

Thiele, Edwin R. *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*. [3d ed.] Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1983. 253 pp. \$12.95.

Edwin R. Thiele's outstanding contribution to biblical studies in his reconstruction of the chronology of the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah during the Divided Monarchy is well known and has justly been recognized as a genuine "breakthrough." An intriguing account of this remarkable achievement has been provided in a paper by another renowned OT scholar, Siegfried H. Horn, and entitled "From Bishop Ussher to Edwin R. Thiele" (a Founders' Week address at Andrews University in 1979 in honor of Thiele, and published in *AUSS* 18 [1980]: 37-49).

Thiele's initial publication on the subject appeared in *JNES* 3 (1944): 137-186. An expanded version appeared under the present title in 1951 (published jointly by the University of Chicago Press and Cambridge University Press), with a revised edition in 1965 (published by the William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company in Grand Rapids, Michigan). Thiele has amplified those treatments with articles in various scholarly journals, and has also provided a simplified shorter version of his work, entitled *A Chronology of the Hebrew Kings* (published in 1977 by the Zondervan Publishing House in its Contemporary Evangelical Perspectives series; see my review of this particular title in *AUSS* 17 [1979]: 227-228).

Inasmuch as Siegfried H. Horn has reviewed at some length the 2d edition of *Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (see *AUSS* 5 [1967]: 213-214), a thoroughgoing description of the work will not be necessary here, but rather I should like to call attention more particularly to some of the new features of the present edition as compared with the earlier ones.

First of all, it may be observed that the somewhat technical chapter on "Modern Chronological Systems" which appeared in the 1st edition but was already excluded in the 2d edition is also omitted in the 3d edition. On the other hand, this newest publication contains a short but significant chapter on "Coregencies and Overlapping Reigns" which was not present in either of the earlier editions. Also beyond what was included in those earlier editions, this new book contains a short—but important—paragraph on p. 55 relating to what Thiele calls "*dual dating*." The significance of this phenomenon is there described as follows: "Concerning the regnal data for coregencies and rival reigns, it is vital to know that in five of the nine such reigns the datum for the length of reign is the number of years from the beginning of the period of overlap to the end of the sole reign, but the synchronism of accession marks the end of the overlap and the commencement of the sole reign. This I term *dual dating*. Failure to understand this practice more than anything else has been responsible for the confusion and bewilderment that has arisen concerning the data in

Kings." (Although not treated as such in the earlier editions of *Mysterious Numbers*, Thiele has hitherto given this concept of "dual dating" considerable exposure in his *Chronology of the Hebrew Kings*.)

Except for the items mentioned above, the basic content and the general sequence in which the materials are presented remain the same in all three editions, albeit with different chapter divisions and a completely revised mode of presentation in this new edition (more will be said shortly about the new mode of presentation). Perhaps the most striking change in chapter titles in the present book as compared with its forerunners is the absence of the rubrics "Pattern Twelve-Thirteen" (1st ed.), "Patterns Twelve-Twenty and Two-Seventeen" (2d ed.), and "Pattern 752" and "Pattern 740" (*Chronology of the Hebrew Kings*); but the new presentational scheme tends itself to highlight somewhat the problems and solutions dealt with earlier under those various rubrics. In any case, Thiele has not failed in this new book to cover adequately the essentials of what is involved with regard to the confusing data he treated earlier under those special designations.

Especially noteworthy in this 3d edition is the completely new mode of presenting the data pertaining to the kings of Israel and Judah. Concerning this new organizational scheme, Thiele himself states in the Preface to the 3d edition: "I will discuss the Hebrew rulers one by one in the order of sequence in which their accounts appear in Kings. That order is important, for it is the order in which the editors of Kings believed the rulers to have commenced their reigns. Step by step I will build up the pattern that represents the original arrangement of years in which the Hebrews fitted into ancient history" (p. 23).

Not only does the new mode of presenting the data pertaining to the monarchs of Israel and Judah lend to the meaningfulness called to attention by Thiele, but it also breaks the text up into useful and readily manageable segments. The reigns are numbered in sequence in *side-heads* that provide the particular ruler's name, country (Israel or Judah), and dates of reign (all helpfully put into bold type). This is followed by a *listing* of the following pertinent items: Bible reference, synchronism data, length-of-reign data, and other relevant information about the ruler (e.g., Ahab of Israel fought in 853 B.C. against Shalmaneser III at the battle of Qarqar [p. 94]). Thereafter follows the discussion itself.

That discussion has, of course, been updated in this volume to take notice of recent discoveries. New information coming to light between the appearance of the 1st and 2d editions—including D. J. Wiseman's 1956 publication of a group of tablets under the title *Chronicles of Chaldaean Kings (625-556 B.C.) in the British Museum*—was utilized in the 2d edition; and it is interesting to observe that the striking relevant discoveries between 1951 and 1965 confirmed the basic accuracy of Thiele's original reconstruc-

tion. The same still holds true, though perhaps the new information that has come to light since 1965 is not as remarkable as that which surfaced in the interim between the first two editions of *Mysterious Numbers*. (In this connection, it can only be regretted that Hayim Tadmor's long-awaited study of the section of Tiglath-Pileser III's annals dealing with Judahite king Azariah has not been published in time for Thiele to utilize before having to go into print with his 3d edition.)

In this present volume, one of the more fascinating newer items relates to a certain stele inscription of Tiglath-Pileser III that makes mention of Menahem of Israel (reigned 752-742 B.C.). Although the full inscription as yet awaits publication, Louis D. Levine published two brief items about it in 1972. Thiele's own penetrating analysis of the location on this stele of the reference to "Menahem of Samaria" as among tribute-payers to Tiglath-Pileser indicates that that reference belongs to events of the Assyrian monarch's years 3 and 4—i.e., 743 and 742 B.C. (pp. 126-128). Such dating accords perfectly, of course, with Thiele's chronology as to the time of Menahem's reign.

The present edition of *Mysterious Numbers* has its text enhanced by numerous accompanying charts, diagrams, and lists. Indeed, there were precursors to these in the 2d edition; but in my opinion, especially are the thirty-three "Charts of Reigns" more useful than the earlier tables in that they break the chronological span into shorter, simpler, and more meaningful segments in relationship to the accompanying text.

The new edition of *Mysterious Numbers*, like its predecessors, contains eight helpful appendices dealing with various related and/or background matters (pp. 215-229). It contains, in addition, an introductory table that lists in order the specific references in 1 and 2 Kings, together with the names of the monarchs and relevant data pertaining to them (unnumbered pp. 11-13, preceding the prefaces). There is a "Glossary of Basic Terms" (pp. 231-232), a comprehensive bibliography (pp. 233-242), and several indexes (prepared by James F. Scott): "Subject and Person," "Author," and "Scripture" (pp. 243-253).

As a fitting conclusion to this review, it will be in order to give a brief quotation from Thiele's own concluding chapter as to the results of his work in reconstructing the chronology of those "mysterious numbers" of the Hebrew kings: "The original chronicles of the kings of Israel and Judah were contemporary productions in full accord with the facts of the times. During the period of the exile the records from north and south were brought together in a single book. The facts we have set forth here in the restoration of the chronological patterns of the individual reigns give evidence that the work from beginning to end was done with great devotion and almost unbelievable accuracy" (p. 208).