

THE SYNCHRONISMS OF THE HEBREW KINGS—A RE-EVALUATION: I

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The synchronisms of the Hebrew rulers as recorded in the books of Kings constitute one of the most perplexing as well as prominent features of those books. For the record of each king, be it Israel or Judah, the rule is to begin the account with a synchronism (1 Ki 15: 1, 9, 25, 28, 33; 16: 8, 15, 23, 29; 22: 41, 51; 2 Ki 3: 1; 8: 16, 25; 9: 29; 12: 1; 13: 1, 10; 14: 1, 23; 15: 1, 8, 13, 17, 23, 27, 32; 16: 1; 17: 1; 18: 1). Additional synchronistic notices may also occur in the body of the account (1 Ki 15: 28; 16: 10; 2 Ki 18: 9, 10) or at the close (2 Ki 1: 17; 15: 30). In certain instances where reigns began practically simultaneously with each other, as in the case of Rehoboam and Jeroboam, and Jehu and Athaliah, no synchronisms are given. For Tibni there is no synchronism nor any other specific chronological datum.

A brief glance at the synchronistic data seems to indicate, however, that they are in a rather chaotic state, apparently out of harmony with each other and with the data for the lengths of reign. Thus Ahaziah of Judah is said to have come to the throne in the eleventh year of Joram (2 Ki 9: 29) and also in the twelfth year (2 Ki 8: 25). Joram's accession in Israel is given as the second year of Jehoram of Judah (2 Ki 1: 17) and the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat (2 Ki 3: 1). Hoshea's accession in Israel is recorded as the twentieth year of Jotham (2 Ki 15: 30) and also the twelfth year of Ahaz (2 Ki 17: 1). There is one instance where two kings seem to begin their reigns each before the other. Thus Joram of Israel began in the second year of Jehoram of Judah (2 Ki 1: 17), but Jehoram of Judah began in the fifth year of Joram of Israel (2 Ki 8: 16).

The lengths of reign as given in the traditional data seem constantly out of line with the results secured from the synchronistic materials. Thus Elah began his reign in the twenty-sixth of Asa (1 Ki 16: 8) and was succeeded by Zimri in the twenty-seventh year (1 Ki 16: 10). Hence according to the synchronisms he reigned one year whereas the official length of his reign is two (1 Ki 16: 8). There are many instances of this nature. Omri's accession is given as the thirty-first year of Asa (1 Ki 16: 23) and he was succeeded by Ahab in Asa's thirty-eighth year (1 Ki 16: 29), which would be 7 years. But he slew Zimri and succeeded him in the twenty-seventh year of Asa (1 Ki 16: 15, 16), which would give him 11 years. Yet the official length of his reign was 12 years (2 Ki 16: 23). How long, then did Omri reign, 7, 11, or 12 years?

Azariah came to the throne in the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam (2 Ki 15: 1). Since Jeroboam reigned 41 years (2 Ki 14: 23), his death should have occurred in Azariah's fourteenth year, but the year of his son Zachariah's accession is given as Azariah's thirty-eighth year (2 Ki 15: 8). Was there a gap of 24 years between Jeroboam's death and his son's accession, or could Jeroboam have reigned 65 instead of 41 years?

Amaziah began his reign in Judah in the second year of Jehoash (2 Ki 14: 1). Since Jehoash reigned 16 years (2 Ki 13: 10), Amaziah would thus have had 14 years of rule during the reign of Jehoash. Jehoash was succeeded by his son Jeroboam II, in whose twenty-seventh year, Amaziah's son Azariah began to reign (2 Ki 15: 1). But that would give Amaziah a reign of 41 years (14 + 27), whereas the length of his reign was 29 years (2 Ki 14: 2).

These are only a few of the numerous difficulties almost constantly encountered with the synchronistic data. The following table shows the differences between the lengths of reign according to the official numbers and the results secured from the synchronistic and traditional figures of the neighbouring kingdoms:

Table I

Lengths of reign According to the Official Figures and the Synchronistic Materials

Judah

Ruler	Official Length	Synchronistic Length	Difference
Rehoboam	17 years	18 years	plus 1 year
Abijam	3 years	2 years	minus 1 year
Asa	41 years	46 years	plus 5 years
Jehoshaphat	25 years	25 years	same
Jehoram	8 years	7 years	minus 1 year
Ahaziah	1 year	1 year	same
Athaliah	not given	7 years	
Joash	40 years	40 years	same
Amaziah	29 years	41 years	plus 14 years
Azariah	52 years	28 years, 7 months	minus 23 years 5 months
Jotham	16 years	15 years	minus 1 year
Ahaz	16 years	6 years	minus 10 years
Total	248 years	236 years, 7 months	

Israel

Ruler	Official Length	Synchronistic Length	Difference
Jeroboam I	22 years	22 years	same
Nadab	2 years	1 year	minus 1 year
Baasha	24 years	23 years	minus 1 year
Elah	2 years	1 year	minus 1 year
Zimri	7 days	4 years	plus 4 years
Tibni	not given	not given	
Omri	12 years	7 years	minus 5 years
Ahab	22 years	20 years	minus 2 years
Ahaziah	2 years	1 year	minus 1 year
Jehoram	12 years	16 years	plus 4 years
Jehu	28 years	30 years	plus 2 years
Jehoahaz	17 years	14 years	minus 3 years
Jehoash	16 years	18 years	plus 2 years
Jeroboam II	41 years	52 years	plus 11 years
Zachariah	6 months	1 year	plus 6 months
Shallum	1 month	—	
Menahem	10 years	11 years	plus 1 year
Pekahiah	2 years	2 years	same
Pekah	20 years	28 years	plus 8 years
Hoshea	9 years	10 years	plus 1 year
Total	241 years, 7 months	261 years	

The serious difficulties encountered in the endeavor to create a harmonious chronological pattern based on both the synchronisms and the lengths of reign, and the seemingly insurmountable discrepancies between Hebrew years and those of contemporary Assyria, have given rise to the view that the synchronisms are late, artificial, and largely erroneous, and thus are of little or no value in the construction of a sound chronological scheme.¹ Driver remarked that, "the length of the reigns of the various kings is not the same according to the traditional and the synchronistic figures. Since, however, it is clear on various grounds that these synchronisms are not original, any attempt to base a chronological scheme on them may be disregarded."²

Kittel stated his view that, "Wellhausen has shown, by convincing reasons, that the synchronisms within the Book of Kings cannot possibly rest on ancient tradition, but are on the contrary simply the products of artificial reckoning . . . The Israelitish numbers and the parallel numbers referring to Judah do not agree at the points at which we are able to compare them."³ Robinson also was impressed by Wellhausen's evaluation: "Wellhausen is surely right in believing that the synchronisms in Kings are worthless, being mere-

¹ Eberhard Schrader, *The Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament*, trans. Owen C. Whitehouse (London, 1885), II, 321; W. Robertson Smith, "Kings," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. XIV, 9th ed.; E. L. Curtis, "Chronology of the Old Testament," *Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. James Hastings (New York, 1908), I, 397-403; George Rawlinson, "Introduction to the Two Books of Kings," *The Holy Bible According to the Authorized Version (A. D. 1611), with an Explanatory and Critical Commentary and a Revision of the Translation*, by Bishops and Other Clergy of the Anglican Church, ed. F. C. Cook (New York, 1901), II, 475; Charles Foster Kent, *A History of the Hebrew People from the Division of the Kingdom to the Fall of Jerusalem in 586 B. C.* (New York, 1899), p. 12; Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, trans. J. Sutherland Black and Allan Menzies (Edinburgh, 1885), p. 273.

² S. R. and G. R. Driver, "Bible, Old Testament, Chronology," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. VIII, 14th ed.

³ R. Kittel, *A History of the Hebrews* (London, 1896), II, 234.

ly a late compilation from the actual figures given." ⁴

R. H. Pfeiffer's opinion was that, "The chronology based on the synchronisms is of course less reliable than the one based on the regnal periods, since the synchronisms were figured from the regnal periods. Neither chronology is wholly accurate . . . In spite of these discrepancies, inaccuracies, and errors, the chronology of Kings is not fantastic." ⁵

J. F. McCurdy expressed himself to the effect that, "Many of the numbers given, especially the synchronisms, are erroneous, as is proved by the fact that no attempt to harmonize the two series has been successful . . . Startling inconsistencies are also found where the several synchronisms for the same king are worked out." ⁶

K. Marti gave his observation: "The synchronistic notes betray their character as 'subjective additions of the Epitome.' It is clear, to begin with, that this noting of synchronisms was not in actual use during the existence of the two kingdoms . . . Almost along the whole line, the discrepancy between synchronisms and years of reign is incurable." ⁷

C. H. Gordon observed: "The numerical errors in the Books of Kings have defied every attempt to ungarble them. Those errors are largely the creation of the editors who set out to write a synchronistic history of Judah and Israel, using as sources two sets of unrelated court chronicles. Combining two elaborate sets of figures was not an easy task. But even with due regard for the difficulties involved, the editors did not execute the synchronisms skillfully." ⁸

Are these judgements sound? Is it indeed a fact that the synchronisms can not be woven into a harmonious pattern

⁴ Theodore H. Robinson, *A History of Israel* (Oxford, 1932), I, 454.

⁵ Robert H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York, 1941), p. 394-95.

⁶ J. Frederic McCurdy, "Chronology, II, Biblical," *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, IV, 69-70.

⁷ Karl Marti, "Chronology, Old Testament," *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, I, 773-779.

⁸ Cyrus H. Gordon, *The World of the Old Testament* (New York, 1958), p. 194.

with the lengths of reign? Has this question been given the thorough study that is its due?

In our modern attempts to grapple with the problems of ancient Hebrew chronology, oversimplification is an ever present danger. We fail to take into consideration the fact that in the production of these records much time and many individuals were involved. Customs followed at one time did not necessarily prevail at another. Chronological procedures followed by one scribe were not always followed by all. Methods employed at one time could have been discarded and replaced by entirely different procedures. Conditions in the complex historical milieu of the ancient East were not always the same. Times of chaos and crisis might have called for entirely different situations on the throne and in the conduct of the affairs of state than would prevail at times of peace and tranquility. If in the study of the Hebrew chronological data the discovery is made that everything is not as simple as we have imagined it was or that we wish it might have been, let us not criticize or condemn. It is not for us to create the past but accept it. What happened, happened not always to suit our convenience in our endeavors at reconstruction, but in accord with the exigencies of often very complex and troubled times. Rather than setting forth views in accord with our ideas as to what might have happened or should have happened, let us examine the evidence and ascertain exactly what it was that did take place.

In previous studies I have shown that once a careful analysis of the data is made, once the various possibilities of action in the conduct of the affairs of state or the production of ancient records are taken into consideration, it becomes possible to work out the basic chronological principles employed by the Hebrew scribes and the diverse involvements surrounding the royal thrones, and that once these factors are recognized and understood, it is indeed possible to weave the synchronistic and traditional chronological data into a single pattern of reigns, consistent with itself and in harmony

with the chronology of contemporary times.⁹ In the present limited survey it will not be possible to discuss in detail every facet of every problem, and for a fuller discussion recourse may be had to my earlier studies.

First let us notice those instances in Kings where divergent synchronisms for an accession occur. When 2 Ki 9: 29 states that Ahaziah came to the throne of Judah in the eleventh year of Joram, that synchronism is in line with the accession-year system employed by Judah from Rehoboam to Jehoshaphat inclusive. That synchronism is not the official synchronism of the reign, and was inserted in the record by some scribe who refused to go along with the newly introduced nonaccession-year system. The official synchronism of Ahaziah appears in 2 Ki 8: 25, the twelfth of Joram, and is reckoned according to the nonaccession-year system used in Israel and borrowed from that kingdom when Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, became the wife of Jehoram of Judah. The twelfth year nonaccession-year reckoning is identical with the eleventh year, accession-year reckoning.¹⁰

The two synchronisms for the accession of Joram in Israel, expressed in terms of the second year of Jehoram of Judah (2 Ki 1: 17) and the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat (2 Ki 3: 1), give evidence of a coregency, the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat being the second year that his son was with him on the throne. It will be noticed that the information for this coregency in Judah is provided by two seemingly contradictory synchronisms for the accession of a king of Israel. Without them a reconstruction of the years of this involved period

⁹ See the author's works, "The Chronology of the Kings of Judah and Israel," *JNES*, III (1944), 137-186; *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (Chicago, 1955); "A Comparison of the Chronological Data of Israel and Judah," *VT*, IV (1954), 185-195; "The Question of Coregencies Among the Hebrew Kings," *A Stubborn Faith*, ed. Edward C. Hobbs (Dallas, 1956), pp. 39-52; "The Problem of Overlapping Reigns," *The Ministry*, XXXIII (August, 1960), 33-35.

¹⁰ For additional details on this period see my, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, pp. 38-40, 63-65.

in Judah's history would not be possible,¹¹ although evidence of the existence of that coregency does occur in connection with the official datum of Jehoram's accession (2 Ki 8: 16). Such synchronisms give every evidence of being accurate and early rather than untrustworthy and late.

The two synchronisms for the accession of Hoshea, in the twentieth year of Jotham (2 Ki 15: 30) and the twelfth year of Ahaz (2 Ki 17: 1) point to the existence of two distinct chronological patterns for the concluding period of Israel's history, which will be discussed in fuller detail in part II of this paper to be published next year. Suffice it to say here that it is the synchronism of 2 Ki 17: 1 which provides the key to the solution of this extremely difficult problem.

In discussing these three occurrences of seemingly discordant synchronistic data for the accessions of two kings in Judah and one in Israel, we have noticed that no two are of the same nature,—that one points to a change in chronological procedure, another to the existence of a coregency, and the other to the occurrence of two distinct chronological patterns covering a critical period of Hebrew history.

Let us next notice a very interesting phenomenon revealed by a combination of the synchronistic and traditional numbers for the period of Rehoboam to Jehoshaphat in Judah and from Jeroboam to Joram in Israel. This pattern is as follows:

<i>Judah</i>											
Totals:	17		20	22		23		46	47		
Rehoboam	17	Abijam	3	Asa	2d		3d	26th	27th		
<hr/>											
Jeroboam				22	Nadab	2	Baasha	24	Elah	2	Zimri
Totals:				22		24		48		50	
Excess years for Israel				0		1		2		3	
<i>Israel</i>											

¹¹ Further details concerning these coregencies will be found in my study on "The Question of Coregencies Among the Hebrew Kings," *A Stubborn Faith*, pp. 40-43.

Judah

Totals:	58	61	78	79
	38th	41	Jehoshaphat 17th	18th
	Ahab	4th	22	Ahaziah 2 Joram
	Omri	12		
Totals:	62	66	84	86
Excess years for Israel	4	5	6	7

As these numbers are examined, it will be discovered that they reveal basic chronological patterns in Judah and Israel which provide for an increase of one year in the totals of Israel over Judah for every reign. Such a phenomenon is certainly not the result of accident or chance, but calls for some underlying reason that would produce such unusual results. That reason is revealed in the following comparison of the synchronistic and traditional data for the lengths of reign of the kings of Israel for this period:

Ruler	Beginning of reign	End of reign	Synchro- nistic length	Official length	Diffe- rence
Nadab	2d of Asa	3d of Asa	1 year	2 years	1 year
Baasha	3d of Asa	26th of Asa	23 years	24 years	1 year
Elah	26th of Asa	27th of Asa	1 year	2 years	1 year
Zimri	27th of Asa	27th of Asa	—	7 days	—
Omri	27th of Asa	38th of Asa	11 years	12 years	1 year
Ahaziah	17th of Jehoshaphat	18th of Jehoshaphat	1 year	2 years	1 year

The above phenomenon provides conclusive evidence that Israel during this time employed the nonaccession-year system of reckoning. According to this system the balance of the regnal year during which a new king took the throne was termed his first year, his second official year beginning with the next new year. It will be noticed that according to this system the year when a king began his reign was always counted twice, as the last year of the old king and the first year of the new, and thus the totals of reigns so reckoned increase by one year for every reign over absolute time. When, however, the accession-year system is employed, the balance of the regnal year during which a king came to the throne was

termed his accession year, and thus in effect was for him a zero year and was entirely credited to his predecessor. According to this system the first official year did not begin till the new year following his accession, the year which according to the

Accession—Versus Nonaccession Year Reckoning

	Old king	New king
Accession-year system	15 16 17/ac	1 2 3

	Old king	New king
Nonaccession-year system	16 17 18/1	2 3 4

nonaccession-year system was termed the second official year. Totals reckoned according to accession-year reckoning are thus in accord with absolute time, and are one year less for every reign than totals reckoned according to the non-accession-year system. When the above facts are understood, it will be clear that in the data of this period we have positive evidence of the fact that Judah employed accession-year reckoning while the nonaccession-year system was employed in Israel.

A reduction of one year for the length of reign of the kings of Israel for this period thus provides the length in absolute time, and totals thus reckoned will be in agreement with the totals of the Judean rulers involved.

	Israel			Judah	
	Official total	Actual total		Official total	Actual total
Jeroboam	22 years	21 years	Rehoboam	17 years	17 years
Nadab	2 years	1 year	Abijam	3 years	3 years
Baasha	24 years	23 years	Asa	41 years	41 years
Elah	2 years	1 year	Jehoshaphat	18 years	18 years
Zimri	7 days	7 days	Total	79 years	79 years
Omri	12 years	11 years			
Ahab	22 years	21 years			
Ahaziah	2 years	1 year			
Total	86 years	79 years			

It will be noticed that it is the combined evidence of the synchronisms and the lengths of reign that portray this

revealing and important picture of ancient Hebrew chronology. Contradictory though the data at first might appear, once the basic principles involved are understood, there is perfect agreement between all the data recorded. If even one of these pertinent data is tampered with, the striking sequence is broken and the basic pattern is ruined. It is only to the reign of Jehoshaphat of Judah that this phenomenon prevails, for after his time the data reveal a change in Judah's system of reckoning, the accession-year system being replaced by the nonaccession-year method employed in Israel.

In the above period where this interesting phenomenon prevails, Prof. W. F. Albright, in order to secure his date 922 B.C. for the division of the monarchy, suggests adjustments in the biblical chronological data¹² which involve the rejection of all the synchronisms of both Israel and Judah for the ten rulers indicated and the regnal years of three of the kings. This pattern bears no resemblance to that portrayed by the chronological data of Kings. The following are adjustments that would be required in the biblical data of this period by an acceptance of his date 922 B.C.

Synchronisms

Ruler	Old Testament	Albright	Adjustment
Abijam	18th of Jeroboam	8th of Jeroboam	minus 10 years
Asa	20th of Jeroboam	10th of Jeroboam	minus 10 years
Jehoshaphat	4th of Ahab	4th of Omri	minus 12 years
Nadab	2d of Asa	13th of Asa	plus 11 years
Baasha	3d of Asa	14th of Asa	plus 11 years
Elah	26th of Asa	37th of Asa	plus 11 years
Zimri	27th of Asa	38th of Asa	plus 11 years
Omri	31st of Asa	38th of Asa	plus 7 years
Ahab	38th of Asa	5th of Jehoshaphat	plus 8 years
Ahaziah	17th of Jehoshaphat	24th of Jehoshaphat	plus 7 years
Joram	18th of Jehoshaphat	1st of Jehoram	plus 7 years

Lengths of reign

Rehoboam	17 years	8 years	minus 9 years
Omri	12 years	8 years	minus 4 years
Ahab	22 years	20 years	minus 2 years

¹² W. F. Albright, "The Chronology of the Divided Monarchy of Israel", *BASOR*, No. 100 (Dec., 1945), 20 f.

Albright's reason for rejecting all these data in Kings is based on his insistence upon the accuracy of the statement in 2 Chr 16: 1 that Baasha built Ramah in the thirty-sixth year of Asa.¹³ But according to 1 Ki 15: 33 and 16: 8, Baasha began his reign in the third year of Asa, reigned 24 years, and was succeeded by Elah in Asa's twenty-sixth year. Upon the basis of these data, 2 Chr 16: 1 would bring Baasha's building of Ramah 10 years after his death. I have previously dealt with this subject in some detail,¹⁴ pointing out the real meaning of 2 Chr 15: 19 and 16: 1, and the inconsistencies of the statements as they now occur. Briefly, it may be said that 2 Chr 16: 1 is entirely out of line with 2 Chr 15: 10, for Baasha would not have waited until his thirty-sixth year to meet the crisis of his fifteenth year. Yet it is this erroneous datum of 2 Chr 16: 1 that Albright accepts against all the evidence of Kings and the contextual evidence of Chronicles as well. When he declares that my system "is sometimes in striking disagreement with the data of II Chron."¹⁵ it should be understood that it is 2 Chr 16: 1 to which he refers, and that the reason for this disagreement is that this particular datum is in "striking disagreement" with the vast body of chronological evidence of Kings on this point. The date 922 B.C. rests solely upon the acceptance of a single datum in Chronicles which is clearly in error and the rejection of fourteen data in Kings and two in Chronicles which give every evidence of being clearly correct.

Albright's argument is that the Chronicler is so reliable an historian that 2 Chr 16: 1 must be accepted regardless of any evidence to the contrary in Kings. But what he does not take into consideration is the fact that certain data which he would reject in Kings occur also in Chronicles (1 Ki 14: 21 = 2 Chr

¹³ *Ibid.*, 18 f.; Albright, "A Votive Stele Erected by Ben-Hadad I of Damascus to the God Melcarth," *BASOR*, No. 87 (Oct., 1942), 27f.

¹⁴ Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, pp. 57-60, 246-250.

¹⁵ Albright, *The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra* (New York, 1963), p. 104.

12: 13; 1 Ki 15: 1 = 2 Chr 13: 1), and by rejecting these data in Kings he rejects them in Chronicles as well. Why should fourteen data found in Kings be rejected in order to sustain a single datum in Chronicles, when thereby two other data in Chronicles must be rejected?

Furthermore, the claims to obtain support for the date 922 B.C. from Tyrian, Egyptian, or other ancient historical records are hardly tenable. To his assertion that Josephus' correlation between Tyrian and Israelite chronology gave a "tremendous advantage" to his date 922,¹⁶ I called attention to the fact that these arguments based on Josephus' Tyrian list involved so many uncertainties and inconsistencies,¹⁷ that they become useless for reliable chronological purposes. Likewise I pointed out that the cuneiform text mentioning

¹⁶ Albright, "Alternative Chronology," *Interpretation*, VI (1952), 101-3.

¹⁷ Albright's argument is based on 814 B.C. being the absolute date for the founding of Carthage, when the facts are that ancient sources provide a number of alternate dates for that event, such as 793, 813, 815, 823, 825 or 1234. He accepts Josephus' listing of the Tyrian kings as providing the exact year for the founding of Solomon's temple, whereas Josephus' listing of the Hebrew kings would provide a date 54 years earlier for that event. Why should Josephus be more exact in his years for the kings of Tyre than he would be for the years of his own nation? Josephus, moreover, in one place states that the founding of the temple took place in the eleventh year of Hiram (*Ant.* viii. 62) and in another place that it happened in the twelfth year (*Ag. Ap.* i. 126). Albright accepts 40 years as the absolute length of Solomon's reign, now forsaking Josephus whom he has followed thus far and who gives 80 years for that reign. And here in accepting this biblical number of 40 as an absolute rather than an approximate number, he disregards the long series of 40s in the period of the judges and the early kings. And if Josephus' chronological deductions are so reliable as to establish 958 as the absolute date for the founding of the temple and to give such a "tremendous advantage" to the date 922 B.C. for the division of the monarchy, then why may not Josephus also be used as authority for 1198 B.C. as the year for the founding of Tyre, 1550 B.C. as the year of the Exodus, 1978 B.C. as the date of Abraham's entry into Canaan (*Ant.* viii. 61 f.) or 1435 B.C. as the year of the death of David and the beginning of Solomon's reign (*Ant.* vii 392), 1570 B.C. for the Exodus (*Ag. Ap.* ii. 19), or 882 B.C. for the division of the monarchy (*Ant.* viii. 211)?

Ba'li-ma-AN-zêri, presumably Balezoros II of Tyre, as having paid tribute to Shalmaneser III together with Jehu in 841 B.C.¹⁸ would, on the basis of his calculations, completely invalidate his date 922 B.C.¹⁹ for the Assyrian text requires that Balezoros be king of Tyre in 841 B.C. yet according to Albright's reckoning Ba'li-ma-AN-zêri's dates would be 835 to 829 B.C. Albright's response to my arguments was that, "The name Ba'al-manzer . . . has *nothing whatever* to do with Ba'al-'a'zôr = Balezoros,"²⁰ but, as he has argued elsewhere, must represent some other "Tyrian king whose name has fallen out of the list because it so closely resembled that of his precursor (or successor), Balezoros."²¹ What he, however, did not make clear is how Josephus' list of the Tyrian kings can be so accurate in detail as to give such a "tremendous advantage" to his date 922 B.C., yet at the same time be so unreliable as to omit the years of an entire reign together with the name of the king involved.

It should be noted, however, that the validity of the argument that Ba'li-ma-AN-zêri of the cuneiform text is not to be identified with Balezoros of Josephus, rests on the assumption that every transliteration of a proper name from one ancient language into another must always be philologically exact, and if not, individual identities are to be denied. There are, assuredly, certain divergencies between Ba'li-ma-AN-zêri and Balezoros, but is this sufficient justification for the invention of an entirely new Tyrian king? If every slight phonetic divergence in the transcription of a name from one ancient language into another would constitute sufficient grounds

¹⁸ Fuad Safar, "A Further Text of Shalmaneser III from Assur," *Sumer*, VII (1951), 11, 12, col. iv, 10-12. See also J. Liver, "The Chronology of Tyre at the Beginning of the First Millenium B.C.," *IEJ*, III (1953), 113-120.

¹⁹ Thiele, "A Comparison of the Chronological Data of Israel and Judah," *VT*, IV (1954), 188-190.

²⁰ Personal letter of Albright to the writer, Nov. 9, 1954.

²¹ Albright, "The New Assyro-Tyrian Synchronism and the Chronology of Tyre," *Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves*, XIII (1953), 1-9.

for the invention of some new historical character, what would that do to the facts of ancient history? The similarity of the two names here involved, the one in Greek of the first century A.D. and the other in cuneiform of the ninth century B.C., together with the exact correspondence of their years of reign make the identity of the two almost certain.

To Albright's charge that my chronology "cannot be squared with the Tyrian chronology of Menander preserved by Josephus,"²² all that need be said is that it cannot be squared with the date that Albright accepts for the founding of Tyre, 814 B.C. If that date is correct and if Ba'li-ma-AN-zêri of the cuneiform text is Balezoros of Josephus' list of Tyrian kings, then the date 922 B.C. is according to Albright's own calculations, historically disproved. If the two are not the same, and if an entire reign together with the years involved has been lost from Josephus' list, then that list is valueless toward the establishment of any absolute date in ancient history. Surely Josephus' list cannot at the same time be admittedly wrong and yet absolutely right.

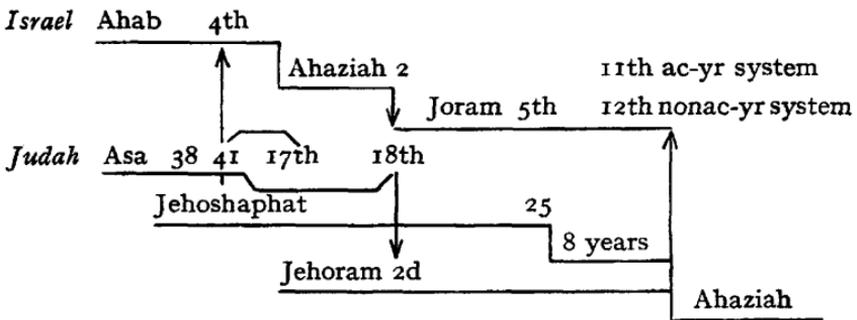
Other arguments advanced as providing support for 922 B.C. from certain contemporary events in Egyptian history,²³ involve so much of vagueness and conjecture, as to deprive them of value in the support of any absolute date in Hebrew chronology. The events involved can be used just as fully on behalf of 931 B.C. or any other date approximate thereto. For the reasons set forth I fail to see that the date 922 B.C. has any Biblical or historical support.

Let us next observe a number of basic patterns of reign in certain involved periods of Hebrew history. First to be noticed will be the period of Ahab, Ahaziah, and Joram in Israel contemporary with Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, and Ahaziah in Judah. Asa, after a reign of 41 years (1 Ki 15: 10), was succeeded by Jehoshaphat in the fourth year of Ahab (1 Ki

²² Albright, *The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra*, p. 104.

²³ Albright, "New Light from Egypt on the Chronology and History of Israel and Judah," *BASOR*, No. 130 (Apr., 1953), 4-11.

22: 41). Ahab was succeeded by Ahaziah in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat (1 Ki 22: 51). Following Ahaziah, Joram became king in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat according to 2 Ki 3: 1, and in the second year of Jehoram according to 2 Ki 1: 17. Jehoshaphat was succeeded by Jehoram in the fifth year of Joram in Israel (2 Ki 8: 16). After an 8-year reign, Jehoram was followed by his son Ahaziah, in the eleventh year of Joram according to 2 Ki 9: 29, and in the twelfth year according to 2 Ki 8: 25. The details here given have often been regarded as giving evidence of contradiction, error, and confusion, but they can all be woven together into the following logical and comparatively simple pattern of reigns.



The period here pictured is one of unusual interest in that it involves two coregencies in Judah,—Jehoshaphat with his father Asa, and Jehoram with his father Jehoshaphat; it involves a shift in Judah from accession to nonaccession-year reckoning; and it provides two absolute contacts with Assyria that enable us to assign absolute years to the Hebrew chronology of this period, and to check on the chronological methods employed in Israel.

It will be noticed that the full reign of Jehoshaphat covers 25 years, but they begin at a time when his father, Asa was still alive but becoming ill-disposed (1 Ki 15: 23; 2 Chr 16: 12), after he had been on the throne 38 years and needed his son's assistance in the conduct of the affairs of state.

During the reign of Jehoshaphat an alliance was made

between Judah and Israel (1 Ki 22: 1-4, 44; 2 Chr 18: 1; 20: 35, 36), under the terms of which Jehoshaphat accompanied Ahab in battle against Syria, an encounter in which Ahab was slain and in which Jehoshaphat found himself in extreme jeopardy (1 Ki 22: 32). The synchronism of 2 Ki 1: 17 calls for the accession of Jehoram as coregent with Jehoshaphat at that time.²⁴ And the synchronism of 2 Ki 8: 16 makes it clear that the original records upon which the present account in Kings is based, had a notation to the effect that Jehoshaphat was still on the throne when Jehoram began to reign, although that particular synchronism marks the beginning not of his coregency but of his sole reign.

When this synchronism of 2 Ki 8: 16 is carefully studied it will be discovered that it provides the clew to Judah's shift from accession—to nonaccession-year reckoning. It was at the time of Judah's alliance with Israel that Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, became the wife of Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, and that Jehoram "walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab" (2 Ki 8: 18). The nonaccession-year system then introduced into Judah²⁵ continued during the reigns of Jehoram, Ahaziah, Athaliah, and Joash.

Jehoram's official reign of 8 years (2 Ki 8: 17) is the length of his sole reign, not including the period of his coregency, unlike the 25 years of Jehoshaphat which include the years of his regency with his father and also the regency of his son. The 8 official years of Jehoram being reckoned according to the nonaccession-year system, constitute 7 actual years, beginning in the fifth year of Joram (2 Ki 8: 16) and terminating in the twelfth year (2 Ki 8: 25). This latter synchronism

²⁴ For a more complete discussion of the coregencies involved in this period see my study in *A Stubborn Faith*, pp. 41-43. For a fuller study of all the data involved see my *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, pp. 61-66.

²⁵ For additional details on this period and the change of reckoning then introduced see *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, pp. 38-40, 63-65.

constitutes the official synchronism of Ahaziah's accession and is reckoned according to the newly-adopted nonaccession-year method, although the citation in 2 Ki 9:29 at the close of his reign, stating that he began to reign in the eleventh year of Joram, is reckoned according to the recently discarded accession-year system.

Mention has already been made of the strange anomaly of Jehoram of Judah beginning in Joram's fifth year, but of Joram commencing in Jehoram's second year (2 Ki 1:17). This latter synchronism is extremely useful, since it provides the evidence of Jehoram's coregency with his father, being reckoned in terms not of his sole reign but of his coregency. Jehoram's synchronism, on the other hand, is expressed in terms of the beginning of his sole reign.

Two Assyrian contacts with Israel during this period attest to Israel's use of the nonaccession-year system at this time, for it was in the sixth year of Shalmaneser III, 853 B.C., that the battle of Karkar was fought and in which Ahab was a participant, and it was in Shalmaneser's eighteenth year, 841 B.C., that Jehu paid tribute to Assyria, a period of 12 years, and it was during that interval that we have the reigns of Ahaziah, officially two but actually one, and Joram, officially 12 but actually 11, thus making 12 years for Israel during the same 12 years in Assyria.

(To be continued).