

# THE BABYLONIAN CHRONICLE AND THE ANCIENT CALENDAR OF THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH

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Of the official ancient records those known as the Babylonian Chronicles are among the most reliable. Fragments of such chronicles covering a number of years from about 700 B.C. to the end of the Babylonian empire, in 539, have come to light in recent decades from time to time. Of the period of the Neo-Babylonian empire the available chronicles cover the following years: 626-623, 616-594, 556-555, and 554-539.<sup>1</sup> All of these important historical texts have received the widest possible discussion from historians and chronologists, especially during the years following the publication of each document. It may therefore seem to be superfluous to reopen the subject here. However, it is a fact that scholars have reached differing conclusions from their study of these texts with regard to certain events in which the Kingdom of Judah is involved. The present article, therefore, is written to present certain observations which either have not been made in previous discussions, or need strengthening and clarification.

Since this article deals with the problem of the nature of the calendar in use during the last decades of the existence of the Kingdom of Judah, only the three following texts are pertinent for our study: (1) B.M. 21901, published by C. J. Gadd in 1923, covering the years 616-609,<sup>2</sup> and (2) B.M. 22047

<sup>1</sup> Translations of the Babylonian Chronicles as far as they were known before 1956, when Wiseman published four more texts, have been provided by A. Leo Oppenheim in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, ed. James B. Pritchard (2d ed.; Princeton, 1955), pp. 301-307.

<sup>2</sup> C. J. Gadd, *The Fall of Nineveh* (London, 1923). It is republished by Wiseman in his publication listed in the next note.

and B.M. 21946, published in 1956 by D. J. Wiseman, covering the years 608-594.<sup>3</sup>

These three texts are of the utmost value for the history and chronology of the last years of the Kingdom of Judah, since they have provided accurate information with regard to a number of events recorded in the Bible, such as (1) the Battle of Megiddo between Josiah of Judah and Neco of Egypt, in which the former was mortally wounded, (2) the Battle of Carchemish, mentioned by Jeremiah, as the result of which Nebuchadnezzar occupied all of Syria and Palestine, and (3) the surrender of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar by King Jehoiachin. The publication of the two tablets B.M. 22047 and B.M. 21946 by Wiseman put an end to the strange silence which the contemporary records of Nebuchadnezzar seemed to have observed in regard to historical data. Before 1956 hardly any historical records of the 43-year reign of this famous king of Babylon had come to light. On the other hand it was known from Biblical records that he carried out several military campaigns against Judah, which culminated in the final destruction of Jerusalem, that he achieved a victory over Pharaoh Neco at Carchemish, conducted a long siege of Tyre, and invaded Egypt. However, not one historical contemporary text was known that contained a clear record of any of these events. The wealth of texts from Nebuchadnezzar's reign, coming in part from the excavations of Babylon by R. Koldewey and in part from other sources, including inscriptions found in the Lebanon, were records either of building or of other non-military activities of the king.<sup>4</sup> This strange absence of clear records dealing with specific political activities of Nebuchadnezzar had the result that some scholars questioned whether

<sup>3</sup> D. J. Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldaean Kings (626-556 B.C.) in the British Museum* (London, 1956); henceforth abbreviated: *CCK*.

<sup>4</sup> A convenient translation of most of these texts is given by Stephen Langdon, *Die neubabylonischen Königsinschriften* (Leipzig, 1912), pp. 70-209.

that king ever had possessed the political importance which the Bible seems to give him.<sup>5</sup>

The first break in this absence of historical information with regard to Nebuchadnezzar came when King Jehoiachin's captivity in Babylon became attested by the "ration" tablets from Nebuchadnezzar's palace, which Weidner published in 1939.<sup>6</sup> Also some light was shed on the siege of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar by six economic tablets,<sup>7</sup> and an invasion of Egypt in Nebuchadnezzar's 37th year is recorded in a tantalizingly fragmentary tablet in the British Museum.<sup>8</sup>

But these texts rank in importance far behind those of the Babylonian Chronicles, which for the first time have provided brief but clear records of Nebuchadnezzar's political and military activities during the first ten years of his reign. They have revealed that during these ten years he conducted one military campaign after another, defeated the Egyptian army at Carchemish, and also took Jerusalem.

Wiseman, publishing the chronicles dealing with Nebuchadnezzar's reign, has ably discussed their historical implications and bearing on the history of the last years of the Kingdom of Judah. His work has been reviewed by several scholars,<sup>9</sup> and a comparatively large number of articles have

<sup>5</sup> See W. F. Albright's remarks with regard to the views of S. A. Cook and C. C. Torrey, who strongly doubted the accuracy of the Biblical description of the devastation of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar, in *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (2d ed.; Baltimore, 1946), pp. 246-248.

<sup>6</sup> E. F. Weidner, "Jojachin, König von Juda, in babylonischen Keilschrifttexten," *Mélanges syriens offerts à Monsieur René Dussaud*, II (Paris, 1939), 923-935.

<sup>7</sup> Eckhard Unger, "Nebukadnezar II. und sein Šandabakku (Oberkommissar) in Tyrus," *ZAW*, XLIV (1926), 314-317; Albright, *JBL*, LI (1932), 95, n. 51.

<sup>8</sup> Oppenheim, *ANET*, p. 308.

<sup>9</sup> Weidner, *AfO*, XVII (1954-1956), 499-500; M. Noth, *JSS*, II (1957), 271-273; E. Dhorme, *RA*, LI (1957), 209-210; W. von Soden, *WZKM*, LIII (1957), 316-321; J. Friedrich, *AfO*, XVIII (1957-1958), 61; F. R. Kraus, *VT*, VIII (1958), 109-111; A. Pohl, *Orientalia*, XXVII (1958), 292-294; E. Cavignac, *OLZ*, LV (1960), 141-143.

appeared dealing with the last kings of Judah in the light of these texts.<sup>10</sup> All reviewers have accepted without question the data as presented in the texts, but have reached different conclusions (1) in regard to the date of the final destruction of Jerusalem and the end of Zedekiah's reign, and (2) in regard to the methods employed by the books of Jeremiah and Kings in dating Nebuchadnezzar's regnal years. Although there are other differences in the approach of the scholars who have published their views, the chief difference consists in the application of different ancient calendars. Most of them assume that the calendar used in Judah was identical with the Babylonian calendar and that the year began in Judah, as well as in Babylonia, with the month Nisan in the spring.<sup>11</sup> They have reached the conclusion that Jerusalem was destroyed in the summer of 587 B.C.,<sup>12</sup> and that Jeremiah reckoned Nebuchadnezzar's regnal years one year too early. Some, however, believe that the Jews used a Palestinian civil calendar, according to which the year began with Tishri in the autumn. They have come to the conclusion that the destruction of Jerusalem occurred in the summer of 586 B.C.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Albright, "The Nebuchadnezzar and Neriglissar Chronicle," *BASOR*, No. 143 (Oct., 1956), 28-33; D. N. Freedman, "The Babylonian Chronicle," *BA*, XIX (1956), 50-60; J. P. Hyatt, "New Light on Nebuchadnezzar and Judean History," *JBL*, LXXV (1956), 277-284; A. Malamat, "A New Record of Nebuchadnezzar's Palestinian Campaign," *IEJ*, VI (1956), 246-256; F. Nötscher, "'Neue' babylonische Chroniken und Altes Testament," *BZ*, I (1957), 110-114 (not seen); M. Noth, "Die Einnahme von Jerusalem im Jahre 597 v. Chr.," *ZDPV*, LXXIV (1958), 133-157; H. Tadmor, "Chronology of the Last Kings of Judah," *JNES*, XV (1956), 226-230; E. R. Thiele, "New Evidence on the Chronology of the Last Kings of Judah," *BASOR*, No. 143 (Oct., 1956), 22-27; E. Vogt, "Chronologia exeuntis regni Iuda et exsilii," *Biblica*, XXXVIII (1957), 389-399; Vogt, "Die neubabylonische Chronik über die Schlacht bei Karkemisch und die Einnahme von Jerusalem," *Supplement to VT*, IV (1957), 67-96.

<sup>11</sup> The following scholars, whose articles are mentioned in Footnote 10, apply the Spring year: Albright, Freedman, Hyatt, Noth, Tadmor and Vogt.

<sup>12</sup> Vogt, however, dates the fall of Jerusalem in 586.

<sup>13</sup> Malamat and Thiele. See for their articles Footnote 10.

It is, therefore, obvious that the date of the fall of Jerusalem depends on what type of calendar is employed. While no definite and unassailable conclusions can be reached until a historical record dealing with that event is found, it is the present writer's conviction that the authors and/or compilers of the books of Kings, Chronicles, and Jeremiah used a calendar year that began in the autumn with the month of Tishri.

In an earlier study I have shown that such a civil calendar seems to have existed in the times of Solomon, of Josiah, and of Nehemiah.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, a complete harmony of the chronological data of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah during the two centuries when the two kingdoms existed side by side can be obtained only if it is assumed that Judah followed an autumn-to-autumn calendar and Israel a spring-to-spring calendar.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the Jews who lived in Egypt during the post-exilic period seem to have applied a civil calendar that began in the autumn, as revealed by their dated, and in many instances double-dated, documents.<sup>16</sup>

Any consideration of the evidence must start with events of which the dates have been securely established:

*The Battle of Megiddo.* Before Wiseman published the last part of the Nabopolassar Chronicles there was uncertainty with regard to the date of the Battle of Megiddo and the death of Josiah. Some dated these events in 609<sup>17</sup> and others in

<sup>14</sup> S. H. Horn and L. H. Wood, *The Chronology of Ezra 7* (Washington, D.C., 1953), pp. 60-65, 70-71. See also Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids, 1965), pp. 28-30; henceforth abbreviated: *MNHK*.

<sup>15</sup> Thiele, *MNHK*, p. 30: "Perhaps the strongest argument for the use of a Tishri-to-Tishri regnal year in Judah is that this method works, giving us a harmonious pattern of the regnal years and synchronisms, while with a Nisan-to-Nisan regnal year the old discrepancies would be retained."

<sup>16</sup> Horn and Wood, "The Fifth-Century Jewish Calendar at Elephantine," *JNES*, XIII (1954), 1-20; but see the objections of R. A. Parker, "Some Considerations on the Nature of the Fifth-Century Jewish Calendar at Elephantine," *JNES*, XIV (1955), 271-274.

<sup>17</sup> For example J. Lewy, "Forschungen zur alten Geschichte

608.<sup>18</sup> Gadd, who published the text of that part of Nabopolassar's Chronicles which ended in 609, was convinced that the Battle of Megiddo took place in connection with an Egyptian campaign in 608. For 609 the Chronicles record an unsuccessful advance of Assyrian and Egyptian armies on Haran. Since the city of Carchemish is mentioned in 2 Chr 35:20 as the site of a military encounter in which Neco was apparently involved after the Battle of Megiddo, Gadd thought that this encounter was not the one dealt with in the Babylonian Chronicles for 609, in which Carchemish is not mentioned. He and those who followed him found support for their views in the "catch-line" of Gadd's Chronicles, which reads: "In the [18th]year, [in the month of Elu]l, the king of Akkad called out his army." They assumed that the campaign of Nabopolassar to which this "catch-line" refers was directed against Egypt.

The publication of Wiseman's Chronicles has proved this assumption to be incorrect. Although the opening words of the new text correspond to the "catch-line" of the preceding tablet, the text shows that the campaign of the Babylonian army of 608 was directed against Urartu in the north. The Egyptians do not seem to have been considered a threat to Babylonia during that year or the following year, for they are not mentioned again until we reach the records of the year 606. We have, therefore, no alternative but to relate the Egyptian campaign, of which the Battle of Megiddo was an incident, to the events recorded in Gadd's Chronicles for the summer of 609. This conclusion must be considered final, and it has been accepted by all scholars who have written on the subject in recent years.

However, the exact date of the Battle of Megiddo cannot be ascertained with certainty. The campaign against Haran by the Assyrians and Egyptians began with the crossing of

Vorderasiens," *Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatisch-Aegyptischen Gesellschaft*, XXIX (1925), 20-23.

<sup>18</sup> Gadd, *op. cit.*, pp. 15, 24.

the Euphrates in Tammuz (June 25 to July 23) and ended with their retreat in Elul (Aug. 23 to Sept. 20). This means that the campaign could have begun as early as the end of June or as late as the second half of July. The distance from Megiddo to Carchemish is approximately 340 miles and must have taken the Egyptian army nearly a month to cover. This leads to the conclusion that the Battle of Megiddo could hardly have ended later than the middle of June, if the advance toward Haran started in the latter part of Tammuz. It could have been earlier, if the crossing of the Euphrates took place in the early part of Tammuz.

After the unsuccessful attack on Haran had forced him to retreat, Neco seems to have set up his headquarters at Riblah, south of Hamath in Syria. It was to Riblah that he summoned Jehoahaz and there he deposed him (2 Ki 23:33). This action must have taken place either in Elul or in Tishri, the following month.

If we now apply this evidence to the chronology of the kings of Judah from Josiah to Jehoiakim, we reach the following conclusions: During the Battle of Megiddo Josiah was mortally wounded and died in Megiddo (2 Ki 23:30). Neco, who was in a hurry to reach the headquarters of his army at Carchemish on the Euphrates (2 Chr 35:20, 21), continued his march north as soon as the forces of Josiah had been defeated. He felt that Judah with a beaten and demoralized army no longer posed a threat to him, and that he could postpone the political arrangements in Judah until after the encounter with the Babylonians had taken place. However, the lack of exact data makes it impossible to be definitive with regard to the dates of the reigns of the kings involved. It is certain that Josiah died in May or June 609 in the 31st year of his reign (2 Ki 22:1). He was succeeded by Jehoahaz, who in turn was deposed by Neco after a reign of three months (2 Ki 23:31, 33). He may therefore have reigned from May to August or from June to September, 609.

For those who hold the view that the regnal years of the

kings of Judah were counted according to a calendar which began the year in the spring, the date of the death of Josiah is immaterial, as long as it occurred after March 28 (= Nisan 1). In that case, the year that began in the spring of 609 and ended in the spring of 608, was then (1) the 31st year of Josiah, (2) the year in which Jehoahaz reigned for three months, and (3) the accession year of Jehoiakim.

Those, however, who believe that a civil year beginning in autumn was used in Judah to reckon the regnal years of the kings, are forced to assume that Jehoahaz was not deposed until after Tishri 1 (Sept. 21), because data contained in the Babylonian Chronicles, not yet discussed, make it certain that Jehoiakim, the successor of Jehoahaz, began his first regnal year in 608, either in the spring or in the autumn, and that his first year cannot have started in the autumn of 609.<sup>19</sup> According to this reasoning the Battle of Megiddo cannot have taken place earlier than in Tammuz, the same month in which the Assyrian and Egyptian armies crossed the Euphrates. In no other way could Jehoahaz have reigned for three months and still be deposed after Tishri 1.

Before leaving this subject we should point out that it is possible that Neco and his armed forces, held up by the Battle of Megiddo, were not able to join those Egyptian army contingents which were permanently stationed at Carchemish when the campaign against Haran began. It is known that Egyptian forces had supported the Assyrians before 609, for the Babylonian Chronicles attest their military participation in Assyrian campaigns for the years 616 and 610. The excavations of Carchemish have also provided evidence that this city was under a strong Egyptian influence under Psamtik I and Neco II before it was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in

<sup>19</sup> Thiele, *MNHK*, pp. 163-165, dates the Battle of Megiddo in Tammuz 609, and the accession of Jehoiakim in Tishri of the same year. Malamat, *op. cit.*, p. 256, presents a Synchronistic Table which shows the end of Jehoahaz' three months of reign coinciding with the change of year in the autumn. He considers the next full year as the accession year of Jehoiakim.

605.<sup>20</sup> It was probably an Egyptian garrison city during those years. Furthermore, the name of Neco is not mentioned in the Babylonian Chronicles. The Egyptian forces stationed at Carchemish may therefore have joined the Assyrians according to an agreement worked out between the heads of state sometime earlier or through diplomatic channels. In fact it is possible that the late arrival of Neco and his army was the reason for the failure of the campaign against Haran.

*The Battle of Carchemish.* The Babylonian Chronicles published by Wiseman have put an end to the uncertainty with regard to the date of the Battle of Carchemish mentioned both in the Bible (Jer 46:2) and by Josephus (*Ant.* x.6.1), but nowhere else in ancient records prior to the discovery of the Babylonian Chronicles. Unfortunately no exact date is given for this battle in the Chronicles. We merely learn that it took place in the 21st year of Nabopolassar before he died on Ab 8 (= Aug. 15, 605). Since the Babylonian year had begun April 12 in 605, and Nebuchadnezzar before the end of August (when word of his father's death reached him) had defeated the Egyptians not only at Carchemish, but also at Hamath in Syria, and had "conquered the whole area of the Hatti-country," it cannot be far amiss to assume that the Battle of Carchemish took place early in the Babylonian year, perhaps before the end of April—most probably not later than in May.

*The Capture of Jerusalem.* The most exact information ever obtained from cuneiform records for any event recorded in the Bible is that of the Babylonian Chronicles pertaining to the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar during the reign of Jehoiachin. It is stated that Nebuchadnezzar left for Palestine (Hatti-land) in Kislev of his 7th regnal year (= Dec. 18, 598 to Jan 15, 597), and that he seized "the city of Judah"

<sup>20</sup> C. L. Wooley, *Carchemish*, II (London, 1921), 123-129.

(= Jerusalem) on Adar 2 (= March 16, 597). Moreover, it is stated that on that day he "captured the king" and "appointed there a king of his own choice." This provides an exact date for the end of Jehoiachin's reign and the accession of Zedekiah. In fact, even a virtually exact date for the end of Jehoiakim's reign is obtained by means of this information, because the length of Jehoiachin's reign is known—three months and 10 days (2 Chr 36:9). This leads back to Marcheshwan 22 (= Dec. 10, 598) for Jehoiachin's accession and the death of his father Jehoiakim.<sup>21</sup>

Jehoiakim died in his 11th regnal year (2 Ki 23:36) which had begun either in the autumn of 598 or in the spring of the same year, depending on the type of calendar then used. This leads to the year 608/607 as his first year, as has already been pointed out in the discussion of the Battle of Megiddo. If an autumn-to-autumn calendar was used Jehoiakim must have come to the throne after Tishri 1, 609, since the beginning of his 1st regnal year did not occur until Tishri 1, 608. However, if a spring-to-spring calendar was used, he could have come to the throne before Tishri 609, because his first regnal year would have begun Nisan 1, 608.

Jehoiachin's total three-month reign falling entirely between Tishri and Nisan poses no problems as far as the chronology is concerned, nor do the available data provide any evidence in regard to the type of calendar used during his time.

<sup>21</sup> This date is arrived at from the calendar tables of R.A. Parker and W. H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.-A.D. 75* (Providence, 1956) by reckoning back 10 days from Kislev 2 inclusively, assuming that Marcheshwan had 29 days and that the dating used by the Hebrew chronicler coincided with the Babylonian. Thiele, *MNHK*, p. 168, gives Marcheshwan 21 (Dec. 9, 598) as the date of Jehoiachin's accession, evidently preferring this date to Marcheshwan 22, which he had defended in his *BASOR*, No. 143, article (p. 22, where the equation with Dec. 8 is incorrect). Vogt, *Suppl. to VT*, IV, p. 94, also takes Marcheshwan 22 as the date for Jehoiakim's death and equates it with Dec. 9, evidently using the tables of the 2d edition of Parker and Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.-A.D. 45* (Chicago, 1946), as the basis of his computation.

For Zedekiah's reign, however, a difference of an entire year is involved, depending on the type of calendar applied to his recorded length of reign of 11 years (2 Chr 36:11). The date of his predecessor's capture, and presumably of his own accession is given by the Babylonian Chronicles as Adar 2 (= March 16, 597). If an autumn-to-autumn calendar is applied to his reign his first regnal year would have begun Tishri 1, 597, and his eleventh year, in which Jerusalem was destroyed (2 Ki 25:2), would have been the year 587/586, autumn-to-autumn. In that case Jerusalem's capture would have taken place Tammuz 9 (2 Ki 25:3) and its final destruction Ab 7 (2 Ki 25:8), or July 18 and August 14, 586, respectively.

On the other hand, if a spring-to-spring calendar was applied, Zedekiah's first year would have begun Nisan 1 in 597, and his 11th year would have begun Nisan 1, 587. In that case Jerusalem would have been captured July 29, 587, and destroyed August 25, 587. Both sets of dates have found defenders among Biblical historians, as has already been pointed out. Fortunately some information is available which can, according to the present author's views, decide which set of dates is correct. This information is given in 2 Ki 25:8 and in Jer 52:12, where the capture and destruction of Jerusalem is dated in the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar. Whether the date is reckoned by the Babylonian calendar, according to which Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year began Nisan 1, 586, or by an autumn-to-autumn calendar, according to which Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year would have begun Tishri 1, 587,<sup>22</sup> the result is the same: The capture and destruction of Jerusalem took place in the summer of 586, because only during that summer both months fell in the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar.

Scholars who have defended the use of the spring-to-spring calendar by the writers of the records of the last kings of Judah have generally followed W. F. Albright, who holds

<sup>22</sup> See below for a demonstration of the evidence for this view.

that in the west Nebuchadnezzar's official accession year (605/604) was considered his first regnal year, and that all data pertaining to Nebuchadnezzar given in Biblical records (with the exception of a passage in Jer 52:28-30) were one year higher than the Babylonian numbering, and thus differed by one year from the official Babylonian reckoning.<sup>23</sup> This theory can hardly be correct, because it would seem strange indeed that the Jewish annalists should have used for Nebuchadnezzar the antedating (or non-accession-year) system, while they used the postdating (accession-year) system for their own kings. That the Babylonians used the postdating system is well known and needs no demonstration, and all scholars agree that this system was also used by the Jewish writers with regard to the regnal years of their own kings. Should it therefore not be more plausible to assume that the Jewish historians used the postdating system consistently in their records for the kings of Babylonia as well as for their own kings?

Moreover, many scholars have failed to take into consideration the fact that the Hebrew chroniclers counted the regnal years of a foreign king according to the calendar of the chroniclers' own country, even if it differed from the calendar of the country over which the foreign king ruled. Only if this principle is recognized and consistently applied can a chronology of the kings of Judah and Israel be obtained, based on the synchronisms and other chronological data found in Kings and Chronicles.<sup>24</sup>

It is also well known that Ptolemy, the 2nd century astronomer of Alexandria, applied the ancient Egyptian calendar with its wandering year to the Babylonian, Seleucid, Macedonian and Roman rulers whom he lists in his famous Canon.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Albright, *BASOR*, No. 143, p. 32; Freedman, *op. cit.*, pp. 56, 57; Noth, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

<sup>24</sup> Thiele, *MNHK*, pp. 19-21, 54 ff.; Horn, "The Chronology of Hezekiah," *AUSS*, II (1964), 43.

<sup>25</sup> F. K. Ginzel, *Handbuch der mathematischen und technischen Chronologie* (Leipzig, 1906), I, 138-143.

That his practice was common in Egypt has been demonstrated by certain double-dated documents, such as the Elephantine papyri of the 5th century B.C.<sup>26</sup> The following date shows this clearly: "Kislev 3, year 8 = Toth 12, year 9 of Darius [II]." <sup>27</sup> In this case a certain date according to the Egyptian calendar was considered to have fallen in the 9th year of Darius, while the same day according to the Babylonian or Jewish calendar was considered to have fallen in the 8th year.

The clearest example of this practice in Biblical literature is Nehemiah's record of his appointment as governor of Judah in Nisan of the 20th year of Artaxerxes I (Neh. 2:1 ff.) after he had received a report of the unfavorable conditions in Judah in the month Kislev of that same 20th year of Artaxerxes (Neh 1:1 ff.). Unless an error is involved in one or both of these texts, as some scholars think,<sup>28</sup> we have here evidence of a calendar year in which Kislev preceded Nisan, and of the fact that a Jew applied this type of calendar to the 20th year of Artaxerxes, king of Persia.<sup>29</sup> If this were an isolated case one might be tempted to dismiss the evidence as an error, but the cumulative evidence from many sources points in the same direction: The kingdom of Judah in the pre-exilic period used an autumn-to-autumn civil year, and applied it to the reckoning of the regnal years not only of their own kings but also of foreign kings as well, and this practice remained in force among many post-exilic Jews.

If this evidence is applied to Nebuchadnezzar's reign the following conclusions can be reached. The Babylonian Chronicles have revealed that Nabopolassar died on Ab 8 in his 21st regnal year (= Aug. 15, 605), and that Nebuchadnezzar reached Babylon on Elul 1 (= Sept. 7, 605) of the same year

<sup>26</sup> Horn and Wood, *JNES*, XIII (1954), 4, 5.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17, No. AP 25.

<sup>28</sup> For example W. Rudolph, *Esra und Nehemia* (Tübingen, 1949), p. 102; R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel* (London, 1962), p. 192.

<sup>29</sup> J. Wellhausen, *Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte* (7th ed.; Berlin, 1914), p. 161; Thiele, *MNHK*, p. 30.

and "sat on the royal throne." Both of these dates fell between Nisan and Tishri. Therefore, the chroniclers of Judah, applying the autumn-to-autumn year to Nebuchadnezzar's reign, began to count his first regnal year with Tishri 1 in 605 (= Oct. 7, 605). Hence his accession year, according to Jewish reckoning, had a length of less than two months, while according to the Babylonian reckoning it lasted until the spring of 604.

This double reckoning of Nebuchadnezzar's regnal years by the Babylonian and Jewish annalists accounts for the apparent discrepancy between the data with regard to the date of Jehoiachin's capture; for the Babylonian Chronicles place this event in the 7th year of Nebuchadnezzar, while 2 Ki 24:12 puts it in the 8th year. The 7th year of Nebuchadnezzar according to the Babylonian spring calendar lasted from March 27, 598 to April 12, 597, but according to the Jewish autumn calendar it had already ended in the autumn of 598, when Nebuchadnezzar's 8th year had begun.<sup>30</sup> Hence, both documents, the Babylonian Chronicles as well as 2 Ki 24:12, contain accurate information in spite of their apparent contradictions.

If this simple explanation is accepted, there is no need for the rather strange assumption that the Jewish annalists used the antedating system for Nebuchadnezzar's reign,<sup>31</sup> or if not, that Jehoiachin after his surrender was not immediately transported to Babylonia, so that the Babylonian Chronicles record his arrest, and 2 Ki 24:12 his deportation.<sup>32</sup>

Also all other Biblical passages mentioning regnal years of Nebuchadnezzar, with the possible exception of one,<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> This has already been suggested by Thiele, *BASOR*, No. 143, p. 26.

<sup>31</sup> See *supra* under note 23.

<sup>32</sup> Wiseman, *op. cit.*, p. 34; Malamat, *op. cit.*, p. 254. For another, equally improbable theory see Thiele, *MNHK*, pp. 167, 168.

<sup>33</sup> The only problem text seems to be Jer 46:2, which states that the Battle of Carchemish took place in the 4th year of Jehoiakim, which according to the Jewish calendar was the year 605/604, autumn-

then fall in line. In Jer 25:1, the 4th year of Jehoiakim of Judah is equated with the 1st year of Nebuchadnezzar. This was the autumn-to-autumn year 605/604. The fall and final destruction of Jerusalem is dated in 2 Ki 25:8 and in Jer 52:12 in the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar, which coincided with the 11th year of Zedekiah of Judah (2 Ki 25:2; Jer 39:2; 52:5). That year was the autumn-to-autumn year 587/586, as has already been pointed out.

The two deportations of Jews recorded in Jer 52:28-30 which took place in the 7th and 18th years of Nebuchadnezzar must have been secondary and minor deportations, and cannot refer to deportations which took place after Jehoiachin's capture in 597 and after the fall and destruction of Jerusalem

to-autumn. But we know now that the Battle of Carchemish took place in the spring of 605, before Nabopolassar's death. This difficulty can be explained only in one of two ways: (1) Either the passage of Jer 46:2 contains a scribal error made by the author, compiler or a copyist, or (2) the date refers not to the battle itself but rather to the time when the prophecy was issued. I therefore, venture to suggest that Jer 46:1, 2 be read in the following way: "The word of Yahweh which came to Jeremiah the prophet, against the nations; about Egypt: against the army of Pharaoh Neco, king of Egypt (which had been at the river Euphrates at Carchemish and which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had defeated) in the 4th year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah." If the portion of the verse referring to the Battle of Carchemish is considered a parenthetical clause, all chronological difficulties are removed, and this passage falls in line with the rest of the dated historical statements of Jeremiah mentioning Nebuchadnezzar.

In this case one has to assume that the parenthetical clause was inserted in the introduction to Jeremiah's message to point out that the prophetic oracle was pronounced over the Egyptian army which had been badly mauled several months before, perhaps as long ago as a year. It is true that in this way the passage shows an artificial and unnatural grammatical construction, for which reason this interpretation may not appeal to many scholars, but one should at least admit the possibility that the text can be interpreted in such a way that the chronological difficulties, which otherwise exist, can be removed. That translators from the LXX to our time have applied the date as referring to the battle is no proof that the traditional reading is correct. Since numerous parallels of similar parenthetical clauses have been recognized in many other Biblical passages, this one need not be rejected as an isolated case.

in 586, because of the small number of deportees. For the deportation of 597 our sources in 2 Ki 24:14 and 16 mention 10,000 and 8,000 deportees respectively. Therefore, the deportation of 3,023 according to Jer 52:28 in the preceding year (the 7th year of Nebuchadnezzar, 599/598, autumn-to-autumn) must have been in connection with the harassment of Jehoiakim by "bands of the Chaldeans" to which 2 Ki 24:2 refers, in which Nebuchadnezzar was not personally involved, although these military activities against Judah were carried out under his direction and with his sanction (cf. 2 Chr 36:6). They were probably led by one of his generals. In the course of these military encounters Jehoiakim must have met his death.

The number of citizens of Judah deported to Babylonia after the fall of Jerusalem is not recorded, but it seems incredible that the number should not have been larger than 832, as those scholars believe who apply Jer 52:29 to this deportation. Undoubtedly the few deportees referred to in this verse were Jews captured during the siege of Jerusalem, perhaps after the fall of such cities as Azekah or Lachish, to which Jer 34:7 refers and on which the Lachish letters have shed some welcome light.