

EZEKIEL'S JUBILEE: REAL OR RABBINIC FICTION? PART 2: THE JUBILEE/SABBATICAL YEAR CYCLE

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Abstract: *This second article in a two-part series dealing with the chronology of Ezekiel 40:1 will focus first on the definite reference to a Sabbatical Year in the text of Isaiah 37:30 and 2 Kings 19:29, followed by the probable, but not quite so definite, reference to a Sabbatical Year when Zedekiah proclaimed a year of release (Jer 34:8–11). The timing of both events will be shown to be consistent with the starting of Jubilee and Sabbatical Years in Tishri of 1406 BC. The second part of the article undertakes the more difficult task of separating the wheat from the chaff in chronological statements related to Jubilee and Sabbatical Years in the rabbinic literature, showing that, if proper methods of historical analysis are used, this literature contains valuable information about when starting of the counting for these cycles began, information that agrees with dates derived from biblical texts for the Exodus and entry into the land.*

Key words: *Jubilee Years, Sabbatical Years, date of Exodus, Seder 'Olam, rabbinic chronology*

Part 1 of this two-part series concerns the exegesis of Ezekiel 40:1, demonstrating that Ezekiel saw his vision on the tenth of Tishri, a day that he calls Rosh HaShanah, “New Year’s Day,” and that day initiated a Jubilee Year.¹ By chronological considerations, both from the Bible and the Babylonian Chronicle, it showed that the year of the vision was 574 BC. The latter part of the article then showed that, consistent with the Bible’s Exodus Era texts and independently of the text of Ezekiel 40:1, a Jubilee Year was due to start in 574 BC.² It was remarked that this “coincidence” of the time of the Exodus as determined by these two independent chronological systems—the Jubilee Year cycles and the Bible’s Exodus Era texts—has yet to be explained by those who deny a fifteenth-century Exodus.

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¹ Rodger C. Young, “Ezekiel’s Jubilee: Real or Rabbinic Fiction? Part 1: Ezekiel 40:1 and 1 Kings 6:1,” *JETS* 67.3 (2024): 475–92.

² The term “Exodus Era” was introduced in Part 1, p. 486, as follows: “A suggested way in which modern translators could make it clear to readers that Israel employed era-reckoning, the same way we do with the present Anno Domini system, would be to supply the word ‘era’ in those chronological texts that are expressed in terms of that era. That would better convey the sense in which these verses were understood by their original authors and readers. One way of doing this is suggested in Table 1 [of Part 1], where ‘Era of the Exodus’ is capitalized, just as we capitalize the Roman era Anno Urbis Condita and our own Anno Domini. Adding the word ‘Era,’ though not strictly in the Hebrew text of these verses, avoids the implication that the Exodus was still going on in phrases like ‘year 2 of the going-out (Exodus)’ (Num 1:1); the Exodus itself was a one-time event that happened when Israel left Egypt in Nisan of 1446 BC, not an ongoing process.”

In what follows, it will be useful to have a chart of when Jubilee Years were due that is consistent with the thesis that counting started in 1406 BC. This date is fixed by the last of the nine Exodus Era texts that were a major focus of Part 1. The chart will facilitate the timing of the Sabbatical Years during the pre-exilic period, since Sabbatical Years were always an exact multiple of seven years before or after (or coincident with) the Jubilee Years given in the table. The chart of Jubilee Years based on the entry into the land in 1406 BC is presented in Table 1.

Jubilee #	Year BC	Jubilee #	Year BC
1	1358	10	917
2	1309	11	868
3	1260	12	819
4	1211	13	770
5	1162	14	721
6	1113	15	672
7	1064	16	623
8	1015	17	574
9	966		

Table 1. Chart showing when the Jubilee Years were due, based on the time-keeping calendar of Exodus Era years as found in the Pentateuch and continued in 1 Kings 6:1. This calendar places the entry of Israel into the Promised Land in Nisan of 1406 BC, after which Jubilees were due in every forty-ninth year. Jubilee Years began on Tishri 10 (Day of Atonement) of the designated BC year.

With this chart as reference, the study of the timing of Sabbatical Years can be divided into two parts: references derived from Scripture (Section I) and references derived from rabbinic literature (Section II). Of these, the second section will necessarily be the longer, since the literature seems to be lacking in rational explanations of rabbinic chronology as derived from the Talmud and earlier rabbinic texts. The focus of the second section will be on the chronological systems of these sources. Often all these references, in particular the timing they assign to Jubilee and Sabbatical Years, are dismissed out of hand because of the known shortening of the Persian period and other obvious faults in rabbinic chronology. Section II will show that, despite these shortcomings, the Talmudim and earlier rabbinic writings have preserved “hidden pearls” of historical material that should not be overlooked simply because of the various other evident errors in this literature. But first, the biblical data.

I. BIBLICAL REFERENCES TO SABBATICAL YEARS OR POSSIBLE SABBATICAL YEARS

1. *The “second year” of Isaiah 37:30 // 2 Kings 19:29.* This is the most definite statement of the occurrence of a Sabbatical Year in the Israelite kingdom period, second in importance only to the Sabbatical and Jubilee Year of the post-kingdom period indicated by the text of Ezekiel 40:1. Ezekiel’s five temporal expressions in

Ezekiel 40:1 were the subject of the preceding article in this two-part series.³ That article pointed out that the first of the three years of Isaiah 37:30 // 2 Kings 19:29 could not have been a Sabbatical Year because the people were allowed to eat the *sāpiah* (what my farmer father-in-law called “volunteer growth”) in that year, but the harvesting of the *sāpiah* was forbidden for a Sabbatical Year (Lev 25:5).⁴ In the second year, after the Assyrians had left, there was to be no sowing, but the people could eat the “Sabbath product of the land” (Heb. *šabbat hā-ʾāreš* in Lev 25:6; *sāhiš* in 2 Kgs 19:29) that was allowed for a Sabbatical Year.⁵ Since the first of these two years could not have been a Sabbatical Year, as just explained, whereas the second necessarily was, this consideration is contrary to the seemingly countless online articles claiming to have discovered a Sabbatical Year followed by a Jubilee Year in the texts of Isaiah 37:30 and 2 Kings 19:29.

According to the current consensus, the Assyrians invaded Israel in the spring of 701 BC. This was the fourteenth year of Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:13 // Isa 36:1), whose sole reign began in 716t BC, with the “t” after the BC year indicating that the Judean year began in the fall month of Tishri. For convenience, the chronology of the kings of Judah is given in Table 2.⁶

³ Young, “Part 1,” 476–85 (Section I).

⁴ Young, “Part 1,” 490–91 (Section II.4).

⁵ Ralph Hawkins attempts to deny that the second year of the prophecy, in which the people were forbidden to sow or reap, was a Sabbatical Year, writing, “The second year of Isaiah’s prophecy, in which the people would be dependent on volunteer growth, is probably simply an indication that the land was in a sad condition due to the occupation of the Assyrians, and there are no indications in the text that this was a Sabbatical year” (*How Israel Became a People* [Nashville: Abingdon, 2013], 59). Hawkins’s statement is contrary to both human nature and the biblical text. As to human nature, no matter how severe the siege was in year one, and how sad the condition of the ground was after the Assyrians left, any people on earth would want to go out and do what they could to produce some kind of crop from the ground when their enemies were gone and they were free to do so. In regard to the biblical text, 2 Kings 19:29 // Isaiah 37:30 are in the form of a command from the Lord: In the second year, the people were to eat what was allowed for a Sabbatical Year, and only in the third year were they given permission to sow and reap. Such a contradiction of both human nature and the biblical text is necessary for Hawkins because, once he admits that the Israelite priests knew the time of the Jubilee and Sabbatical Years, his thirteenth-century Exodus theory falls into jeopardy.

⁶ Table 2 is taken from Young, “Tables of Reign Lengths from the Hebrew Court Recorders,” *JETS* 48:2 (2005): 246. The 716t/715n notation signifies that Hezekiah’s sole reign began sometime on or after Tishri 1 of 716 BC but before Nisan 1 of 715 BC. The Bible’s frequent cross-synchronization between Judah, which followed a Tishri-based year, and Israel, which followed a Nisan-based year, allows narrowing many of these figures to a six-month interval. These data generally agree with those of Thiele, except (1) for clarity, they are expressed in a more exact notation (the Nisan/Tishri notation) than Thiele used; (2) the reigns of the Judean monarchs, Solomon through Athaliah, are one year earlier than Thiele’s dates; and (3) the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, and thus the end of the reign of Zedekiah, occurred in 587 BC instead of Thiele’s 586. In addition, Thiele’s failure to properly determine the reign of Hezekiah is well known; he did not acknowledge a co-regency of Hezekiah with his father Ahaz, although he recognized that the three preceding kings, and Manasseh after Hezekiah, all had co-regencies with their fathers.

King	Began co-regency	Began sole reign	Ended reign	Years reigned
Saul		1051t?	1009t?	42?
David		1009t?	969t?	40
Solomon	971t	969t?	932t	40 (39)
Rehoboam		932t	914n/914t	17
Abijah		914n/914t	912t/911n	3
Asa		912t/911n	871t/870n	41
Jehoshaphat	873t	871t/870n	848n/848t	25 (24)
Jehoram	854t	848n/848t	841n/841t	8 (7)
Ahaziah		841n/841t	841n/841t	1 (0)
Athaliah		841n/841t	835n/835t	7 (6)
Joash		835n/835t	796n/796t	40 (39)
Amaziah		796n/796t	767n/767t	29
Uzziah	791t	767n/767t	740t	52 (51)
Jotham	750n/750t	740t	(735n/735t) 732t	16 (15)
Ahaz	735n/735t	732t	716t/715n	16
Hezekiah	729t/728n	716t/715n	687t	29
Manasseh	697t	687t	643t	55 (54)
Amon		643t	641t	2
Josiah		641t	609 Tammuz (Jul)	31
Jehoahaz		609 Tammuz	609 Tishri (Oct)	3 mo.
Jehoiakim		609 Tishri	598 21 Heshvan (about 9 Dec 598)	11
Jehoiachin		598 21 Heshvan	597 2 Adar (Mar 16)	3 mo. 10 d.
Zedekiah		597 2 Adar	587 9 Tammuz (Jul)	11 (10)

Table 2: Chronology of the kings of Judah. Dates are conjectural for Saul and David, although probably accurate within two years. In the rightmost column, where there are two numbers for the years reigned, the first is the number given in the biblical text for the king's length of reign, and it is measured in a non-accession (inclusive numbering) sense, so that, for elapsed years, the number in parentheses should be used. Both systems—accession and non-accession reckoning—were used in the Hebrew kingdom period. In each relevant biblical text, the data should determine which method is being employed, as opposed to a presupposition-based approach that assumes one method must be used everywhere.

From the Annals of Sennacherib, we learn that the Assyrians must have spent quite a long period in the depredations of Judah and the surrounding nations, since Sennacherib lists several countries and their rulers who were subjected, while “Hezekiah the Jew” was confined to Jerusalem “like a bird in a cage.”⁷ That the campaign extended over several months is also indicated by the large siege ramp that the Assyrians needed in order to capture Lachish. The remains of the siege ramp exist to the present day. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the Assyrians were still committing depredations in Judah after the planting season in the fall of 701, which is why Isaiah and 2 Kings report that the people would have to eat the volunteer growth (*sāpiah*) in the year that began in Tishri of 701 BC. The next year, the Sabbatical Year, would then start in Tishri of 700 BC. According to the list of Jubilees in Table I, 700t BC was indeed a Sabbatical Year, three Sabbatical cycles after the Jubilee of 721t. Isaiah 37:30 and 2 Kings 19:29 therefore not only establish that Judah was commanded to observe a Sabbatical Year during the reign of Hezekiah, but also that the timing of that Sabbatical Year was consistent with the counting for those years starting in 1406 BC. This, in turn, reinforces the thesis that Ezekiel observed the initiation of a Jubilee/Sabbatical Year in the fall of 574 BC, since 574t BC, the time of Ezekiel’s vision, was eighteen Sabbatical periods after Hezekiah’s Sabbatical Year in 700t BC.⁸

No special pleading is necessary in order to calculate that 700t BC, the second year of the Isaiah/2 Kings prophecy, was a Sabbatical Year. This determination can be built solely on the literal interpretation of the Bible’s Exodus Era texts, including the best texts of 1 Kings 6:1, a literal reading of Leviticus 25:1–7 instead of the misreading of this text given by rabbinical scholars and some of their modern counterparts, and the establishment of the correct chronology for Solomon’s fourth year, which can be done independently of any reference to the time of the Exodus or the Jubilee/Sabbatical cycles. Critics of the fifteenth-century Exodus have consistently failed to demonstrate any special pleading in establishing these dates. However, once we accept the chronology of Jubilee and Sabbatical Years that is built on them, it follows naturally that 700t BC, the year in which the people were commanded not to sow or reap, would be a Sabbatical Year. And what about

⁷ ANET, 287–88.

⁸ A complicating factor in this discussion of Sennacherib’s invasion is the opinion that Sennacherib invaded twice, first in 701 BC and then several years later but before his death in 681 BC. This theory was first put forth by George Rawlinson in 1858, after which it was espoused by W. F. Albright, Albright’s pupil John Bright, William Shea, and other scholars. See W. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1957), 314n53; J. Bright, *A History of Israel*, 3rd ed. (London: SCM, 1981), 298–309; William H. Shea, “Sennacherib’s Second Palestinian Campaign,” *JBL* 104.3 (1985): 401–18. Shea writes, “This campaign should be dated after the fall of Babylon in 689; and since Hezekiah died in 686, 688/7 is a reasonable date to suggest for this second campaign” (417). Since 686t was a Sabbatical Year, Shea’s chronology for the purported second invasion, 688/7, would be compatible with the “second year” of Isaiah 37:30 and 2 Kings 19:29 being a Sabbatical Year. Shea does not mention Sabbatical Years in his discussion. Sufficient criticisms have been leveled against the two-invasion theory that it is now generally rejected by mainstream scholarship and not the main focus of the present discussion.

the timing of the Jubilee cycles built on these simple exegetical principles, so that the counting started in 1406 BC and the first Jubilee was in 1358 BC and the seventeenth in 574 BC (Table 1)? There is only one chance in forty-nine that a Jubilee would be observed in 574 BC (Ezekiel's Jubilee) if these numbers, derived as they are from the biblical texts, do not display the true timing of the start of counting for the Jubilee and Sabbatical Years. It is this "coincidence" that has yet to be explained by critics of the Bible's chronology of the Exodus and the Jubilee/Sabbatical cycles, a chronology that can be established independently of any reference to rabbinic literature.

2. *The release of slaves by command of Zedekiah (Jer 34:8–11)*. As an addendum to his translation of the works of Josephus, William Whiston included a dissertation in which he stated that the release of slaves mentioned in Jeremiah 34 would have happened in a Sabbatical Year, since such a release was commanded every seven years, in the year of cancelling debts (Deut 15:1).⁹ In the twentieth century, Cyrus Gordon reiterated Whiston's thesis. Addressing the consensus of contemporary critical scholarship and its doctrinaire adherence to the Documentary Hypothesis that claimed that the laws of the Sabbatical and Jubilee Years were exilic or postexilic in origin, Gordon wrote,

The view that the Sabbatical and Jubilee Cycles are late and artificial legislation can no longer be maintained. Jeremiah (34:12–16) attests the attempted revival of Sabbatical obligations that had fallen into disuse. It is interesting to note that the snags this attempted pre-Exilic revival encountered did not include the determining of when the Sabbatical Year fell. This means the Sabbatical Cycle had all along been in use as a means of reckoning time, even though its obligations had been neglected because they called for material sacrifices on the part of the people.¹⁰

When was this release of slaves? According to Jeremiah 34:1, it was during the final siege of Jerusalem by the forces of Nebuchadnezzar. Ezekiel 24:1 and 2 Kings 25:1 say that the siege began on the tenth of Tebeth in the ninth year of Zedekiah, which was January 27, 589 BC. If, as both Whiston and Gordon maintained, the release of slaves would be at the beginning of a Sabbatical Year, the release would have been in Tishri of 588 BC. In keeping with Table 1 above, a Sabbatical Year began at that time, fourteen years before Ezekiel's Jubilee/Sabbatical Year of 574t

⁹ "Dissertation V, Upon the Chronology of Josephus," in *Josephus: Complete Works*, trans. William Whiston (repr., Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1964), 703. Most translations of Deuteronomy 15:1 say that the cancellation of debts, and hence the release of slaves, was to be done "at the end of the seventh year," according to their rendering of **מִקֵּץ שְׁבַע שָׁנִים**. On the basis of the use of this phrase in the Qumran documents, Meir Wallenstein says that the expression in Deuteronomy 15:1 means that slaves were to be released "at the beginning of the seventh year" ("Some Lexical Material in the Qumran Scrolls," *VT* 4 [1954]: 213). The same Hebrew expression is used in 31:10 for the public reading of the law in a Sabbatical Year. The reading was to be done during the Feast of Booths, which was not at the end of either a Tishri-based year or a Nisan-based year. It was, however, soon after the start of a Tishri-based year.

¹⁰ Cyrus Gordon, "Sabbatical Cycle or Seasonal Pattern?," *Orientalia* 22 (1953): 81.

BC. Although it might be argued that Zedekiah could have released the slaves at any time and not necessarily at the beginning of the Sabbatical Year, it is reasonable to assume that, since it was the duty of the priests (including Jeremiah, with whom Zedekiah conferred frequently¹¹) to know when Sabbatical Years were due, Zedekiah would have consulted Jeremiah or one of the other priests so that the freeing of slaves conformed with Deuteronomy 15:1 and 31:10, “in the year of release.”

3. *The timing of the pre-exilic instances narrated above is consistent with the Exodus Era calendar presented in the previous article.* That calendar started counting for the Jubilee and Sabbatical cycles in 1406 BC, a date that can be established in a straightforward way by examining the Exodus Era texts in the Hebrew Bible—the subject of the first of these two articles. All nine of the Exodus Era texts measure in terms of the that era, all are consistent with the era beginning in 1446 BC, and all were meant to be understood in a technical and exact sense. The first article showed that there are nine texts in the Hebrew Bible that refer to an era that began with Israel's Exodus from Egypt, and that each of these texts was meant to be understood in a technical and exact sense so that it would be known how much time had elapsed since the Exodus in Nisan of 1446 BC. Section I showed that the calendar of Jubilee and Sabbatical Years derived from the Exodus Era texts harmonizes with the biblical data, whether Zedekiah's release of slaves in Jeremiah 34:8–11, which can reasonably be interpreted to refer to a Sabbatical Year, or whether the “second year” of Isaiah 37:30 // 2 Kings 19:29, which definitely refers to a Sabbatical Year. Both instances are dated to a time consistent with 1406 BC being the year that began the reckoning of Jubilee/Sabbatical Years. For those who hold the opinion “that the Sabbatical and Jubilee Cycles are late and artificial legislation,” the chronological agreement of these instances with the Jubilee/Sabbatical Year calendar must be just a strange coincidence. The present author finds much more rational Gordon's assertion, supplemented as it is by the above chronological study to which Gordon made no appeal, that such an option “can no longer be maintained.”¹²

After the return from Babylonian exile, the pattern given above for the Jubilee and Sabbatical Years no longer held, because the people started the seven-year cycles anew when they came back from exile. Andrew Steinmann dates this renewal to Tishri of 533 BC, with the first renewed Sabbatical Year occurring in 527t.¹³ With this understanding, the public reading of the law described in Nehemiah chapters 8 and 9 should not be expected to cohere with the calendar of pre-exilic Sabbatical Years, although the reading happened during the Feast of Booths in accordance with Deuteronomy 31:10–11.

¹¹ Jer 21:1–7; 27:12–15; 32:3–44; 34:2–6; 37:3–10, 17–21; 38:14–26.

¹² Gordon, “Sabbatical Cycle,” 81.

¹³ Andrew Steinmann, “A Chronological Note: The Return of the Exiles under Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel (Ezra 1–2),” *JETS* 51.3 (2008): 521.

II. THE PRINCIPLES OF RABBINIC HISTORIOGRAPHY

According to Philip Schaff, “The Talmud ... is a chaos of Jewish learning, wisdom, and folly, a continent of rubbish, with hidden pearls of true maxims and poetic parables.”¹⁴ The same could be said of much of the earlier nonbiblical material—the Mishnah, the Gemara, and Seder ‘Olam—which the Talmud uses as the starting place for its seemingly endless discussions and disagreements.¹⁵ It is, however, curious that certain chronological statements in the Talmud are not open to discussion; they were regarded as historical fact that might be interpreted as to their meaning, but not questioned as to their factuality. Among these are the statements that both destructions of Jerusalem—that by the Babylonians in 587 BC and that by the Romans in AD 70—occurred in the latter part of a Sabbatical Year, and that the vision of the last nine chapters of Ezekiel took place at the beginning of the seventeenth Jubilee Year. Are these statements factual?

In order to address that question properly, it is essential that the historian employ the proper tools and methods to distinguish, in the chaos of Jewish learning, those “hidden pearls of true maxims” that reflect historical fact. What follows here will endeavor to delineate how an objective historian can use such tools to separate the wheat from the chaff in rabbinic statements related to the chronology of the Jubilee and Sabbatical Years, years that were chartered by the commands given to Moses in Leviticus 25.

1. *The principle of embarrassment as applied to rabbinic chronology.* “One of the ways historians can tell whether an author is telling the truth is to test what he says by ‘the principle of embarrassment.’... This principle assumes that any details embarrassing to the author are probably true. Why? Because the tendency of most authors is to leave out anything that makes them look bad.”¹⁶ Christian apologists, such as Geisler and Turek, just cited, and J. Warner Wallace in various YouTube presentations, have applied this principle to show the credibility of the Gospels, because the narrators of the Gospels relate events in the lives of Jesus’s disciples, such as their failure to understand the nature of Jesus and their cowardice when he was captured by the mob in Jerusalem, that would not be presented if the Gospels were merely propaganda designed to advance the beliefs of a sect that came to be called Christianity.¹⁷ Christian apologists to the Muslim world use the

¹⁴ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 12th ed., 8 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1914), 2:39.

¹⁵ The Mishnah is the oral tradition that attempted to preserve Jewish learning that was in jeopardy of being lost when the Second Temple was destroyed in AD 70. It was put into writing around AD 200. The Seder ‘Olam, first composed about AD 160 but probably added to after that, can be considered part of the Mishnah. The Gemara are discussions on the Mishnah. The Mishnah and the Gemara were combined into the Jerusalem Talmud around AD 400 and into the Babylonian Talmud around AD 500.

¹⁶ Norman L. Geisler and Frank Turek, *I Don’t Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 275.

¹⁷ See also Frank Turek, *Stealing from God: Why Atheists Need God to Make Their Case* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 2014), 199–203, a section Turek labels “Embarrassing Testimony.”

principle of embarrassment to demonstrate that the tradition of Muhammed consummating his marriage with Aisha when the girl was only nine years old must be genuine history, because such an atrocity, accepted as it is by all mainstream Muslim scholars, would not have been reported by early Muslims unless it was historically true.

In what follows, the principle of embarrassment is applied to various rabbinic statements related to the Jubilee and Sabbatical cycles, showing that the timing of those cycles, as historically remembered and in agreement with all relevant texts of the Bible, is an embarrassment to explicitly stated principles given by the rabbis in their attempts to construct a chronology of the world. This applies specifically to their chronology of the time from the entry into the Promised Land until the time of Ezekiel in the early exilic period.

2. *The methodology of rabbinic scholarship is to make presumptions, and when those presumptions conflict with evidence, to invent another presumption.* The reason for clashes of rabbinic historical method about dates that can be fixed with reasonable certainty by modern historical research and that agree with the Bible is that the rabbinic approach was dominated by what can be called a presupposition-dominant methodology. That methodology involves inventing a presupposition regarding some historical matter, then producing another presupposition that attempts to negate any evidence that arises to contradict the original presupposition. This methodology may be contrasted with the scientific or inductive method, which also starts with a presupposition in order to explain observed data but allows for modification of the initial presupposition (hypothesis) in order to accommodate new data that are discovered. In what follows, instances are given that show that rabbinic scholarship uses the presupposition-dominant approach, not the scientific method. In each instance, the discordant data that do not match the rabbis' method are the factual data associated with the Jubilee and Sabbatical cycles. These cycles, therefore, by the criterion or principle of embarrassment, should be given high credibility by an objective historian.

We look first at rabbinical writings that reinforce the thesis that Israel's priests were aware of when Jubilee and Sabbatical Years were due during the seventh century BC (time of Josiah) down to the early exilic period (time of Ezekiel). It will also be shown that rabbinic chronological methods, based as they are on the presupposition-dominant approach, could not have predicted correctly the time of the Jubilee and Sabbatical Years that are mentioned for the time of Josiah, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah, and Ezekiel. Consequently, the principle of embarrassment indicates that the rabbinic remembrances of Sabbatical and Jubilee Years during those eras are based on historic remembrance, not on rabbinic speculation or calculation. This exactness has not been explained by critics of a fifteenth-century Exodus.

III. RABBINICAL SOURCES WITH CORRECT UNDERSTANDING OF SABBATICAL AND JUBILEE YEARS

1. *Correct rabbinic account: The language of Ezekiel 40:1, by itself, shows that Ezekiel's vision was at the beginning of a Jubilee Year.* In Part 1 of this two-part series, the Babylonian Talmud was cited with its reference to Ezekiel's Jubilee, as follows:

Is it not written [Ezek 40:1] "In the twenty-fifth year of our captivity, on Rosh HaShanah, on the tenth of the month, in year fourteen after the smiting of the city?" But which year is it when Rosh HaShanah is on the tenth of the month? It must be said that this is a Jubilee.¹⁸

This passage was cited earlier because it is saying that the text of Ezekiel 40:1 is, by itself, sufficient to place Ezekiel's vision at the start of a Jubilee Year, since the reader was expected to be familiar with Leviticus 25:8–10. This passage says that in a Jubilee Year the year started (New Year's Day) on the tenth of Tishri, which according to Leviticus 23:27 is the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). In Part 1 of the present series, it was shown that the Ezekiel passage must be dated to the tenth of Tishri, 574 BC. The passage in b. 'Arak. 12a, in saying that the text of Ezekiel 40:1 by itself refers to the beginning of a Jubilee period, agrees with an earlier rabbinic work, Seder 'Olam,¹⁹ which says in its chapter 11 that Ezekiel saw his vision "at the beginning of a Jubilee period," and, further, that Ezekiel's Jubilee was the seventeenth, a statement that is in exact agreement with the timing of Jubilee Years derived from 1 Kings 6:1 as shown in Table 1.

2. *Correct rabbinic account: Two Jubilees were forty-nine years apart: those of Ezekiel and Josiah.* Seder 'Olam, chapter 24, cites 2 Kings 22:3 referring to the eighteenth year of Josiah and then says, "In that year the book of the Torah was found in the Temple and that year was also the beginning of a Jubilee."²⁰ Extensive documentation was given in the earlier article (Part 1), showing that the text of Ezekiel 40:1 refers to the initiation of the Jubilee Year 574t BC. Thiele's chronology establishes the eighteenth year of Josiah as 623t BC, a figure with which we agree (see Table 2).²¹ These two dates are forty-nine years apart, in harmony with the forty-nine-year Jubilee cycle. But this presents an insurmountable problem to rabbinic chronologi-

¹⁸ b. 'Arak. 12a, author's translation.

¹⁹ "Seder 'Olam" can be translated as "Order of the Ages," or "History of the World." "It is the basis of the historical world view of the Babylonian Talmud and of our counting of years 'From the Creation.'" Henrich W. Guggenheimer, ed. and trans., *Seder Olam: The Rabbinic View of Biblical Chronology* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), ix.

²⁰ The latter part of this statement, that the eighteenth year of Josiah was a Jubilee Year, is missing from some manuscripts of Seder 'Olam. Guggenheimer omits it in his edition, but remarks that it is found in European manuscripts (211). Other editions of Seder 'Olam include it as part of the original text, and the fact that rabbinic calculation methods gave forty-seven years between Ezekiel's Jubilee and the eighteenth year of Josiah explains why later editions of Seder 'Olam would delete this embarrassment to their presupposition-dominant calculation methods.

²¹ Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 179, Chart 28. Young, "When Did Jerusalem Fall?," *JETS* 47.1 (2004): 27–28.

cal methods. Those methods originated in Seder 'Olam and perhaps earlier works, and they are accepted without question in the Babylonian Talmud. The problem is that rabbinical chronology would assign only forty-seven years between the eighteenth year of Josiah and Ezekiel's vision (Ezek 40:1), meaning that they could not both be Jubilee Years in the rabbinic system.

To substantiate that statement, it is sufficient to look at explicit statements in Seder 'Olam that show how its authors counted years of judgeship in the time of the judges and then regnal years in the kingdom period. In Seder 'Olam 12, when considering the years for the judges Jephthah and Ibzan (Judg 12:7-9), this principle is given: "Deduct from these one year that is counted for both of them." For the next two judges, Elon and Abdon (12:11-14), again: "Deduct from these a year that is counted for both of them." The same principle was used for the kingdom period. In Seder 'Olam 22, the author cites 2 Kings 15:32 as saying that Jotham of Judah began to reign in year two of Pekah of Israel, and then he died in year seventeen of Pekah (2 Kgs 16:1) after a reign of sixteen years, which agrees with the method of subtracting one year from the years given in the time of the judges. In modern terminology, this is non-accession reckoning, where the partial year in which the judge or king began is counted as a full year, so that in doing calculations one year must be subtracted from the stated reign length. No alternative to this method (i.e., allowing accession reckoning) is given anywhere in Seder 'Olam.

Therefore rabbinical chronological methods give only forty-seven years between Josiah's Jubilee and that of Ezekiel. The computation is straightforward, as can be seen from Table 2. This gives thirteen years from Josiah's year eighteen to his (last) year thirty-one, zero years for Jehoahaz, ten for Jehoiakim, zero for Jehoiachin, ten for Zedekiah, and then fourteen years to Ezekiel's vision, totaling forty-seven years. But if Jubilees were observed in Josiah's eighteenth year and in the year of Ezekiel's vision, which have in modern times been shown to be forty-nine years apart, it is easy to see why some (not all) later editors of Seder 'Olam omitted the statement the eighteenth year of Josiah being a Jubilee. Why then is it found in some copies, and presumably in the original? The most straightforward answer must be that there was solid historical remembrance that an actual Jubilee was due at that time. It has already been shown that Ezekiel's vision occurred at the start of a Jubilee Year. Once that is established, reckoning back forty-nine years to 623t BC gives Josiah's eighteenth year also as a Jubilee Year, although there is no explicit text in the Bible that so designates it.

Another text in Seder 'Olam agrees with the statement that the eighteenth year of Josiah was a year of Jubilee. In Seder 'Olam 25, the statement is made that "Jehoiachin was exiled in the middle of a Jubilee cycle, in the fourth year of a Sabbatical cycle." Reference to Table 2 shows that this statement is historically accurate: Jehoiachin was exiled in 598t BC, which is twenty-five years after the Jubilee in Josiah's eighteenth year, 623t BC, and thus also in the fourth year of a Sabbatical cycle. But the rabbinic method of calculation cited in the preceding paragraph, by making Josiah's eighteenth year only forty-seven years before Ezekiel's Jubilee, could not accurately compute the correct span of years. Therefore the statement

from Seder 'Olam 25, just cited, agrees with the eighteenth year of Josiah being a Jubilee Year, the sixteenth Jubilee.

Once again, the principle of embarrassment applies: Although rabbinical chronological methods are contradicted by the two Jubilees of Josiah and Ezekiel, the rabbis could not change these embarrassments to their system that used only non-accession reckoning and never considered accession reckoning. This assumption (only non-accession reckoning allowed) is false—see Table 2. Therefore the timing of these two Jubilees cannot be the result of rabbinic speculation or calculation; something else must be the cause of these two dates being known as Jubilees in rabbinic literature. The most reasonable explanation is that the “something else” was historical remembrance. The rabbis had to accept historical records that Jubilee Years really were due in the eighteenth year of Josiah and the time of Ezekiel’s vision in the last chapters of his book, even though the timing of those two Jubilees contradicted their wrong chronological methods. But those two Jubilees are in accordance with the year of the Exodus and the start of the Conquest as derived from 1 Kings 6:1. This exactness has never been explained by critics of the fifteenth-century Exodus or advocates of the late-date composition of the book of Leviticus that charted the Jubilee and Sabbatical Year cycles.

3. *Correct rabbinic account: Both destructions of Jerusalem, the Babylonian in 587 BC and the Roman in AD 70, occurred in a Sabbatical Year.* If Ezekiel 40:1 designated a Jubilee Year, then the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians fourteen years (two Sabbatical cycles) earlier must have been in a Sabbatical Year, specifically in the latter part of the Sabbatical Year 588t, since the city fell in 587 BC, in the summer month of Tammuz (2 Kgs 25:3; Jer 52:12). In agreement with this, Seder 'Olam 30 relates that Jerusalem fell toward the end of a Sabbatical Year, as given here in Guggenheimer’s translation:

You find it said that the destruction of the first Temple was at the end of Sabbath, at the end of a Sabbatical year, when the priests of the family of Yehoiariv were officiating, on the Ninth of Ab, and the same happened the second time.... The city wall was breached on the Ninth of the Fourth month the first time and on the Seventeenth the second time.²²

There is, however, a controversy about the proper translation of phrase that Guggenheimer renders “at the end of Sabbath, at the end of a Sabbatical year.” For the year involved, this translation agrees with both Ezekiel 40:1 marking the beginning of a Jubilee Year, 574t BC, and the city falling fourteen years—two Sabbatical cycles—earlier, in 588t, that is, the summer of 587 BC. However, some translations into English of this passage, and of its quotation in the Talmud (b. 'Arak. 11b) translate the Hebrew that is quoted from Seder 'Olam as saying that the destruction of both temples was not “at the end of Sabbath, at the end of a Sabbatical year” (Guggenheimer), but in “the day after the Sabbath and the year after a Sabbatical

²² Guggenheimer, *Seder Olam*, 264.

year.... And so in the case of the destruction of the Second Temple.”²³ In agreement with Guggenheimer’s rendering is the Soncino translation of b. ‘Arak. 11b: “The day on which the first Temple was destroyed was the ninth of Ab, and it was the going out of the Sabbath, and at the end of the seventh [Sabbatical] year.... The same happened the second time [the second Sanctuary’s destruction].”²⁴

All these translations start with the same Hebrew text, as was originally given in Seder ‘Olam 30. The differences are not in the original, but in the translator’s rendering into English. Andrew Steinmann and I have written extensively on the issue of the correct translation, showing that the rendering of the original Hebrew by Guggenheimer and the Soncino translator is correct, and translators who put the destruction of the two temples in the year after a Sabbatical Year misunderstood the Hebrew phrase used. In our dissertation on Caligula’s statue, we wrote:

Therefore the focus here will be on the phrase that Rabbi Yose uses to associate both Temple burnings with a Sabbatical year: it was מוֹצְאֵי שְׁבֻעֹת, *motsae shevith*. *Motsae* is the plural participial form of the common verb *yatsa*, to go out or to go forth. There is nothing in this verb or any of its declensions that suggests the idea of “after,” as would be required by those who interpret the phrase to mean “after a seventh year (Sabbatical year).”²⁵

That the city fell to the Babylonians in the course of a Sabbatical Year agrees with a Jubilee occurring fourteen years later, at the time of Ezekiel’s vision. It is also consistent with the historically accurate remark in Seder ‘Olam 25 that Jehoiachin was exiled in the middle of a Jubilee cycle and the fourth year of a Sabbatical cycle. Table 2 shows that this was 598t BC, so that the fall of the city ten years later (588t, i.e., summer of 587 BC) would be in a Sabbatical Year. Consequently, the chronology of Seder ‘Olam, which is accepted as authoritative in later rabbinic literature, including the Babylonian Talmud, firmly places the destruction of the First Temple in the latter part of a Sabbatical Year, in agreement with the end of the reign of Zedekiah as shown in Table 2 of the present article. For the Second Temple, this is evidence in support of Wacholder’s calendar of Second Temple Sabbatical Years, as opposed to that of Zuckermann that is one year earlier.²⁶ Important

²³ y. Ta’an. 4:5 in Jacob Neusner, trans., *The Talmud of the Land of Israel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 18:273.

²⁴ *The Babylonian Talmud* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948), 3.65. Brackets and bracketed words are in the Soncino text.

²⁵ Rodger C. Young and Andrew E. Steinmann, “Caligula’s Statue for the Jerusalem Temple and Its Relation to the Chronology of Herod the Great,” *JETS* 62.4 (2019): 770, online at <https://rcyoung.org/articles/Antedating.pdf>. In a footnote to this paragraph, we added, “Jastrow gives a one-word definition of מוֹצְאֵי: ‘exit.’” “Jastrow” is Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (London: Luzac, 1903). In the same footnote we provided three passages from the Babylonian Talmud where מוֹצְאֵי must be translated in the sense given in the Guggenheimer and Soncino translations and not in the sense provided by Jacob Neusner.

²⁶ Ben Zion Wacholder, “The Calendar of Sabbatical Cycles during the Second Temple and the Early Rabbinic Period,” *HUCA* 44 (1973): 153–96; Benedict Zuckermann, *Treatise of the Sabbatical Cycle and the Jubilee: A Contribution to the Archaeology and Chronology of the Time Anterior and Subsequent to the Captivity*

for this article is that the dates of the destruction of both temples in the latter part of Sabbatical Years—as Seder ‘Olam 30 says—is compatible with Ezekiel’s Jubilee (574t BC) in the year that was fourteen years after the year of the destruction of the First Temple in 588t BC (summer of 587).

Some attention should be given to another chronological note in the Seder ‘Olam 30 passage: Why does Rabbi Yose say that the burning of both temples occurred on the ninth of Ab, when we learn from Josephus, an eyewitness of the burning of the Second Temple, that it occurred on the tenth of the month, which he says was the same day of the same month as the burning of the First Temple?²⁷ Second Kings 25:8 states that the Babylonian general Nebuzaradan came to Jerusalem on the seventh of Ab (587 BC) and Jeremiah 52:12–13 says that he entered the city three days later, the tenth of Ab, after which he burned the temple. Why does Seder ‘Olam state that both temples were burnt one day earlier, a tradition that is followed to the present day? The full explanation of this anomaly could be the subject of another article that deals with the ninth of Ab (Tisha b’Av) in Jewish tradition. In order not to detract from the main purpose of the present article, only this short summary from an earlier paper is given:

The explanation in the Talmud of why Rabbi Yose dated both burnings to the ninth of Ab (*b. Ta’an. 29a*) is not satisfactory. Putting the burning on the ninth of the month is contrary to Josephus for the Second Temple and Jer 52:12 for the First Temple. The reason for the slight adjustment in the *SO* [Seder ‘Olam] is apparently because the Bar-Koseba rebellion came to an end on the ninth of Ab, AD 135, and Rabbi Yose’s mentor, Rabbi Akiba, saw the messianic hopes he pinned on Bar-Koseba dashed when Bar-Koseba was killed and his fortress taken on that date. By a slight adjustment of one day, the ninth of Ab could be associated with other calamities that came upon the Jewish nation, including the two Temple burnings.²⁸

The disparity between the ninth and tenth of Ab illustrates another example where rabbinic presupposition is allowed to override historic fact, in this case the day of the month for the burning of both temples. The remembrance that the Second Temple was burnt in a Sabbatical Year very likely came from Rabbi Akiba. Akiba would have been about twenty years old at the time of the Roman capture of Jerusalem, and hence would have known well that it was a Sabbatical Year. The very questionable other statements in Seder ‘Olam 30 regarding the burning of the two temples—that the same priestly course was on duty, that the same hymn was being sung—should not be used to discredit the statement that the year in which the burning of the Second Temple took place was a Sabbatical Year, as would have been remembered by Akiba, who was presumably already well educated in rabbinic

Accompanied by a Table of Sabbatical Years, trans. A. Löwy (London: Chronological Institute, 1866); trans. of *Über Sabbathjahrcyclus und Jubelperiode* (Breslau: W. G. Korn, 1857).

²⁷ *J.W.* 6.250/6.4.5, 6.268/6.4.8.

²⁸ Young and Steinmann, “Caligula’s Statue,” 770n35.

practices and chronology in AD 70. According to the astronomical research of Herman Goldstine, the day on which Bar Koseba was killed, 9 Ab in AD 135, was a Sabbath, which is additional evidence that the *מוֹצָאֵי שַׁבָּת* of Seder 'Olam 30 and b. 'Arak. 11b must be translated to give the meaning "the latter part of a Sabbath day," and the year expression must be translated as the latter part of a Sabbatical Year.²⁹

IV. RABBINICAL SOURCES WITH INCORRECT UNDERSTANDING OF SABBATICAL AND JUBILEE YEARS

When the timing of Sabbatical and Jubilee Years is based on rabbinic chronological methods, not on historical remembrance, the resultant dates clash with Israel's chronology as established by modern historical research. The sections below give instances of such rabbinic calculation. Those calculations start from three wrong principles: (1) The years of Judean kings are always to be measured in a non-accession sense; this is in contradiction to what is shown in Table 2, where only those kings whose reign length is given twice, the second figure in parentheses, used non-accession reckoning. (2) Each reign length refers to the years of sole reign; Table 2 shows that this was not the case for Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, Jotham, and Manasseh. (3) Israel must have been in its land for an exact number of Jubilee cycles. These are the basic presuppositions of the presupposition-dominant approach to history that was presented in Section II.2 as the opposite of a scientific (induction-based) approach. This last of these wrong presuppositions will be addressed first.

1. *First wrong rabbinic assumption: Israel must have been in the land an integral number of Jubilee cycles.* Thus Seder 'Olam 11:

Now Israel stayed 850 years from the time they entered until the time they left, these are 17 complete Jubilee periods. And so it says (Ez. 40:1): "In the 25th year of our exile, on the day of the New Year, on the tenth of the month, 14 years after the destruction of the city [of Jerusalem]." When did he [Ezechiel] have this vision? At the beginning of a Jubilee period. If they stayed for 17 entire Jubilee periods, how can there be an excess of 17 years? One has to say that 14 years Israel spent at Gilgal, seven when they were conquering and seven when they were distributing.³⁰

This Seder 'Olam passage declares that Israel stayed in its land for seventeen Jubilee periods, an assertion that is not backed by any scriptural reference. The only justification given for this presupposition is the statement that Ezekiel 40:1 refers to the beginning of the seventeenth Jubilee, and it is assumed that Ezekiel 40:1 somehow supports the idea of seventeen Jubilees in the land. But if Israel had to

²⁹ Herman H. Goldstine, *New and Full Moons: 1001 B.C. to A.D. 1651* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1973; repr., 1991). On p. 95, Goldstine gives a full moon at Babylon on July 28, AD 135, at 11:15 AM, which means that the first crescent would have been observed at Jerusalem in the evening of July 29, and thus 1 Ab was Friday, July 30, AD 135, and 9 Ab was Saturday, August 7.

³⁰ Guggenheimer, *Seder Olam*, 116.

stay in its land an exact number of Jubilee cycles, why does not the author of Seder 'Olam make this come out right by moving the seventeenth Jubilee back fourteen years so that it coincides with the beginning of the Babylonian exile in 587 BC? The only reason that suggests itself for not taking this simple solution is that it was known that Ezekiel's Jubilee was a historical fact, and it was also known that it was the seventeenth Jubilee, facts that could not be denied no matter how strongly they contradicted rabbinic speculation. This includes the presupposition that Israel had to be in its land an exact number of Jubilee cycles. Ezekiel's Jubilee was, and is to this day, an embarrassment to rabbinic calculation methods. Consequently, the principle of embarrassment implies that assigning the beginning of a Jubilee Year to Ezekiel 40:1 was not based on those calculation methods but was a matter of historical reality.

The other principle at play in the method of the authors of Seder 'Olam, and of all rabbinic commentators who followed them, is the principle of presupposition-dominant reasoning. The presupposition had been stated: Israel must be in its land an exact number of Jubilee cycles. It is contradicted by the seventeenth Jubilee occurring in 574t BC, not fourteen years earlier when the city fell. Rather than abandoning the initial presupposition, a second presupposition, that the counting of cycles started fourteen years after the entry into the land, is invented in order to support the initial idea, even though that second presupposition contradicts the statement in Leviticus 25:2 that counting of the cycles was to start "when you come into the land." By the presupposition-dominant approach, the first presupposition, that Israel must spend an exact number of Jubilee cycles in its land, is not allowed to be negated by the embarrassing fact that Ezekiel's Jubilee was fourteen years after the exile began. Instead, a new presupposition is invented in order to preserve the first presupposition. Presupposition-dominant reasoning, such as is found here and throughout rabbinic literature dealing with OT texts, can thus be characterized as anti-scientific and, ultimately, anti-intellectual. It is unfortunate that this method is so widely used in our own day in the schools of higher criticism, where archaeological and inscriptional data that conflict with the latest modifications of the Documentary Hypothesis are explained away by inventing another presupposition, or, very commonly, just ignored.

This should not be misunderstood as saying that all presuppositions must be avoided. We use presuppositions constantly in our daily lives. In the scientific method, the first step is observation of something (facts or seeming facts) that need to be understood, and the second step is to make a hypothesis that seeks to explain those facts. The hypothesis is basically a presupposition; it is an idea that is put forth that hopefully will explain the observed data. The third step in the scientific method is to devise an experiment that will test whether the hypothesis (presupposition) can predict new results. If the experiment is successful, the hypothesis is accepted as the best current explanation of the data, continually subject to modification when new data arise that might challenge the hypothesis.

We should always be willing to admit that our ideas might be wrong when they are contradicted by well-established new data. An example can be given from my own experience. In a 2008 paper written by Bryant Wood and myself, we stated

that the large altar discovered by Adam Zertal on Mt. Ebal could not be the altar built by Joshua (Josh 8:30–32) based on two principles (presuppositions): (1) that the date of the construction of the earlier altar given by Zertal, ca. 1240 BC,³¹ contradicted the biblical dating of Joshua derived from both 1 Kings 6:1 and the chronological notes of the book of Judges, and (2) that the altar was on the wrong side of Mt. Ebal; it should have been on the side facing Mt. Gerizim.³² It is my belief now that this second presupposition has been proved to be false; there is no evidence in either Moses's commission to Joshua (Deut 27:4–8) or the actual construction of the altar (Josh 8:30–32) that indicates it had to be on the side of the mountain facing Mt. Gerizim. For myself, I am glad to admit the error in the second presupposition, because my goal is not to establish my own ideas, but to determine the truth by taking into account all valid biblical and archaeological evidence. For the first presupposition, however, since our publication in 2008, archaeological evidence has appeared showing that the seven-by-nine-meter rectangular altar that Zertal called Joshua's altar, and which we agree was built in the latter half of the thirteenth century BC, was not the real Joshua's altar; it was, instead, built over, and centered on, a smaller round altar that had animal bones, ashes, and plaster.³³ In 2005, Steven Rudd, who had accompanied Zertal to the site of the two altars, suggested to him that this earlier round altar was the real Joshua's altar and that the larger rectangular altar was built over it at a later time in order to honor and protect it.³⁴ Zertal never accepted this suggestion; he designated the earlier altar by an ambiguous term, "primogenal," and insisted it was built by Israelites who were in the land before Joshua and came, not from Egypt, but from the east.³⁵ Zertal's dating of the earlier altar at around 1240 BC has now been negated by pottery evidence of four types that were associated with the altar site and that must be dated between 1500 and 1300 BC and no later.³⁶ These new archaeological data are

³¹ Adam Zertal, "An Early Iron Age Cultic Site on Mount Ebal: Excavation Seasons 1982–1987: Preliminary Report," *Tel Aviv: Journal of the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University* 14.2 (1987): 109.

³² Rodger C. Young and Bryant G. Wood, "A Critical Analysis of the Evidence from Ralph Hawkins for a Late-Date Exodus-Conquest," *JETS* 51.2 (2008): 225–43.

³³ Plaster used on an altar is a rarity in Near Eastern archaeology. But see Deuteronomy 27:4, 8 and Joshua 8:32, where Moses commanded Joshua to cover the Mt. Ebal altar with plaster so that the words of the law could be written on it. Zertal boxed up some of the plaster and stored it in the basement of the University of Haifa over thirty years ago. There is currently an effort using advanced technology to see if any writing can be deciphered on the plaster.

³⁴ Steven Rudd, personal communication.

³⁵ Zertal, "An Early Iron Age Cultic Site," 158, 160.

³⁶ Abigail Leavitt, *The El-Burnat (A) Structure(s): Joshua's Altar?* (Katy, TX: Nehemiah Press, 2022), 47–49. Leavitt lists four items that were dated to the LB IIA or earlier: a carinated bowl, a bowl/krater, a chalice, and a chalice base (47). The end of the LB IIA period is usually put at 1300 BC, well before Zertal's estimate of ca. 1240 BC for the construction of the earlier (Joshua's) altar. All four examples are consistent with the earlier altar being built at the end of the fifteenth century BC. Naturally, there is also pottery from a later date, since the site continued to be used until both altars were buried with a large covering of stones in about 1150 BC, a covering that remained until removed by Zertal in the 1980s. Ralph Hawkins, a thirteenth-century Exodus advocate, makes the following curious statement about some of the ceramics at the Mt. Ebal site: "Two Egyptianized scarabs were found that clearly establish a

consistent with the 1406 BC entry into the land that is supported by both the Bible's Exodus Era texts and, independently, by the calendar of Jubilee Years. Will those who accepted Zertal's date for the earlier altar accept this new archaeological evidence, or will it be explained away by inventing a new presupposition that has no archaeological evidence to support it—the presupposition-dominant method?

2. *Second wrong statement from Seder 'Olam 11: Israel was in its land 850 years, from entry until the Babylonian Exile.* Where did the 850 years come from? It apparently was derived by taking 479 years from the Exodus until Solomon's fourth year (Rabbi Yose would have understood 1 Kings 6:1 properly in this regard), subtracting the forty years in the wilderness, then adding thirty-six years for the remainder of Solomon's reign, followed by adding, in a non-accession sense, the reign lengths of all Judean monarchs (see Table 2). It is a presupposition of Seder 'Olam that that all these reign lengths were for the years of sole reign (see section III.2 above) and none were measured from a co-regency. The result is 851 years, or 850 years if six years are given for Athaliah from 2 Kings 11:3 instead of the seven years of 2 Kings 11:4. Or perhaps Rabbi Yose just rounded the 851 years to 850. Thus wrong assumptions about how to calculate the chronology of the kingdom period led to conflict not only with modern calculations of the time from the Exodus until the Babylonian exile, but with rabbinic assumptions that this time must involve seventeen Jubilee periods exactly.³⁷

3. *Third wrong statement from Seder 'Olam 11: The 850 years "are 17 complete Jubilee periods."* This is incongruous with the further statement that 850 years are "an excess of 17 years," that is, seventeen years more than seventeen Jubilee cycles of forty-nine years each. Apparently the phrase "these are 17 complete Jubilee periods" was added later than the time of Rabbi Yose, because accepting that the 850 years were seventeen complete Jubilee periods, implying a Jubilee cycle of fifty years, then contradicts the question that the passage asks about the 850 years being an excess of seventeen years over seventeen Jubilee cycles of forty-nine years each. That question only makes sense if the original author knew that the Jubilee cycle was forty-nine years.³⁸ Additional evidence that the phrase "these are 17 complete Jubilee periods" was not in the original text of Seder 'Olam 11 is found in the citation of this passage in the Talmud (b. 'Arak 12b), where the phrase "these are 17 Jubilee periods" is absent.

terminus post quem of the mid-to-late thirteenth century B.C.E. for the founding of the site" (*Discovering Exodus: Content, Interpretation, Reception* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021], 184). Any archaeologist knows that finding a scarab does not automatically set a *terminus post quem*, it only indicates that the site was occupied at that time and says nothing about earlier occupation. No one disputes that the site was occupied in mid-to-late thirteenth century BC. Leavitt's work has now shown it was also occupied—by Israelites—before 1300 BC.

³⁷ The rabbinic literature contains futile attempts to explain the 850 years of Seder 'Olam 11. See Guggenheimer, *Seder Olam*, 117–18; b. Sanh. 38a; b. Giṭ. 88a.

³⁸ Guggenheimer, who accepted a 50-year Jubilee cycle, could not understand the "excess of 17 years," writing, "The reading 'excess of 17 years' must be a scribal or typographical error" (*Seder Olam*, 119).

The 850-year figure, however, was probably in the original text, because that number is what provoked the question of why this exceeded by seventeen years the postulated seventeen Jubilee cycles of forty-nine years each, giving 833 years. Section IV.2 just above discussed the probable source of the 850-year figure.

4. *Fourth wrong rabbinic assumption: Judean years of reign must always be reckoned from the start of sole reign, and this principle can be used to date Sennacherib's invasion of Judah.* Years of reign, as given in the historical books of the Hebrew Bible, were sometimes measured from the start of sole reign and sometimes from the start of a co-regency. This can be seen in Table 2 where, following modern exegesis and historical research, the reign lengths given in the Bible for Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, Jotham, and Manasseh are measured from the start of a co-regency, not the start of their sole reign. Coucke and Thiele had the right approach in this matter (the inductive or scientific method), that the data must be examined to determine, in each instance, which method was used.

Seder 'Olam 23 states, "In the eleventh year of a Jubilee cycle, in the fourth year of a Sabbatical cycle, Sennacherib attacked." The two rabbinic assumptions—non-accession reckoning always, and reign lengths are always measured from the sole reign—led the author of Seder 'Olam 23 into wrong conclusions when trying to date Sennacherib's invasion of Judah. As seen above (section I.1), this was in the spring of 701 BC by modern historical consensus. By starting from the acknowledged Jubilee Year in the eighteenth year of Josiah, the calculation of Seder 'Olam 23 to reckon the time of Sennacherib would give the following: seventeen years back from Josiah's Jubilee, one year for Amon, fifty-four years for Manasseh, and then fifteen years from the twenty-ninth year of Hezekiah until the invasion of Sennacherib in Hezekiah's fourteenth year—totaling eighty-seven years from Josiah's Jubilee back to Sennacherib's invasion. Two Jubilee cycles are ninety-eight years, so this would place Sennacherib's invasion in year eleven of a Jubilee cycle and year four of a Sabbatical cycle. As cited above, this is exactly what Seder 'Olam 23 says, indicating that the calculation just given is indeed the rabbinic method of calculating back from the known (and historically correct) Jubilee in the eighteenth year of Josiah. The rabbinic calculation is entirely wrong: eighty-seven years before Josiah's Jubilee was 710 BC, not the historically accepted 701 BC for Sennacherib's invasion. The major problem in the rabbinic calculation is the assumption that regnal years are always measured from the start of a sole reign instead of letting the data determine whether they were from the start of a sole reign or a co-regency. Since rabbinic chronology generally does not use cross-checking with the chronology of the northern kingdom, there is no way to get the correct figure in these matters when such data are not taken into account. For the correct calculation of this time, a calculation that is consistent with the Jubilee/Sabbatical Year calendar of Table 1 and the start of counting in 1406 BC, see section I.1 above.

IV. ATTEMPTS TO EXPLAIN AWAY THE EXACT CORRESPONDENCE OF EZEKIEL'S JUBILEE WITH THE BIBLICAL DATE FOR THE EXODUS DERIVED FROM 1 KINGS 6:1

In the book *Five Views on the Exodus*, Scott Stripling took the position that the Exodus occurred in the fifteenth century BC, versus the other four positions: (1) a thirteenth-century Exodus (James Hoffmeier), (2) a thirteenth-century Exodus that involved the Hyksos (Peter Feinman), (3) a twelfth-century Exodus (Gary Rendsburg), and (4) the Exodus was mostly legendary and basically not historical (Ronald Hendel).³⁹ Among several other evidences that argue in favor of a fifteenth-century Exodus, Stripling devoted a paragraph to the evidence from Ezekiel 40:1, Seder 'Olam 11, and the Babylonian Talmud that Ezekiel's vision was at the start of the seventeenth Jubilee, and that another Jubilee was observed in the eighteenth year of Josiah. "Both figures place the start of counting for the Sabbatical and Jubilee Years in 1406 BC, in agreement with the 1446 date for the exodus calculated from 1 Kgs 6:1 and the subsequent forty years in the wilderness."⁴⁰ If we say that we believe in mathematics and science, then surely we ought to pay attention to this argument because of its mathematical exactness. How can the two independent methods of determining the date of the Exodus agree so exactly unless they are based on historical fact?

1. *Rendsburg's response.* Only one correspondent, Gary Rendsburg, saw fit to respond to Stripling's argument about the agreement of Ezekiel's Jubilee as the seventeenth Jubilee with the date of the Exodus as calculated from 1 Kings 6:1.⁴¹ His argument was threefold: (1) The First of Tishri was not called Rosh HaShanah until the time of the Mishnah (ca. AD 200). (2) Ezekiel 40:1 refers to the tenth of Nisan, not the tenth of Tishri. (3) Using Seder 'Olam for chronological information "sends one down a very slippery slope," for which he presents its shortening of the Persian period as the most glaring example. Rendsburg's argument (1) is essentially an argument from silence; how does he know that the first of Tishri was not called Rosh HaShanah until around AD 200? The Mishnah (Hebrew "repetition," i.e., teaching) was an attempt to preserve knowledge that was in danger of being lost when the Second Temple was destroyed and the Jewish people were dispersed, that is, its claimed source was historical knowledge that was preserved orally before being put into writing about AD 200. Does Rendsburg really think that none of that knowledge precedes AD 200, but was all invented then? Rendsburg's second point, that Ezekiel 40:1 refers to the month of Nisan, not Tishri, was the subject of

³⁹ Scott Stripling et al., *Five Views on the Exodus: Historicity, Chronology, and Theological Implications*, ed. Mark Janzen and Stanley Gundry, Counterpoints: Bible and Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2021).

⁴⁰ Scott Stripling, "The Fifteenth-Century (Early-Date) Exodus View," in Stripling et al., *Five Views on the Exodus*, 31.

⁴¹ Gary Rendsburg, "Response to Scott Stripling," in Stripling et al., *Five Views on the Exodus*, 68.

Section I.3 in Part 1 of the present two-part series, showing the several reasons why the month was Tishri.

Rendsburg's third point was that Seder 'Olam is not to be trusted as a historical document, principally because of its acknowledged shortening of the Persian period. Let us apply this same logic to the writings of Josephus. Josephus stated that the siege of Jerusalem by Herod and the Roman general Sossius was when Marcus Agrippa and Caninius Gallus were consuls at Rome, that is, in the Roman year 37 BC.⁴² As initially pointed out by Filmer,⁴³ in the consular year corresponding to 37 BC, the Roman historian Dio Cassius wrote that "the Romans accomplished nothing worthy of note in Syria."⁴⁴ For Roman writers, Syria included Judea, so this excludes a major undertaking such as a prolonged siege followed by a successful capture of a nation's capital (Jerusalem) in 37 BC. Josephus's consular year is also contradicted by Josephus himself in his same sentence, when he says that the capture of the city took place "on the day of the Fast⁴⁵ ... as if it were a recurrence of the misfortune which came upon the Jews in the time of Pompey, for they were captured by Sossius on the very same day, twenty-seven years later." Pompey the Great captured Jerusalem on the Day of Atonement, 63 BC, so twenty-seven years later was 36 BC, one year after the consulates of Marcus Agrippa and Caninius Gallus. For these and other reasons,⁴⁶ Josephus was demonstrably wrong about the consular year when Sossius and Herod took Jerusalem. There are also many other mistakes that can be pointed out in the writings of Josephus. Therefore, according to Rendsburg's principle that showing a few places where an ancient historical source is incorrect is sufficient to discard all historical information from that source, historians should not write history based on anything written by Josephus. The method of genuine historical research, on the other hand, uses criteria such as the principle of embarrassment, correlation from other sources, and other reasonable principles to separate the wheat from the chaff in ancient writings. This is why the major part of this present work has aimed to show how a proper historical method can separate the chaff (chronological statements based on rabbinic presuppositions) from the wheat (chronological statements that can reasonably be shown to be based on genuine historical events).

2. *Hawkins's response: the Amarna age.* A seemingly more serious challenge to a fifteenth-century Exodus is presented by Ralph Hawkins, an advocate of a thirteenth-century Exodus. His most significant challenge is the statement that "Egypt continued to exercise hegemony over Canaan and Syria through the Late Bronze Age, until about 1250 BC. The idea that the Israelites could attack vital interests in

⁴² *Ant.* 14.487/14.16.4.

⁴³ W. E. Filmer, "The Chronology of the Reign of Herod the Great," *JTS* 17.2 (1966): 286.

⁴⁴ *Hist.* 49.23.

⁴⁵ The Day of Atonement, as in Acts 27:9.

⁴⁶ See, for example, Andrew E. Steinmann and Rodger C. Young, "Consular and Sabbatical Years in Herod's Life," *BSc* 177.708 (2020): 442–61, and <https://rcyoung.org/articles/ConsularSabbatical.pdf>.

Canaan without evoking a response in Egypt during this period seems unlikely.”⁴⁷ This statement might seem convincing to anyone who is ignorant of the Amarna correspondence. These letters, many of them written by mayors of the Canaanite city-states that had previously been subject to the Egyptians, complain that the whole land is being taken over by a group of peoples called collectively the “‘Apiru” or “‘Habiru” and their allies.⁴⁸ All during this time (first half of fourteenth century BC) the Egyptians, instead of exercising Hawkins’s supposed “hegemony” over the land, were continually failing to heed the urgent requests from their Canaanite city-mayors for help. What had happened to the mighty Egyptian Empire of the Eighteenth Dynasty, when Thutmose III, the Napoleon of ancient Egypt, made seventeen campaigns through Canaan and Syria, going as far as the Euphrates without ever encountering any resistance from a people called Habiru or ‘Apiru? They were, however, present in Egypt at least as early as the reign of Thutmose III, where they were known as wine-makers or importers.⁴⁹ But what happened to the mighty Egyptian army after the time of Thutmose III, so that, judging from the Amarna letters, the help never arrived for the beleaguered Canaanite vassal-mayors? Excerpts from some of these letters:

- El Amarna letter 74 (EA 74) from Rib-Hadda, mayor of Gubla/Byblos: “Behold, the war of the ‘Apiru against <me> is severe ...”

⁴⁷ Hawkins, *Discovering Exodus*, 25.

⁴⁸ The standard English language edition of the Amarna correspondence is *The Amarna Letters*, ed. and trans. William Moran (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1992). Moran’s usual transcription of the Sumerian logogram SA.GAS is “‘Apiru,” although in letters 289 and 290 he transcribes as “‘Hapiru.” An earlier translator, Hugo Winckler, transliterated the name as “‘Habiru,” not “‘Apiru” (*The Tell-el-Amarna Letters* [Berlin: Reuther and Reichard, 1896], 283–333), as did William Hallo, “A Letter to Zalaia,” *COS* 3:243. “‘Habiru” has a more general reference than just the Israelites, as shown by Abraham being called a Hebrew in Genesis 14:13 and Potiphar’s wife referring to Joseph as a Hebrew in Genesis 39:14, 17, some years before Jacob (Israel) entered Egypt. Not all Habiru were Hebrews, but all Hebrews were included in the term Habiru. The term also apparently took on a negative connotation beyond its ethnic sense, as is the case with “vandal” in our day.

⁴⁹ Clyde Billington, “The Israelites are the ‘Apiru/Habiru in the Amarna Letters, Part One,” *Artifax*, Autumn 2023: 18, citing Nicholas Grimal, *A History of Ancient Egypt*, trans. Ian Shaw (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 219. Billington goes on to say, “The large number of ‘Apiru/Habiru, who are mentioned in the Amarna Letters did not appear in Canaan until sometime after the death of Amenhotep II ca. 1415 BC” (18). Billington’s three-part series in *Artifax* (Autumn 2023, Winter 2024, Summer 2024) is highly recommended for the light it sheds on the biblical conquest by the Amarna letters, and, correspondingly, the light that the biblical books of Joshua and Judges shed on the Amarna correspondence. For example, Amarna letters EA 244, 245, 246, 250 regarding Lab’ayu, mayor of Shechem and his sons, explain why Israel proceeded immediately to Shechem after burning Jericho and Ai, and the Israelites were able to conduct the reading of the law’s promises on Mt. Gerizim and its curses on Mt. Ebal with no trouble from Shechem, which was situated between the two mountains, or from its mayor. The Shechemites would have been included among the foreigners (גֵּרִים) who joined the Israelites in the Mt. Gerizim-Mt. Ebal ceremony described in Joshua 8:33. Billington summarizes: “Egypt basically lost control over Canaan in the mid 14th Century BC, not in the ‘mid 12th century B.C.E.’ as can be clearly seen in the Amarna Letters” (“The Israelites are the ‘Apiru/Habiru in the Amarna Letters, Part Three,” *Artifax* [Summer 2024], 8).

- EA 77, from the same mayor, and repeated in EA 79: “If t[hi]s year no [ar]chers come out, then all lands will be joi[ne]d t[o] the ‘Apir[u].”
- EA 111, author’s name effaced: “[I]f this [year] there [are no a]rchers, then all lands [will be joined] to [the ‘A]piru.”
- EA 284, from mayor of Qiltu(?): “Be informed, O king, my lord, that all the lands of the king, my lord, have been taken away. I am all alone.”
- EA 288, from Abdi-Heba, king of Jerusalem: “... but now the ‘Apiru have taken the very cities of the king. Not a single mayor remains to the king, my lord; all are lost.”

The timing of the letters is from “about the thirtieth year of Amenophis III and extends no later than the first year or so of Tutankhamun.”⁵⁰ According to the Egyptian low chronology, this would be from about 1360 BC to 1330 BC and would include, between Amenophis III and Tutankhamun, pharaohs Akhenaten (seventeen years) and Semenkhare (two years). The higher Egyptian chronology would date these pharaohs about twenty to twenty-five years earlier. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* uses the higher chronology for the reign of Thutmose III, dating his reign from 1504 to 1452 BC, so that his son and successor, Amenhotep II, would be on the throne in 1446 BC, the biblical year of the Exodus as derived from 1 Kings 6:1.⁵¹ The next paragraph will give the name of the Exodus pharaoh provided by an Egyptian source.

What happened to the Egyptian empire, and particularly to its mighty army, after the reign of the all-conquering Thutmose III? An Exodus in 1446 BC, with the Egyptian army perishing in the *Yam Suph* (Exodus 14) offers the biblical explanation of this major turn of events between the reign of Thutmose III and the reigns of his successors in the fourteenth century BC. What is not so generally acknowledged is that the Egyptians had kept a record of a disaster that happened to a certain pharaoh Amenophis when he was chasing a multitude of runaway “scabby and leprous” slaves who must have been very numerous, because Amenophis’s pursuing army consisted of 300,000 men.⁵² Josephus is here quoting Manetho, a third-century-BC Egyptian priest who must have had access to earlier temple records, and whom Josephus continually misconstrues because he (Josephus) does not understand that Manetho makes a clear distinction between the Hyksos and the slaves that left Egypt many years after the time of the Hyksos. Josephus, not Manetho, equated the two ethnic groups. The only pharaohs with the name Amenophis (Greek form of Amenhotep) were in the Eighteenth Dynasty, and the only proper fit is Amenhotep II, son and successor of Thutmose III.

⁵⁰ Moran, *Amarna Letters*, xxxiv.

⁵¹ Jadwiga Lipińska, “Thutmose III,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, ed. Donald B. Redford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3:401–403. More recently, Douglas Petrovich also accepts the high chronology’s initial year of Thutmose III as ca. 1504 BC (the same as Lipińska) and his death in 1450 BC. See Petrovich, *Origins of the Hebrews: New Evidence of Israelites in Egypt from Joseph to the Exodus* (Nashville: New Creation, 2021), 214.

⁵² Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1:245/1.26.

What happened to Amenhotep's army of 300,000, the size of which was probably no exaggeration because the principle of embarrassment would suggest that a smaller number would be less embarrassing for what is surely described in Manetho's next words as their absolute demise? Recalling that the Egyptians never admitted defeat in warfare, Manetho said this about Amenophis: "Instead, however, of engaging them [the runaway slaves], he, under the belief that he was to fight against the gods, turned back and repaired to Memphis."⁵³ Since Memphis was south of his starting place, which apparently was at Avaris in the north,⁵⁴ his purpose in going to Memphis was probably to assemble a new army from the southern garrisons. All this has an explanation if we accept the dating of the Exodus in 1446 BC. None of it, including the Amarna correspondence, corresponds to a thirteenth-century Exodus, or the denial that there ever was an Exodus in the sense described in the Bible. Skeptics can easily point out errors in some of the statements made by both Josephus and Manetho, but can they explain why an Egyptian priest would invent an account such as the defeat of Amenhotep's army, a defeat that is a major theme of Manetho's writing as quoted—not just cited—by Josephus?

3. *Hawkins's response: citing rabbinic sources to discredit the 480 years of 1 Kings 6:1.* In his book *How Israel Became a People*, cited earlier, Ralph Hawkins explains why the 480th year of 1 Kings 6:1 should not be taken literally.⁵⁵ Hawkins, like his predecessors, never explains why the chronology of the Jubilee/Sabbatical cycles matches exactly the start of counting for those cycles in 1406 BC. Instead, his principal method is to note rabbinic mentions of 480-year periods that are recognized by all competent historians as inaccurate, and to use them to discredit the 480th-year figure of 1 Kings 6:1. Thus, he cites rabbinic commentators who taught that "there were approximately 480 years from Abraham's recognition of God until the emergence of the Hebrews as a free nation."⁵⁶ This figure cannot possibly be correct or even approximately right if we take the 430 years of Exodus 12:40 as starting when Jacob and his family entered Egypt (the Long Sojourn theory), and neither is it very close if we use the LXX and Samaritan variants of Exodus 12:40 that would include Abraham's and Isaac's time in Egypt; this would only be 430 years (the Short Sojourn theory).

Nevertheless, Hawkins continues to cite patently erroneous rabbinic authority as follows (pp. 54–55): "After the building of the first temple, 480 years elapsed until the second one was built. Another 480 years transpired until the rebellion under Bar Kochba." Actual time from the beginning of the First Temple in 967 BC to the start of the Second Temple, which Hawkins dates to 538 BC, would be 429 years. The time from the start of Second Temple (again using Hawkins's date of 538) until the Bar-Koseba rebellion in AD 132: 669 years. This is a very strange

⁵³ Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1:245–46/1.26.

⁵⁴ Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.237/1.26.

⁵⁵ Hawkins, *How Israel Became a People*, 51–63.

⁵⁶ Hawkins, *How Israel Became a People*, 54.

hermeneutic. In order to discredit the historical accuracy of the 480th year of the Exodus Era given in 1 Kings 6:1, Hawkins summons to his aid the unhistorical speculations of the rabbis. The cart is before the horse: How could these rabbinic fantasies, all of them written several centuries after the writing of 1 Kings 6:1, be the source of the 480th-year figure in that text? And while he uses rabbinic fictions to discredit the literalness of 1 Kings 6:1, Hawkins cannot accept the few places where rabbinical tradition got it right, such as placing the destruction of both temples in the latter part of a Sabbatical Year—a tradition that (as was shown above) was based on historical remembrance rather than the rabbinic presupposition-dominant methodology, and that supports 1406 BC being the year that began the reckoning of Jubilee/Sabbatical Years.

One final question for Hawkins, who has written extensively on the Mt. Ebal altars: Is he willing to accept the archaeological dating given by Abigail Leavitt for the ceramics which must be dated to 1300 BC or earlier, and which are associated with the older of the two altars? Leavitt has spent many seasons excavating in Israel; she is assistant director of the Shiloh dig, currently the largest excavation in Israel; and she and the director, Scott Stripling, are experts in Bronze Age pottery. Can this new evidence regarding the pre-1300 existence of the smaller round altar on Mt. Ebal, which is definitely Israelite and which the larger rectangular altar was built over and centered on, be explained away without using a new presupposition in a presupposition-dominant, not artifact-based, methodology?

4. *The Soleb Inscription, consistent with the Amarna correspondence.* Additional information in support of the fifteenth-century Exodus has come from an inscription made by Amenhotep III at the Soleb Temple in what is now northern Sudan. It will be recalled that Amenhotep III was one of the do-nothing pharaohs of the Amarna correspondence, with his regnal dates as ca. 1407–1370 BC in the Egyptian high chronology. This was right at the initial conquest of Canaan when we accept 1446 BC as the biblical date for the Exodus, followed by forty years in the wilderness. Amenhotep III apparently never accomplished anything of note in Canaan, as evidenced by the complaints addressed to him from its mayors in the contemporary records of the Amarna correspondence. Nevertheless, he did make an expedition into Kush (modern Sudan), where he built the Soleb Temple to commemorate his “great” accomplishments. In two places in the temple, he refers to his supposed conquering of a group called the *shasu* (nomads, bedouins) of YHWH. In earlier reports from the site, no photographs were published of the cartouches that contained the name YHWH (Egyptian *yhw3*); only drawings (transcriptions) were given. For that reason, and at some personal risk, Titus Kennedy traveled to the site and took photographs of the two inscriptions.⁵⁷ After examining the photo of the cartouche that contained “land of the *shasu* of *yhw3*,” Kennedy found that “a minor

⁵⁷ Titus Kennedy, “Nomads of Yahweh, the Exodus Wanderings, and the Soleb Temple,” *Bible and Spade* 34.2 (2021): 16–21. Kennedy also published “The Land of the š3sw (Nomads) of yhw3 at Soleb,” *Dotawo: A Journal of Nubian Studies* 6.1 (2019): 175–92, online at <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/07x6659z>.

error had been made in the previous transcriptions,” and that the final sign (glyph) had been misread and had been published wrongly in the literature for decades. The correct translation is now quite certainly “the land of the nomads of Yhwh.” In order to escape the conclusion that this is evidence of a fifteenth-century Exodus, Ronald Hendel wrote regarding the Soleb inscription, “Yhw is probably a place name.”⁵⁸ But Kennedy explains: “There is no topographical site in the entire region with the name *yhw* or anything similar.... There is no land determinative, and therefore ‘Yhwh’ is probably a personal name, not a place name.... This phrase would then have been a reference to the divine name often rendered ‘Yahweh’ and to the people who worshipped Yahweh.”⁵⁹ Some scholars, realizing what this means to theories that there was no Exodus from Egypt in the fifteenth century BC, have suggested that Amenhotep III’s *shasu* of Yahweh were Edomites. There is no record known anywhere of the Edomites worshipping Yahweh. Inventing new suppositions to support earlier suppositions that are contradicted by facts clearly did not end with the sages of the Talmud.

V. CONCLUSION: EZEKIEL’S JUBILEE AS A STUMBLING BLOCK

In what Philip Schaff described as the “chaos of Jewish learning ... a continent of rubbish,” he also mentioned occasional hidden pearls that could be found by those who took the effort to separate the wheat from the chaff in rabbinic literature.⁶⁰ It might seem out of place for a study in a theological journal to undertake this sorting-out process. Whereas Part 1 of this two-part series was dedicated to showing that all five temporal phrases of Ezekiel 40:1 are consistent with Ezekiel’s vision occurring at the start of a Jubilee Year, and this Jubilee Year was consistent—exactly consistent—with the Exodus Era texts of the Bible, this second article has undertaken the rather tedious task of finding the pearls in rabbinic literature by showing that the Jewish sages correctly remembered the following facts that agree with the Bible’s Exodus Era texts: (1) Ezekiel’s Jubilee was the seventeenth Jubilee. (2) Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in the latter part of a Sabbatical Year, fourteen years earlier than Ezekiel’s Jubilee. (3) There was another Jubilee in the eighteenth year of Josiah, consistent with the modern chronology of the kingdom period but inconsistent with rabbinical calculation methods. (4) The time when Jehoiachin was taken captive, Adar of 597 BC, was in the middle of a Jubilee cycle and the fourth year of a Sabbatical cycle. (5) The Hebrew text of Ezekiel 40:1 is, according to b. ‘Arak. 12a, sufficient by itself to establish that Ezekiel saw his vision at the beginning of a Jubilee Year. ‘Arakin 12b says that this Jubilee was the seventeenth, in agreement with Seder ‘Olam 11. It was pointed out that the rabbinical methodology, which was characterized as presupposition-dominant and hence the opposite of the inductive or scientific method, was incapable of calculating these

⁵⁸ Ronald Hendel, “Response to Scott Stripling,” in Stripling et al., *Five Views on the Exodus*, 75.

⁵⁹ Kennedy, “Nomads of Yahweh,” 19.

⁶⁰ Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 2:39.

exact agreements with the biblical chronology that is firmly based on the work of Thiele and his successors and a literal reading of 1 Kings 6:1. The latter part of the present article also demonstrated that the rabbinical presupposition-dominant method is followed by modern writers whose presuppositions cannot account for archaeological facts such as the pre-1300 BC Israelite pottery found at the site of Joshua's altar on Mt. Ebal, the Amarna correspondence showing Israel's conquest of Canaan from a Canaanite perspective, the naming of the Exodus pharaoh in the writings of the Egyptian priest Manetho, and the mentions of the *shasu* of YHWH in the inscriptions of Amenhotep III. Instead, these modern authors resort to new presuppositions that have no basis in ancient inscriptions or archaeological findings: the same methodology that made a chaos of the bulk of rabbinic chronology. The theological importance of all this is that, since there is general agreement among both skeptical and conservative scholars that the Jubilee and Sabbatical Years were charted by the book of Leviticus, the coherence of the Sabbatical/Jubilee Year calendar is evidence that these parts of the book of Leviticus, at the very least, were in existence in 1406 BC, and hence were of Mosaic authorship. This is consistent with the approximately 230 times in the Pentateuch, Exodus through Deuteronomy, where it is said that God gave the words that follow to Moses or to Moses and Aaron, and, in the New Testament, our Lord's frequent attribution of texts from the Pentateuch to Moses. The present article and its predecessor have shown that the calculation of Jubilee cycles based on 1 Kings 6:1 in conjunction with Leviticus 25:1–11 give, with no special pleading, 574t BC as a Jubilee Year, while other, quite separate, biblical and (historical, not calculated) rabbinic texts provide evidence that Ezekiel 40:1 refers to the beginning of a Jubilee Year. No scholar who denies the fifteenth-century Exodus has shown any other means by which these two independent chronological methods come out with exactly the same year for the seventeenth Jubilee. In the words of Scott Stripling, "Feinmann and other critics have failed to explain this amazing 'coincidence.'"⁶¹

⁶¹ Stripling, "The Fifteenth-Century (Early-Date) Exodus View," 78.