason for Amaziah to name a coregent before he embarked on a war with Jehoash of Israel. A reading of the 2 Kings passage suggests he had not done that. In the war, Jehoash captured Amaziah and held him captive for an unspecified length of time. The brief comment in 2 Kings 14:21 that it was the people of the land, and not Amaziah himself, who made Uzziah king (coregent) at the young age of 16, suggests that it was during the time of Amaziah's captivity that the people took this step. The historical context then explains the necessity of the coregency. Nevertheless, the primary reason for accepting it is the harmony it brings to the dates of the two kingdoms during this period of history.

Not accepting a coregency between Amaziah and Uzziah produces the following problem. Amaziah began to reign in the second year of Jehoash of Israel (2 Kgs 14:1). Jehoash reigned 14 more years, followed by his son Jeroboam II, who reigned 41 years until replaced by his son Zechariah, a total of 55 years. On the Judean side, Amaziah reigned 29 years, and it was in his son Uzziah's 38th year that Zechariah of Israel came to the throne, a total of 67 years. The problem facing chronologists is to explain the 12-year discrepancy with the 55 years measured from the Israelite side.

Ussher did it by introducing an interregnum: although Zechariah came to the throne in Uzziah's 38th year (773n), Ussher maintained that his father Jeroboam had died 11 years earlier, in 784n, and an interregnum intervened. Thiele had no need of an interregnum. He accepted a coregency between Amaziah and Uzziah, reducing the count of years from Amaziah's accession to the 38th year of Uzziah by 23 years to 44 years on the Judean side. On the Israelite side, his acceptance of an 11-year coregency of Jehoash and Jeroboam II reduced the years to the accession of Zechariah from 55 to 44 years, the same as for the Judean reckoning. Although Ussher accepted the 11-year Jehoash/Jeroboam coregency, he

could not reduce the reckoning for these kings by that amount, because to do so would make the disparity even worse (34 years instead of 23).

There is no hint of an interregnum in the passages in 2 Kings dealing with Jeroboam II and Zechariah. In contrast, the Amaziah/Uzziah coregency is suggested by the various circumstances related in 2 Kings 14: the need for a coregent when Amaziah was captured by Jehoash, and the fact that it was the people of the land, not Amaziah, who appointed Uzziah at age 16. The curious remark that it was "after the death of his father" that Uzziah rebuilt Elath (2 Kgs 14:22) puzzled rabbinic exegetes as seemingly unnecessary, but it is explained by the coregency: Uzziah had performed other kingly acts before his father died.

Because of the lack of biblical support for an interregnum and its necessity only when accepting Ussher's chronology, many have felt uncomfortable with the idea that there was a time when no king was on the throne of Israel. The discomfort is not limited to Ussher's critics. Floyd Nolen Jones also had his reservations and sought for an alternative explanation. Examining the interpretation of 2 Kings 15:8 by Ussher and Jones, we have the following:

2 Kings 15:8 in Bible (KJV):
"In the thirty and eighth year of Azariah king of Judah did Zachariah the son of Jeroboam reign over Israel in Samaria six months."
2 Kings 15:8 in Ussher (AM 3220)
"When Jeroboam II died, the kingdom seriously declined...All was reduced to anarchy among the Israelites for eleven and a half years, and there was no king during this time."
2 Kings 15:8 in Jones (p. 144b)
"Thus the justified conclusion may be reached that 2 Kings 15:8 is not speaking of the total length of his [Zachariah's] regime but rather is merely giving the data for establishing the <i>termination</i> of both his personal reign and that of the Jehuic dynasty . . ."

There is no indication in the Bible that the kingdom of Israel seriously declined after the death of Jeroboam II, as Ussher states. Jones argues that because the King James Version does not say that Zechariah "began to reign" in 2 Kings 15:8, therefore he did not begin his kingship in the 38th year of Azariah (Uzziah), but actually began to reign 12 years earlier, covering in this way Ussher's awkward 11-year interregnum. But the Hebrew word *malak* that the KJV translates as "did reign" in 2 Kings 15:8 is exactly the word that is translated as "began to reign" in 65 other texts of the King James Version. Hebrew does not have tenses in the sense that we understand tenses in Indo-European languages; it is up to the translator to render the finer nuances of tense when handling the Hebrew text. *Malak* can mean "reigned," "began to reign," or even "had reigned" in English translation. The translator is free to choose any of these, based on context. Jones's argument, then, cannot be sustained.

Ussher was not opposed to positing coregencies in order to harmonize otherwise discordant texts. He used a coregency between Jehoash and Jeroboam II as part of his construction of

the chronology of the ninth century BC, and he found them in four places for Judah and two other places in Israel (see Tables 1 and 2). If a modern interpreter wanted to do justice to Ussher's intent, he or she should recognize that Ussher overlooked an alternative that was consistent with his principles, but which was discovered by later scholarship. Accepting that this was an oversight on Ussher's part would be true to that great scholar's original intent. The abandonment of the mistaken interregnum between Jeroboam II and his son should therefore be adopted by all those who seek to do Ussher justice, even if the consequence will be that it will bring his chronology closer to that of modern scholarship...and (perish the thought!) even begin to reconcile the chronology with firmly established Assyrian and Babylonian dates.

Ussher's Second Gap: After Pekah of Israel

Ussher's positing of a second gap is shown by his response, and Jones's, to the Bible's statement of how the last king of Israel came to the throne:

2 Kings 15:30 in the Bible
"And Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and smote him, and slew him, and reigned in his stead, in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah."
2 Kings 15:30 in Ussher (AM 3265c)
"When Hoshea, the son of Elah, murdered Pekah, the son of Remaliah, he took over the kingdom twenty years after Jotham started to reign over Judah, or in the fourth year of the reign of Ahaz. However, the kingdom was in civil disorder and anarchy for nine years."
2 Kings 15:30 in Jones (p. 178b)
"Hoshea led a conspiracy against Pekah, slew him—and took the reigns [sic] of the government, although not as king at the time (... see Chart 5)."

According to the Bible, Hoshea killed Pekah and "reigned in his stead" in the 20th year of Jotham. According to Ussher and Jones, Hoshea was not reigning in the 20th year of Jotham. The KJV rendering of this verse is, as usual, accurate and literal. The verb in the original Hebrew is the same *malak* that was discussed above, in this case preceded by the *waw*-sequential conjunction. This construction is found in 2 Chronicles 13:1, which the KJV renders as "Now in the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam began Abijah to reign over Judah." If the KJV has a correct translation of 2 Chronicles 13:1 (and it does), then the same construction in 2 Kings 15:30 can be translated to say "Hoshea . . . slew him, and began to reign in his stead in the 20th year of Jotham son of Uzziah."

How did Ussher get in such a position of contradicting the Scripture? The reason involves a problematic correlation of reign lengths in the eighth century. 2 Kings 18:1 has Hezekiah of Judah starting in the third year of Hoshea of Israel, which would be 728n (Ussher has 727n, another of his inaccuracies). By Ussher's date, the 16-year reign of Hezekiah's predecessor, Ahaz, would then start in $727n + 16 = 743n$. The problem is

that the beginning of Ahaz's reign is synchronized with the 17th year of Pekah of Israel in 2 Kings 16:1, which would start Pekah's 20-year reign (2 Kgs 15:27) in $(743n + 17 =) 760n$ and end it in 740n (Ussher, again inaccurate: 759n to 739n), eight or nine years before Ussher's first year for Hoshea, 731n. Because of this conundrum, many interpreters have insisted that the scriptural numbers related to Pekah and Hoshea are in error. Ussher must be included among those who say this Scripture is mistaken. To maintain that Hoshea was not king in the 20th year of Jotham, but that an eight or nine-year interregnum intervened before he was "really" king, is contrary to the express declaration of 2 Kings 15:30, where the Hebrew verb can be translated as either "reigned" or "began to reign," as previously explained. The verse cannot be distorted to say that Hoshea was not reigning in Jotham's 20th year.

What is the solution to this puzzle? It lies in the same principle that Ussher used elsewhere, and which is well expressed by Dr. Jones: "What is being said is that the Hebrew Scriptures are so written that inexorably embedded within the text concerning the regnal information is recorded precise mathematical data which, if heeded, demands the chronologers' choosing the correct method of reckoning over the period wherein the two kingdoms coexist."³⁶ The "correct method of reckoning" in this case is to recognize that the biblical texts for this period are in harmony if Pekah was a rival king to Menahem, with the reign of both starting in the time of strife after the killing of Zechariah, last of Jehu's dynasty. Pekah's 20 years of reign, plus the synchronisms of Jotham and Ahaz to Pekah (2 Kgs 15:32, 16:1) are measured from the start of Pekah's rival reign, whereas his sole reign began in the 52nd year of Uzziah (2 Kgs 15:27).

This interpretation brings harmony to the chronological data for the time, including the synchronisms from Jotham and Ahaz to Pekah's reign, but can it be supported by other biblical texts? It will be shown that it is explained by understanding the political history of the time. It is also demonstrated by a very grammatical approach to some relevant texts.

The political situation in the late eighth century BC was marked by the threat to Israel and Judah from two kingdoms to the east, Aram (Syria) and Assyria. Assyria was also a threat to Syria; Tiglath-Pileser III eventually captured its capital, Damascus, and annexed its territory in 732 BC. Before that time the Hebrew kingdoms were faced with a choice: either submit in some way to the growing power of Assyria, or stand against it, whether alone or by making an alliance with Syria. Ahaz of Judah chose the former course, as described in 2 Kings 16:7–10 and 2 Chronicles 28:16–21. He was succeeded by his son Hezekiah, who opposed the Assyrians. Hezekiah's policy eventually led to invasion by Sennacherib, from which Jerusalem was spared only by God's intervention (Is 37:35–37).

The same choice faced the tribes of Israel in the north: whether to appease the Assyrians or to join a coalition against them. Menahem chose appeasement (2 Kgs 15:19–20), as did Hoshea at first (2 Kgs 17:3–4). Pekah, however, elected to resist the Assyrians. This is shown by his alliance with Syria in an anti-Assyrian coalition (2 Kgs 16:5; Is 7:1), and although these verses refer to a time after Pekah became sole ruler, they

surely reflect an alliance that had formed earlier. During the period of rivalry, Pekah probably had his headquarters or much of his support in Gilead (2 Kgs 15:25), while Menahem ruled in Samaria.

The factionalism of this time, in both Judah and Israel, is reflected in the writings of the prophet Hosea. The poetic language of Hosea deals with Israel, Ephraim, and Judah. Hosea's term "Ephraim" apparently designated the area ruled from the capital city of Samaria, while "Israel" referred to a larger region consisting, in part, of Gilead and the trans-Jordan area. "Israel" can also always be used in its historic meaning to represent the traditional ten tribes of the northern confederation. It is Ephraim that is repeatedly rebuked for its looking to Assyria for help (Hos 5:13; 7:8, 11; 12:1), apparently referring to Menahem's policy of appeasement as reported in 2 Kings 15.

The distinction between Israel and Ephraim is suggested by Hosea 11:12:

Ephraim compasses me about with lies,
and the house of Israel with deceit;
but Judah yet rules with God, and is faithful with the saints.

The natural reading of this verse implies three kingdoms. If it is argued that the first two phrases refer to the same entity by the principle of parallelism, then could not the same reasoning apply to the second and third phrases, which is clearly not the case?

A distinction between Israel and Ephraim that cannot be explained by parallelism is found in Hosea 5:5. The CSB translation is:

Israel's arrogance testifies against them.
Both Israel and Ephraim stumble because of their iniquity;
even Judah will stumble with them.

In the Hebrew of this verse, "both . . . and" is expressed by the use of the *waw* conjunction before "Israel" and also before "Ephraim." *Waw* by itself means "and," but the double usage expresses "both...and." The same construction is used in Jeremiah 21:6, "both man and beast," Zechariah 5:4, "both its timber and its stones," and in numerous other places.³⁷ In all these instances the two items mentioned are necessarily separate entities, just as with "both . . . and" in English.

Why is this verse not translated correctly in most translations of the Bible into English? There is no excuse for the lack of faithfulness to the original, but the reason for the inaccuracy may be that English speakers are not accustomed to having the conjunction expressing "and" serve another purpose when conjoined with two distinct objects. In some other languages the same construction for "both . . . and" is used as in Hebrew: Spanish (*y . . . y*), French and Latin (*et . . . et*), Greek (*καὶ . . . καὶ*) and Russian (*и . . . и*). Since translators into these languages were familiar with a similar usage in their own tongue, it is not surprising that their versions often correctly render the distinction between Ephraim and Israel in Hosea 5:5. The verse is rendered correctly in the LXX, the Latin Vulgate, the original Reina-Valera Spanish version, and the Russian Synodal Version.

Hosea 5:5 shows that in Hosea's day, God, speaking



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Tiglath-Pileser III was king of Assyria from 745 to 727 BC. His original name was Pulu or Pu'ul (biblical Pul, 2 Kgs 15:19), as shown by a Phoenician inscription (the Incirli Stela) and Babylonian records. The Iran Stela and other records from his reign record receiving tribute from Menahem of Samaria, which would be impossible with Ussher's dates for Menahem, 772 to 761 BC.

through His prophet, made a distinction between Israel and Ephraim. The grammar throughout the verse is consistent with the separateness of the two kingdoms. The verb "stumble" that applies to Ephraim and Israel is in the plural,³⁸ and it is "their iniquity," not "his iniquity." It could be argued that the plural verb refers to Ephraim as a collection of people, and so this consideration is not absolute proof of the separateness of Israel and Ephraim. Such proof, however, is provided by the "both-and" construction, which not only assures the separateness, but provides agreement with the chronological data that imply that Pekah was for a time a rival king. The situation is similar to the rivalry between Omri and Tibni 130 years earlier. For Pekah as well as for Omri, the synchronizations to Judah for the start of their reigns refer to their sole reign, whereas reign lengths for both are measured from the start of their rival kingdoms.

An objection to Pekah's having a reign rivaling that of Menahem and Pekahiah is based on 2 Kings 15:25, where Pekah is said to have been serving as "chief officer" when he slew Pekahiah. It is argued that this rules out his being king before then. The political situation at the time, however, with the increasing threat from Assyria, explains why erstwhile enemies would put aside their differences when both are threatened by a more powerful foe. In the power-sharing détente, Pekah was given the position of *shalish*, a term that usually refers to a commander in the army. This was a fatal mistake for the dynasty of Menahem.

It is time for Ussher's advocates to recognize that progress has been made since Ussher published his world history over three and one-half centuries ago.

Conclusion

Two adjustments will correct numerous one-year discrepancies shown in Tables 1 and 2 for Ussher's reign lengths. The first of these steps has been taken by Floyd Nolen Jones (following Thiele): determining when the lengths of reign are given in accession or non-accession years. If Dr. Jones takes the second step by recognizing that Judah's regnal year began in Tishri while that of Israel began in Nisan, then other small discrepancies in his own charts of the kingdom period will also disappear. If this is not done, the chronology derived from Ussher will be either incoherent because it cannot account for the small discrepancies, or it will attempt to explain them by assuming that the biblical data are just approximate, or even sloppy, as compared with the court records of Israel's neighbors.

Ussher's interregnum between Jeroboam II of Israel and his son Zechariah is unnecessary. Thiele's solution for this period, involving a coregency between Amaziah and Uzziah of Judah, is not only in keeping with the state of affairs described in 2 Kings 14, but it is also in keeping with Ussher's principle of letting the biblical data determine when a coregency is called for. Additionally, there is no hint in the Bible of any interruption in the kingship between Jeroboam II and Zechariah. This interregnum needs to be abandoned and the Ahaziah/Uzziah coregency, which is more consistent with the biblical texts, accepted in its place.

Ussher's second interregnum, between Pekah and Hoshea, cannot be sustained unless 2 Kings 15:30, which says that Hoshea was king in Israel in the 20th year of Jotham of Judah, is declared to be in error. If Ussher's supporters do not accept that a rivalry between Pekah and the house of Menahem explains all these texts, then it is incumbent on them to produce an explanation that does not contradict the biblical data. This they have not done.

With these corrections, the chronology initiated by Ussher will, unsurprisingly, converge very closely to that developed by Thiele or to its form as slightly modified by McFall and other recent scholars. I have presented the details of such a chronology in my "Tables of Reign Lengths" article,³⁹ which has four tables showing all starting dates, coregencies, ends of reign, and synchronisms in a more detailed and precise format than used in the tables of the present paper. The resultant chronology is also in harmony with established external dates, although that has not been a priority for Ussher's modern advocates.

I once attacked a logic problem of the kind my wife likes to solve. It had nine clues. Changing any one of the clues made the problem unsolvable, i.e., incoherent. The Bible gives 126

clues for the time of the Hebrew divided monarchies. If we build on the work of Thiele, making the necessary adjustment for the reign of Hezekiah and a few small one-year corrections elsewhere, there results a chronology for the kingdom period that is 1) coherent; 2) in agreement with all 126 texts that are the basic chronological data; and 3) consistent with well-established dates in Assyrian and Babylonian history.

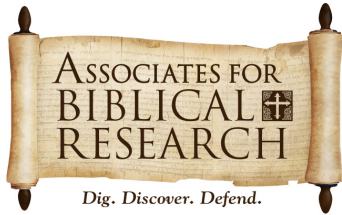
If the logic problem with nine clues was "fragile," i.e. modifying one clue would make it incoherent, then the Bible's chronology of the divided kingdom, with its 126 precise clues, is far more fragile or vulnerable. But vulnerability in scientific theories or historical reconstructions is a good thing. If a theory is true, it will be able to pass all tests put forth to challenge it, and the more points at which it can be challenged and tested, the better. The profuseness of the Bible's data, and their complexity, offer such testing points. As has been demonstrated, the statistics for the kingdom period in the Bible have been shown to be so accurate that Assyriologists have accepted adjustments to their dates that arose from biblical scholarship, while Egyptologists use the synchronism of 2 Chronicles 12:2 to refine their dates for Egypt's 21st and 22nd Dynasties.⁴⁰ All this was unanticipated by scholars of the late-date-for-everything school, who taught that there must be numerous inconsistencies in these many numbers that span over 400 years of history.⁴¹

It is time for Ussher's advocates to recognize that progress has been made since Ussher published his world history over three and one-half centuries ago, and to accept these corrections to his otherwise magnificent work. Further, the polemics against Thiele and those who have followed in Thiele's footsteps need to be renounced and replaced with a recognition that this line of research has produced a biblical chronology that is one of the greatest verifications of the Bible's absolute reliability in its relation of precise, complex, and testable historical data.

Endnotes for this article can be found at www.BibleArchaeology.org. Type "Endnotes" in the search box; next, click the "Bible and Spade Bibliographies and Endnotes" link; then page down to the article.

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Endnotes for *Ussher Explained and Corrected*

Spring 2018 *Bible and Spade*

Notes

¹ That the genealogical lists of Genesis 5 and 11 usually do not give the name of the firstborn son follows from one of the purposes of the lists, which was to provide the names of ancestors of Noah (Gn 5:3–32), and then of Abraham (Gn 11:10b–26). If any modern person endeavors to trace their own ancestry back several generations, they should not be surprised to learn that their direct ancestors were generally not the firstborn. This will especially be true when going back a century or more, when families, in the western world at least, tended to be larger than today. In the patriarchal ages before and after the Flood, the longevity of the individuals listed, along with the assumption that the ages of procreation were proportionately longer, means that many if not most of the individuals in the lists of Genesis 5 and 11 would have had scores of sons and daughters. From all these individuals, however, the genealogical tables of Genesis 5 and 11 are generally restricted to the direct ancestors of Abraham. (Elsewhere, as in Genesis 4:17–22 and 10:2–26, some of these other individuals are named.) The probability that any one of the direct ancestors of Abraham was the firstborn among what could have been scores of siblings is therefore quite low.

An interesting corollary is that, since apparently Abraham could name his ancestors back to Noah, and Noah could name his ancestors back to Adam, it must have been a rather general practice throughout those times, and not just restricted to Abraham's lineage, to preserve one's *toledoth* (family histories). Alternately, it could be presumed that the Lord only instituted the practice of the *toledoth* for the chosen line—or that the lists were revealed miraculously to Moses without there being any previous memory of these individuals, either written or oral. But a direct revelation to Moses or a restriction to just the chosen line does not explain why the literary structure of the early parts of Genesis follows a pattern that is found in very early Mesopotamian inscriptions on clay and stone. It is therefore my opinion that the first of these options is the most probable and most in agreement with the literary structure of Genesis 1:1 to 37:2a. In those chapters, the verses in which the word *toledoth* appears should be understood as summary lines for the preceding account, following a convention that was used in pre-alphabetic inscriptions from long before the time of Abraham. The practice was to write such colophons at the end of stone and clay tablets to summarize the preceding history and to give the name of the author or transcriber. After Genesis 37:2a, which concludes the *toledoth* of Jacob (the verse is definitely not a heading for the “generations of Jacob” as in the KJV), the story of Joseph would have been written on papyrus or parchment, and this convention would no longer be followed. Moses would then have translated the *toledoth* into Hebrew to give us the first 36 chapters of the Bible. See P.J. Wiseman, *New Discoveries in Babylonia about Genesis* (London: Hunt, Bernard & Co., 1936); online at http://www.biblemaths.com/pdf_wiseman.pdf.

² Valerius Coucke, “Chronologie biblique,” in *Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible*, ed. Louis Pirot, vol. 1 (Paris: Librairie Letouze et Ané. 1928), cols. 1245–79.

³ Edwin R. Thiele, “The Chronology of the Kings of Judah and Israel,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 3 (1944), pp. 137–86.

⁴ One year is subtracted from the figure for six kings, but not for Zimri’s seven day reign.

⁵ Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, rev. edition (Grand Rapids: Zondervan/Kregel, 1983), pp. 16, 17.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 77, 78.

⁷ Kenneth A. Strand, “Thiele’s Biblical Chronology as a Corrective for Extrabiblical Dates,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 34:2 (1996), pp. 304–05.

⁸ Hayim Tadmor, “The Campaigns of Sargon II of Assur: A Chronological-Historical Study,” *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 12 (1958), pp. 22–42.

⁹ Hayim Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III, King of Assyria* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1994), pp. 266–67.

¹⁰ James Ussher, *The Annals of the World*, revised and updated by Larry and Marion Pierce (Green Forest, AR, 2003). Originally published in 1658.

¹¹ Floyd Nolen Jones, *The Chronology of the Old Testament*, rev. edition (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2005, 2009).

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 114b.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 114b–15a.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 134b.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 147b.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 173b.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 112b–13a.

¹⁸ Ussher, *Annals of the World*, but comment added by Larry Pierce, p. 913a.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 914a.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 915b–16a.

²¹ Rodger C. Young, “When Did Solomon Die?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 46:4 (2003), pp. 589–603.

²² *Idem*, “When Did Jerusalem Fall?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47:1 (2004) pp. 21–38.

²³ Regarding the identity of “Pul” with Tiglath-Pileser III, Thiele writes, “Many years ago Schrader presented convincing arguments that Pul and Tiglath-Pileser must be the same individual. [footnote to Eberhard Schrader, *The Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament*, trans. Owen C. Whitehouse (London, 1885), 1:218ff.] Indisputable proof of their identity is provided by notations from a Babylonian king list and the Babylonian Chronicle where, in a list of the Babylonian kings, Tiglath-Pileser appears by his usual Assyrian name on the one list and by his name Pulu on the other, as shown in the lists on p. 140” (Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, p. 141).

Jones, unable to deny that Pul or Pulu was another name for Tiglath-Pileser III, insists, because of Ussher’s chronology, that Ashur-dan III (772–755 BC) was also called Pul (*Chronology of the OT*, p. 173). But there are no inscriptions in which Ashur-dan III or any other monarch besides Tiglath-Pileser III is given this name. As mentioned in the main text, the Iran Stela that lists Menahem as a tributary of Tiglath-Pileser shows the folly of such grasping at straws.

²⁴ Jones, *Chronology of the OT*, p. 172a.

²⁵ Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, pp. 68–72.

²⁶ Babylonian Talmud, tractate *Rosh HaShanah* 2a.

²⁷ The length of reign for Solomon is given as 40 years in 1 Kings 11:42 and 2 Chronicles 9:30. However, it is not clear if this was measured from when he was anointed king and coregent with David while his father was still alive (1 Kgs 1:11–48, 2 Chr 23:1), or from the beginning of his sole reign at the death of David. Another variable is whether the 40 years are measured in an accession sense or non-accession sense. Thiele followed a general convention that coregencies were measured in a non-accession sense, although his reasons for so assuming may not apply to the case of Solomon. These two variables therefore introduce uncertainty into how Solomon's 40 years are to be measured. It might be assumed that, facing a choice in the matter, the official recorders chose whichever combination would give 40 years to Solomon's reign in order to match the 40-year reign of his father.

²⁸ Ussher's AM dates for the end of Abijah's reign and the beginning of Asa's are modified from spring ("c") to winter ("b") because of his comment in the text that Asa began to reign "at the very end" of the Nisan-based year. The "c" (spring) would mean the first three months of the regnal year, not the end of the year as indicated in Ussher's text. The same applies to the end of the reign of Jotham and the beginning of the reign of Ahaz.

²⁹ Ussher's AM dates for the end of Ahaziah's reign and the beginning of Joram's are modified from spring ("c") to winter ("b"), because of his comment that Ahaziah died "in the latter end" of the Nisan-based regnal year. The "c" (spring) would mean the first three months of the regnal year, not the end of the year as indicated in Ussher's text. The same applies to the end of the reign of Jehoahaz at the beginning of the reign of Jehoash and the end of Ussher's supposed interregnum at the beginning of the reign of Hoshea.

³⁰ Jehu killed Joram; no coregency possible to get Ussher's extra year over the Bible figure.

³¹ Menahem killed Shallum; no coregency possible to get Ussher's extra year.

³² By specifying 3283b AM for the capture of Samaria, Ussher has the capture occurring in the winter season preceding the first of Nisan, 721 BC. For exact accounting purposes based on the year beginning in Nisan, this was 722n.

³³ Ussher's date for the start of Temple cleansing was AM 3380c, in the spring of 624 BC (Ussher's date; the correct date is fall of 623). To allow enough time for all the events described, he put the date for the Passover one year later, in 3381c, i.e., the spring of 623 BC. Although this was in Josiah's 18th according to Ussher's starting year for Josiah, his putting the start of Temple cleansing one year earlier places it in Josiah's 17th year, contradicting 2 Kings 22:3 (18th year). In an attempt to fix Ussher's contradiction of the Bible, the Pierces, in their edition of the Annals, moved Ussher's date for Josiah's Passover up one year to 624 BC, the same year for the start of cleansing the Temple. The Pierces explain that "No chronological entry by Ussher is invalidated by so doing" (p. 93a). This statement is incorrect. It not only fails to solve the problem that Ussher recognized (namely, that all these events cannot fit into 13 days), but it places both the start of Temple restoration and the following observance of the Passover in the 17th year of Josiah according to Ussher's starting year of 641 BC for that king. The Pierces' "solution" therefore is no solution, and it contradicts both 2 Kings 22:3 and 2 Kings

23:23. Thiele's explanation honors all the relevant Scriptures and is consistent with the other evidences showing that Judah started its regnal years on Tishri 1. The correct date for these events, based on Thiele's Bible-honoring scholarship, is fall of 623 for the initiation of Temple cleansing and the spring of 622 for the Passover, both in Josiah's 18th Tishri-based year, 623t.

³⁴ By acknowledging the use of non-accession years, Floyd Nolen Jones was able to correct some of the one-year inaccuracies in Ussher's dates for the kingdom period. But by not accepting a Tishri-based regnal calendar for Judah, Jones stumbled over Abijah. His chart for the period shows accession years for Rehoboam and Asa on both sides of Abijah, but no accession year for Abijah himself; to do so would put Abijah's starting year in the 17th year of Jeroboam, instead of the 18th year given in Scripture. Most readers will never catch small discrepancies like this in the elaborate charts that some writers use to illustrate their chronologies. It is easier to check whether a given chronology is coherent and in agreement with the biblical lengths of reign and synchronisms if a notation is adopted that displays accurately the kind of year that the ancient writers were using, which is why Tables 1 and 2 provide Nisan-based years for calculations.

³⁵ Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), p. 66. Finegan cites Theodor Mommsen, *Chronica minora* (Berlin: Weidmann 1892–1898), 2:130; Mommsen cites Cassiodorus Senator.

³⁶ Jones, *Chronology of the OT*, pp. 136b–37a.

³⁷ Exodus 40:31, "both Aaron and his sons." Numbers 9:14, "both the foreign resident and the native of the land." 2 Chronicles 23:17, "both its altar and its images." Nehemiah 1:6, "both I and my father's house." Psalms 76:6 (76:7 in Hebrew), "both chariot and horse." Isaiah 34:11, "both owl and crow." Jeremiah 32:24, "both the famine and the pestilence." Ezekiel 39:9, "both bucklers and shields." Ezekiel 48:22, "both the Levites' possession and the possession of the city." Daniel 1:3, "both the royal family and the nobility." Daniel 8:13, "both the sanctuary and the host."

³⁸ "The plural verb in v 5bA indicates that Israel and Ephraim are separate entities." Francis I. Anderson and David Noel Freedman, *Hosea: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible, (Doubleday, NY, London, 1980), p. 393. "The alternation of singulars and plurals in these verses [Hos 5:3–5] would suggest that three kingdoms are here mentioned: Israel, Ephraim, and Judah." H.J. Cook, "Pekah," *Vetus Testamentum* 14:2 (1964), p. 133.

³⁹ Rodger C. Young, "Tables of Reign Lengths from the Hebrew Court Records," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48:2 (June 2005), pp. 225–48. Available online at <http://www.rcyoung.org/articles/rtables.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Kenneth A. Kitchen, *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt (1100–650 B.C.)* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1973), p. 72. Subsequent studies by Egyptologists on the chronology of Shoshenq I, first pharaoh of Egypt's 22nd Dynasty, have accepted Kitchen's use of Thiele's date for the invasion of Shishak/Shoshenq, differing only on which year of the pharaoh's reign his invasion took place.

⁴¹ "It is incredible that all these numbers can have been handed down through so many editors and copyists without often becoming corrupt . . ." Wm. F. Albright, "The Chronology of the Divided Monarchy of Israel," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 100 (1945), p.17.