

SOME MISSING COREGENCIES IN THIELE'S CHRONOLOGY

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Chronological schemes for the Divided Monarchy period of Israelite history can be classified into two incompatible approaches. On the one hand are those interpreters who regard the synchronisms and lengths of reign recorded in the books of Kings and Chronicles as conveying genuine historical data. For this group, the MT text ranges from total accuracy (or virtually so) to widespread corruption of the numbers given. On the other hand are those interpreters who display an attitude of irreconcilability of the numerical data, exploring instead the possibility that these data in Kings and Chronicles conceal some numerico-theological meaning.¹

In 1944 Edwin R. Thiele published a breakthrough study with regard to the chronology of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel.² In this he provided a consistent and rational chronology revealing the basic accuracy of the royal lengths of reign and synchronisms given in Kings and Chronicles. In fact, since the publication of an expanded version of Thiele's findings in 1951 in the first edition of

¹See K. Stenring, *The Enclosed Garden* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1966), and G. Larsson, *The Secret System: A Study in the Chronology of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1973); idem, "Is Biblical Chronology Systematic or Not?" RQ 24 (1969): 499-517; idem, "The Documentary Hypothesis and the Chronological Structure of the Old Testament," ZAW 97 (1985): 316-333. These have been followed by F. H. Cryer, "To the One of Fictive Music: OT Chronology and History," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 2 (1987): 1-27, a particularly disappointing work inasmuch as most of Cryer's "problem texts" have been dealt with in an exemplary manner by many reputable scholars.

²Edwin R. Thiele, "The Chronology of the Kings of Judah and Israel," JNES 3 (1944): 137-186.

his *Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*,³ there has been, in my view, no serious contender to rival his dates.

Thiele's system has become the biblical scholar's first preference, because it has stood the test of time under the scrutiny of a host of able scholars. The recent attempt by J. H. Hayes and P. K. Hooker⁴ to put forward a new chronology is unlikely to succeed due to its reversion to the old "tried-and-failed" method of changing the text.⁵ These scholars have resorted to a number of textual emendations, including a reduction of 12 to 11 years for Omri's rule, altering 22 to 15 for Ahab's reign, and changing 28 to 18 for Jehu's rule, plus many other similar alterations. Where the biblical figures do not fit in with the scheme of these authors, royal abdications are invented. Thus Baasha's reign is reduced to 22 years (MT, 24 years) and the last two years are considered as "abdication years." Likewise, Asa's reign is reduced to 29 years (MT, 41), with the last 12 years being "abdication years."

Thus, in place of coregencies, Hayes and Hooker postulate abdications, counting the years after each abdication as part of the king's reign. The question naturally arises, What is the material difference chronologically between coregencies and these abdications since the period of abdication is counted twice, once for the old king and once for his successor? Hayes and Hooker dismiss coregencies with the argument that "the weakness" in assuming them "is the fact that the hypothesis of coregencies is without biblical warrant."⁶ As Thiele had already shown, the occurrence of coregencies during the Divided Monarchy is by no means without

³Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press; and Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1951). The 2d and 3d editions were published in Grand Rapids, MI, by Zondervan in 1965 and 1983. Throughout the present article the references to Thiele will generally be from the 3d ed.

⁴J. H. Hayes and P. K. Hooker, *A New Chronology for the Kings of Israel and Judah* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1988).

⁵See J. M. Miller, "Another Look at the Chronology of the Early Divided Monarchy," *JBL* 86 (1967): 276-288, for older works advocating unavoidable textual emendations. Miller, 286, states that he cannot avoid textual emendations to the MT if harmony is to be achieved.

⁶Hayes and Hooker, 11.

biblical warrant.⁷ And in any case, even if the statement by Hayes and Hooker were true, their own theory of abdications would fall victim to it too.

Thiele's work opened up a new chapter in the chronological study of the Divided Monarchy, in that he abandoned a methodological mistake that had characterized the work of earlier researchers: that of emending the text whenever any seemingly "contradictory" data appeared. However, in my opinion his work can be improved upon, and certain scholars, such as Siegfried H. Horn, have already taken a step or two in this direction.⁸ I propose in this article to add to their findings by expanding the number of coregencies recognized by Thiele, as well as by looking more closely at the ones already noted by other scholars.

Thiele has made a good case for seven coregencies among the monarchs of Israel (the northern kingdom), and of Judah (the southern kingdom). According to Thiele, one such coregency occurred in Israel—namely, that of Jeroboam II with Jehoash; and six occurred in Judah—Jehoshaphat with Asa, Jehoram with Jehoshaphat, Azariah (Uzziah) with Amaziah, Jotham with Azariah, Ahaz with Jotham, and Manasseh with Hezekiah.⁹ Using the same set of basic factors that Thiele uncovered during the course of his work on the chronology of the Hebrew kings, I believe I can show four further coregencies that he overlooked—one for Israel and three for Judah.¹⁰

⁷For example, Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, 1st ed., 17, 35-36, and 3d ed., 61-65; and Thiele, "Coregencies and Overlapping Reigns among the Hebrew Kings," *JBL* 93 (1974): 174-200.

⁸See Siegfried H. Horn, "The Chronology of King Hezekiah's Reign," *AUSS* 1 (1969): 40-52.

⁹Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, 3d ed., 61, lists these, plus two "overlapping reigns" in Israel—Omri and Tibni, and Menahem and Pekah. A century or so before Thiele's work, only two coregencies had been widely recognized, those of Uzziah with Amaziah and of Jotham with Uzziah (see D. Kerr, "Chronology of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah," *JSL* 4 [Oct. 1849]: 241-257); and this was still the situation in 1895 (see E. L. Curtiss, "The Old Testament Reckoning of Regnal Years," *JBL* 14 [1895]: 125-130).

¹⁰For a comprehensive review of Thiele's chronology, see Leslie McFall, "A Translation Guide to the Chronological Data in Kings and Chronicles," *BibSac* 148 (1991): 3-45. I believe it is possible to make out a case for a fifth additional coregency (for Ahaziah of Israel) if the biblical material should so require (*ibid.*, p. 19, text no. 21).

Five Basic Factors

Five simple factors taken into account by Thiele are basic for the emergence of a harmonious chronology for the Hebrew kings. These are as follows: (1) two alternatives for the New-Year's day; (2) two methods for counting the first year of a king's reign; (3) the freedom to switch from one system of counting to the other; (4) two source documents; and (5) the existence of coregencies.

Two New-Year's Days

During the reign of Solomon the regnal year began on the first day of the seventh month, Tishri (our Sept/Oct).¹¹ This date continued to be used in Judah after the division of Solomon's kingdom and was retained there, as far as we can tell, all throughout Judah's 345-year history. The ten northern tribes, referred to as "Israel," immediately under Jeroboam switched the beginning of their year to the first day of the first month Nisan (our March/April); and as far as the evidence goes, that day remained the New-Year's day in the northern kingdom until the end of that kingdom's 208-year existence. Occasionally this difference in the official beginning of the year would result in a discrepancy of one year in reckoning synchronisms between the years of the monarchs of Judah and of Israel. The small amount of evidence available suggests that in both kingdoms Nisan was the first month of the cultic year, and that the months of the year were numbered consecutively from it, irrespective of when the New Year's day was observed.¹²

Two Systems for Counting Regnal Years

Two systems were in use in Judah and Israel for reckoning the beginning of the monarch's reign: the accession-year system (or

¹¹See Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, 3d ed., 51-52.

¹²See D. J. A. Clines, "The Evidence for an Autumnal New Year in Pre-exilic Israel Reconsidered," *JBL* 93 (1974): 22-40, for a discussion of the issue. Cf. E. Greswell, *Dissertations upon the Principles and Arrangement of a Harmony of the Gospels*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1837), vol. 3, Appendix Dissertation XII, "On the Chronology of the Kingdoms of Judah and of Israel," 484, for the evidence concerning the common assumption that Nisan was the regnal month for both Israel and Judah. See also Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, 3d ed., 52, n. 11.

"single-counting") and the nonaccession-year system (or "double-counting").

In the single-counting (or accession-year) system the new king's years were counted from the New Year's day *after* the old king died, but under the double-counting (or nonaccession-year) system the new king's years were counted from the New Year's day *before* the old king died. This difference will often account for the synchronisms between Judah and Israel being one year out.

Switches between the Counting Systems

Thiele's research has shown that the nonaccession-year system was used for the first 133 years of Israel's 208-year existence, and the accession-year system was used for the last 75 years (from 798-723 B.C.).¹³ On the other hand, the accession-year system was used by Judah throughout its 345-year existence, except for a 52-year period (from 848-796 B.C.). During that period Judah adopted Israel's nonaccession-year system following the marriage of Jezebel's daughter to Jehoram. This meant in fact that Judah switched systems twice.¹⁴

Two Source Documents and Scribal Use of Them

The writers of Kings and Chronicles refer to two documents from which they abstracted their information: the "Chronicles of the Kings of Judah" and the "Chronicles of the Kings of Israel."¹⁵ Thiele has shown that the scribe(s) of the "Chronicles of the Kings of Judah" wrote up both Judah's and Israel's history in terms of Judah's method of reckoning regnal years, and that the scribe(s) of the "Chronicles of the Kings of Israel" wrote up both Israel's and

¹³A. E. Steinmann, "The Chronology of 2 Kings 15-18," *JETS* 30 (1987): 391, misunderstood Thiele's position when he wrote that "only the nonaccession-year method was used in Israel." See Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, 3d ed., 110, regarding the introduction of the accession-year system in Israel.

¹⁴Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, 3d ed., 57-60, 98, 104, 113. In contrast to the demonstrated switches as indicated by Thiele, W. F. Albright, "The Chronology of the Divided Monarchy of Israel," *BASOR* 100 (1945): 16-22 (esp. 22, n. 29), has held that Judah and Israel followed the nonaccession-year system throughout their histories; so also Miller, 288.

¹⁵As is well known, references to these occur repeatedly throughout the books of Kings and Chronicles (normally in connection with the close of royal reigns).

Judah's history in terms of Israel's method of counting regnal years.¹⁶

Coregencies

As indicated earlier, Thiele recognized correctly the existence of coregencies, but in my view he has missed four coregencies. These omissions would account for the few places where Thiele was unable to bring absolute harmony to the biblical data.

Absolute Dating

In addition to the attention given above to the basic factors involved in deriving a sound chronology of the Hebrew kings during the Divided Monarchy, a word must be said concerning absolute dating. In view of the complex interaction of several of the independent factors, it is clear that such factors could never have been discovered (or uncovered) if it had not been for extrabiblical evidence which established certain key absolute dates for events in Israel and Judah, such as 853, 841, 723, 701, 605, 597, and 586 B.C. It was as a result of trial and error in fitting the biblical data around these absolute dates that previous chronologists (and more recently Thiele) brought to light the factors outlined above.¹⁷

2. *Four Missing Coregencies*

I propose in the remainder of this article to set out the case for four missing coregencies in Thiele's reconstruction of the chronology of the Divided Monarchy. In the case of two of the proposed new coregencies—those involving Hezekiah and Jehoiachin—Thiele

¹⁶Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, 1st ed., 34.

¹⁷The earliest date for which we have extrabiblical confirmation is 853, according to Alberto R. Green, "Regnal Formulas in the Hebrew and Greek Texts of the Books of Kings," *JNES* 42 (1983): 167. Shalmaneser III's reference to Ahab was first published by Henry Rawlinson in *The Cuneiform Inscriptions from Western Asia* (London, 1861-84), vol. 3, pls. 7 and 8. The 21-year rule of the Egyptian king Shishak (Shoshenq I) has been dated c. 945-924 B.C. independently of the biblical data (K. A. Kitchen, *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt [1100-650 B.C.]*, 2d ed. with Supplement [Warminster, Eng., 1986], 544, 575). Rehoboam's 5th year ran from Sept 926 to Sept 925, which means that Shishak's invasion of Judah occurred toward the end of his 21-year reign according to Alberto R. Green, "Solomon and Siamun: A Synchronism between Early Dynastic Israel and the Twenty-first Dynasty of Egypt," *JBL* 97 (1978): 358. If this is so, Albright's date of 922 B.C. for the division of the Kingdom would be ruled out.

overlooked them because he departed from his characteristic conviction that none of the numbers given for the Hebrew kings was corrupt. In the case of the other two coregencies, I will show that he missed these because he applied an unusual interpretation to their numbers and consequently had to view their synchronisms as exceptions to the normal practice of the biblical writers.

Jehoiachin's Coregency

Thiele apparently regarded the statements of 2 Kings 24:8 and 2 Chr 36:9 as being irreconcilable. He remarks, "Jehoiachin was eighteen years of age at his accession and the beginning of his captivity in Babylon (2 Kings 24:8; cf. 2 Chr 36:9 where his age is given as eight in most Hebrew manuscripts)."¹⁸ The discrepancy in these two texts also troubled older commentators, with four solutions put forward to try to resolve the difficulty.

First, the suggestion has been made that there was either a corruption of the number "eighteen" that resulted in the "eight" of 2 Chr 36:9,¹⁹ or a corruption of "eight" which resulted in the "eighteen" of 2 Kings 24:8.²⁰ The suggestion that "ten" had

¹⁸Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, 3d ed., 189.

¹⁹Numerous titles from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries could be cited, such as Francis Fawkes, ed., *The Complete Family Bible*, 2 vols. (London, 1761); Thomas Haweis, *The Evangelical Expositor: or, a Commentary on the Holy Bible*, 2 vols. (London, 1765-66); William Dodd, *A Commentary on the Books of the Old and New Testament*, 3 vols. (London, 1770); John Hewlett, *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testament and Apocrypha*, 3 vols. (London, 1811-12); John Kitto, *The Pictorial Bible*, 3 vols. (London, 1836-38), who has noted that the Syriac, Arabic, Houbigant, and Hales support "eighteen"; Greswell, 3:502; Thomas John Hussey, *The Holy Bible*, 3 vols. (London, 1844-45); et al. More recently, the following provide further examples of this approach: R. J. Coggins, *The First and Second Books of the Chronicles*, *The Cambridge Bible Commentary* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 305, where it is noted that "2 Kings 24:8 has 'eighteen,' a much more likely figure; *eight* here may simply be due to scribal error"; J. M. Myers, *2 Chronicles*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1965), 218; and R. B. Dillard, *2 Chronicles*, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 296. See also Alberto R. Green, "The Fate of Jehoiakim," *AUSS* 20 (1982): 103-109.

The NIV alters 2 Chr 36:9 to read "eighteen"; thus Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, 3d ed., 189, is not alone in following the view that the Hebrew number "eight" is corrupt at 2 Chr 36:9. The REB (Oxford and Cambridge, 1989), however, retains "eight" at 2 Chr 36:9.

²⁰E.g., John Henry Blunt, *A Companion to the New Testament* (London, 1881), 26. Joseph Temple and W. Hickman Smith, *The Graphic Family Bible* (London, 1873), have commented that 2 Chr 36:9 and 1 Esdr 1:43 state that "Jehoiachin was eight not eighteen. This agrees best with Mt 1:11 which fixes the time of his birth during his

dropped out of (or was inserted into) the Hebrew text somewhere along the line of transmission is not as simple a solution as it might appear. The two texts read:

2 Kings 24:8 בן־שמונה עשרה שנה "Son-of-eighteen year . . ."

2 Chr 36:9 בן־שמונה שנים "Son-of-eight years . . ."

Since in Hebrew the word for "years" is singular in form when used with numbers greater than ten but plural in form when used with numbers lower than ten, if עשרה ("ten") did drop out of the text by accident it must have been followed by a deliberate alteration of שנה to שנים in order to obtain the correct grammatical agreement. A number of older commentators held the view that the discrepancy was an obvious case of scribal error and consequently concurred with the sentiment of William Wall: "It is in my opinion a pity, that the translators [of the KJV] have not mended such apparent errata of the scribe of the present Heb. out of Kings; 2 Kings xxiv.8. or out of ó [the LXX]; or out of common sense."²¹

A second solution that has been suggested is that Jehoiachin was eight years old when Jehoiakim began to rule. Hence adherents of this view proposed a retranslation of 2 Chr 36:9 as follows: "Jehoiachin was eight years old when he [Jehoiakim] began to reign."²² While such an interpretation might be possible if we

father's captivity."

²¹William Wall, *Critical Notes on the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (London, 1734), 2:354. This work discusses the differences in the chronological data between the LXX and the MT. It is interesting that for 1 Kgs 22:51 the LXX evidence is split between three readings, each of which is correct. Thus MS Alexandrinus reads the 17th of Jehoshaphat, MS Vaticanus reads the 18th, and the Aldine text reads the 21st. These are just three ways of stating the year 853 B.C. Alexandrinus (=MT) uses the accession-year system; Vaticanus employs the nonaccession-year system; and the Aldine prefers to use Jehoshaphat's coregency years. For modern treatments of the value of the LXX data, see J. D. Shenkel, *Chronology and Recensional Development in the Greek Text of Kings* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1968), and W. R. Wifall, "The Chronology of the Divided Monarchy of Israel," *ZAW* 80 (1968): 319-337.

²²W. Gouge, Th. Gataker, et al., *Annotations upon all the Books of the Old and New Testament*, 2 vols. (London, 1651); and Samuel Clark, *The Holy Bible . . . with Annotations and Parallel Scriptures* (London, 1690). A similar solution was proposed by Immanuel Tremellius (fl. ca. 1628) for 2 Kgs 16:2: "twenty years old was Ahaz

were dealing with English grammar, it is not permissible in Hebrew. The MT employs a suffixed infinitive (במלכו) here, and wherever a suffixed infinitive is used of royal accessions in Kings and Chronicles, it always refers to the immediate antecedent. The word order of the Hebrew is: "Son-of-eight years—Jehoiachin—when he began to reign (במלכו)."

An examination of the formula "N was X years old when he began to reign (במלכו)" shows no discrimination between coregencies and kingships. The formula is used to introduce the coregencies of Jehoash of Israel (2 Kings 11:21), and of Azariah (2 Kings 15:2), Jotham (2 Kings 15:33), Ahaz (2 Kings 16:2), Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:2), Manasseh (2 Kings 21:1), and Jehoiachin (2 Chr 36:9) of Judah; also the kingships of Jehoshaphat (1 Kings 22:41), Jehoram (2 Kings 8:16), Ahaziah (2 Kings 8:26), and Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24:8) of Judah, and Jeroboam II of Israel (2 Kings 14:23), each of whom had a period as coregent.

The third solution that has been proposed is that the phrase "a son of eight years" does not relate to the age of Jehoiachin but to the era of the Babylonian Captivity, which is said to have begun in the fourth year of Jehoiakim (Jer 25:1). Matthew Poole, for instance, put forward this theory, pointing also to other eras, such as Saul's being "a son of a year" (1 Sam 13:1);²³ Ahaziah's being "a son of forty-two years," which in the latter instance would have made Azariah older than his father by two years; and to Ezekiel's era of the Captivity (33:21, 40:1).²⁴

It is fortuitous that Jehoiachin did begin his reign in the eighth year of the Captivity. The 8th year of Nebuchadnezzar (on a non-accession-year reckoning, which was not used in Babylon) also marked the beginning of Jehoiachin's kingship (2 Kgs 24:12).

when he [Jotham, Ahaz's father] began to reign." This reading was proposed in order to avoid the difficulty that Jotham would have been only 11 years of age when he begat Ahaz. The unforeseen difficulty with this solution was that Jotham would be only 25 years of age when he began to rule (cf. 2 Kgs 15:33), which would make him the father of Ahaz at five years of age! (Cf. Wall, 2:258.)

²³For this era see Leslie McFall, "Was Nehemiah Contemporary with Ezra in 458 B.C.?" *WTJ* 53 (1991): 263-293.

²⁴Matthew Poole, *Annotations upon the Holy Bible*, 2 vols. (London, 1700); cf. Anthony Purver, *A New and Literal Translation of all the Books of the Old and New Testament*, 2 vols. (London, 1764), 1:559. For the dates of Ezekiel, see K. S. Freedy and D. B. Redford, "The Dates in Ezekiel in Relation to Biblical, Babylonian and Egyptian Sources," *JAOS* 90 (1970): 462-485.

A fourth solution that has been advanced is that there was a coregency for Jehoiachin: For example, at 2 Chr 36:9 the Geneva Version has the marginal note, "That is, he began his reign at eight yere olde, and reigned ten yeres when his father was alive, and after his fathers death, which was the eightente yere of his age, he reigned alone thre moneths and ten dayes."²⁵ This note was retained right through to the 1609 edition of the Geneva Bible printed in London by Robert Barker.²⁶

If there is no corruption of the text, then either solution three or four becomes possible. Solution three recedes in possibility with the observation that 2 Chr 36:9 is preceded (v. 5) and followed (v. 11) by the same formula: "A son of X years is N in his reigning, and Y years he reigned in Jerusalem, and he did the evil thing in the eyes of Yahweh." In each case the reference is to the named individual, thus leaving open the coregency option. Indeed, on Thiele's principles of interpreting such data it becomes a distinct probability that there was such a coregency. Thiele has demonstrated that coregencies were quite normal in Judah, and we have noted above that *בְּמַלְכוֹ* is just as frequently used to introduce a coregency as it is to introduce a kingship.

If we postulate an eleven-year coregency for Jehoiachin on the basis of the four texts given below and insert their information into **Chart 1**, it will be seen how neatly the coregency fits into Judah's

²⁵*The Bible and Holy Scriptures conteyned in the olde and newe testament . . . with most profitable annotations upon all the hard places . . .* (Geneva: Rouland Hall, 1560).

²⁶Other early works which supported the coregency solution were R.F. Herrey, *The Bible . . . with most profitable annotations upon all the hard places . . .* (London: Robert Barker, 1608 [=Geneva Version]); Theodore Haak, *The Dutch Annotations upon the whole Bible*, 2 vols. (London, 1657). This judicious work was commissioned by the Synod of Dort in 1618 and published in 1637. It was published in England by decree of Westminster Parliament, 30 March 1648. This work and that of Simon Patrick are the most useful 17th- and 18th-century commentaries on the chronological difficulties of the Hebrew kings. The works of A. Purver and Wm. Wall are also helpful; as is John Edwards, *A Discourse concerning the Authority, Stile, and Perfection of the Books of the Old and New Testament*, 3 vols. (London, 1694). Matthew Poole, (1700) mentions this solution, as does Simon Patrick, (1727, 1822); cf. also Jean Frédéric Ostervald, *The Holy Bible . . . illustrated with annotations*, 3 vols. (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1787-88); Robert Jamieson & E. H. Bickersteth, *The Holy Bible, with a Devotional and Practical Commentary* (London, 1861); and Matthew Henry, *An Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*, 6 vols. (London, 1842; originally published in 1706).

history at this point. The relevant texts surrounding the appointment of Jehoiachin as coregent are as follows:²⁷

No 1, 2 Kings 23:31: "Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem." Thiele calculated that Jehoahaz became king in Tammuz (25 June-23 July) of 609 B.C. and ended his rule three months later in Tishri (Sept./Oct.).²⁸ Because Jehoahaz's rule spilled over into the next regnal year, Jehoiakim had an accession year of about eleven months.

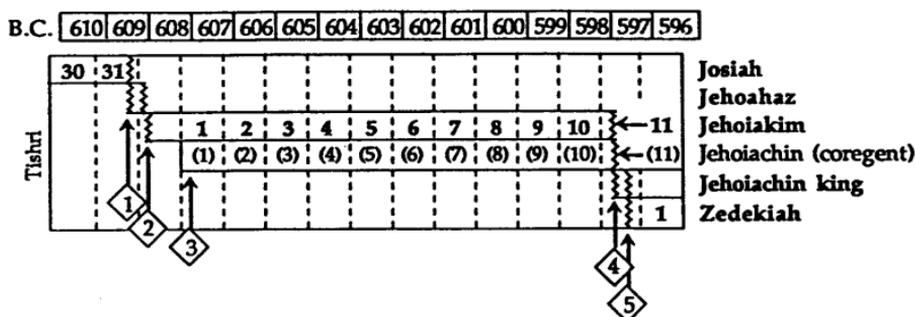


CHART 1. THE COREGENCY OF JEHOIACHIN.

No. 2, 2 Kings 23:36: "Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem" (cf. the parallel in 2 Chr 36:5). Jehoiakim became king about October 609 and he died on 21 Marheshwan (=9 Dec.) 598 B.C., according to Thiele.²⁹

No. 3, 2 Chr 36:9: "Jehoiachin was eight years old when he began to reign [i.e., when he became coregent], and he reigned three months and ten days [as sole ruler] in Jerusalem." Jehoiachin became coregent in Tishri 608 B.C. and was king from 21 Marheshwan to 10 Nisan (=9 December 598 to 22 April 597 B.C.).³⁰ The date 21 Marheshwan

²⁷The text of the RSV is used throughout this article for Bible quotations in English, unless otherwise indicated or implied.

²⁸Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, 3d ed., 182.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 187.

³⁰April 22 is the date when Jehoiachim departed from Jerusalem as a captive. His reign terminated a month or so before this date.

marked the end of Jehoiakim's rule. This was the middle of winter (cf. the mention of "cold" in Jer 36:30).

No. 4, 2 Kings 24:8: "Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem."

No. 5, 2 Kings 24:17: "And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his place and changed his name to Zedekiah."

If Jehoiachin had already passed his eighth birthday before he was made coregent in Tishri of 608 B.C. and had passed his eighteenth birthday before he was made king, then his birthday fell sometime between 22 Marheshwan and 1 Tishri.

For Jehoiakim to be credited with a rule of eleven years on the accession-year system, his first regnal year and Jehoiachin's first year as coregent must have begun on the same New Year's day (Tishri) in 608 B.C. Thus father and son were inducted into their respective offices at the same time.

In the ninth month of Jehoiakim's fifth year (Kislev, 603 B.C.), when Jehoiachin was thirteen years of age, his father cut up and burnt Jeremiah's scroll (Jer 36:9, 22-23). As a result of this action, his dynasty was cursed with the words: "He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David" (36:30). Yet, in 2 Kings 24:6 it is recorded, that "Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead," or "succeeded him as king." For the words of Jeremiah's prophecy to be fulfilled, it must have been publicly and/or legally recorded in Jeremiah's day that Jehoiakim's son, Jehoiachin, was not his legal son, as far as inheritance to David's throne was concerned.³¹

There may be a direct reference to the result of the curse on Jehoiakim in the omission of his name in the genealogy of Joseph in Matt 1:11, "And Josiah begat Jechoniah and his brethren" (RV). What appears to have happened is that because of Yahweh's curse on Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin knew that he could not inherit David's throne *as a son of Jehoiakim*, but if he were moved back one

³¹Zedekiah is said to be the "son" of Jehoiachin (1 Chr 3:16) because he succeeded him on the throne; in reality, Zedekiah may have been Jehoiachin's uncle.

generation into his father's place, he could inherit David's throne *as the son of Josiah*.³²

By this legal device Jehoiachin was able to succeed Jehoiakim, but not as his legal son. He derived his legitimacy to the throne of David through Josiah, his (grand-)father. If this suggestion should prove to be correct, then the genealogy of Matthew takes on the character of representing a spiritual or divinely approved list of legitimate sons of David, a list in which Yahweh excluded Jehoiakim, as indicated above. Another exclusion from Matthew's genealogy—that of the three Judean kings who were united through marriage to the house of Ahab—would seem to support this view of Matthew's list.

Jehoiachin's arrogance and contempt for Yahweh eventually led to a curse being placed on him and on his seed: "Write this man down as childless, . . . for none of his offspring shall succeed in sitting on the throne of David, and ruling again in Judah" (Jer 22:30). The terms of this curse appear at first to renege on the "everlasting covenant" made with David. One solution is to suppose that Jehoiachin's son Shealtiel, who was directly affected by the curse from succeeding his father *as his son*, saw a way of continuing the Davidic dynasty by disowning his father. If he did so, then Shealtiel had himself grafted into the family of Neri. In this way he provided himself with a righteous branch which ascended to David through Nathan.

It was no loss to Shealtiel to graft himself into a nonroyal branch, because the terms of the curse excluded any Davidite from ever sitting upon the earthly throne of David (this curse would apply to the Messiah, whose kingdom would now revert to the purely spiritual dimension it had before David was born). By this legal device Shealtiel would have cut himself off from a cursed branch of the House of David. The element that links David to the future Messianic King is that the progenitors of the Messiah would continue to emerge from the *royal branch* which Shealtiel represented.

If this interpretation is correct, then Luke 3:27 may be a confirmation of Shealtiel's action, for there Shealtiel is called the "son of Neri," not the "son of Jehoiachin." The fulfillment of the

³²A precedent was set for this possibility when Jacob moved Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, back one generation so that their uncles became their brothers; the same may apply in the case of Jehoiachin, in which his uncles are called "his brethren" in Matt 1:11. Jehoiachin was seven years old when Josiah died.

command to Jeremiah to write down Jehoiachin as "childless" is given concrete expression in Luke's genealogy of Joseph; there, in Luke 3 Jehoiachin is deprived of his fatherhood of Shealtiel, though the Solomonic line is nevertheless continued without interruption.

What may have made the displacement of Jehoiakim's name in Matthew's genealogy possible was the fact that Jehoiachin began to rule at the same time as his father, and so it was quite a simple matter to delete Jehoiakim's name and substitute that of his son as ruler for the eleven years of the former's reign. It may be that the Chronicler was aware of how Jehoiachin circumvented the curse on his father's dynasty by becoming the "son of Josiah" (which Matthew's genealogy appears to endorse), and realized that the descent had to be traced from Josiah to Jehoiachin, thus bypassing Jehoiakim. This would also account for the Chronicler's interest in giving the *younger age* at which Jehoiachin began to rule.

The curses on Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin may also explain the missing generation in Matthew's second series of fourteen generations. Scholars have assumed that Jehoiakim's name has dropped out of Matthew's text by mistake. However, the inclusion of Jehoiachin *as a king* among the kings in the second series is justified, because he made up the 14th generation in that series. The inclusion of Jehoiachin *as the first commoner* in a line of commoners is justified, because he constituted the first generation of Solomonic kings without a throne in Matthew's third series.

Hezekiah's Coregency

The omission of Hezekiah's coregency in Thiele's scheme is, in my view, an inexplicable deviation within what is basically an exemplary approach to the problems of Hebrew chronology. As far as can be determined from Thiele's published materials, he has refused to open up to the possibility of a coregency for Hezekiah, even in the face of his reviewers' criticisms and Horn's cogent suggestion of such.³³ I have elsewhere put forward the case for a coregency for Hezekiah.³⁴

³³Horn, "Chronology of King Hezekiah's Reign," 40-42. See also the reviews by S. H. Horn in *AUSS* 5 (1967): 213; by Gleason L. Archer in *Christianity Today* 10 (April 15, 1966): 34-36; and by F. D. Kidner in *Churchman* 8 (1967): 68.

³⁴Leslie McFall, "Did Thiele Overlook Hezekiah's Coregency?" *BibSac* 146 (1989): 393-404. S. H. Horn had already come to the same solution, of course, in his "Chronology of King Hezekiah's Reign," 40-52.

Older commentators found great difficulty in resolving the difficulties relating to the figures for Hezekiah's reign. The main stumbling block was the synchronism in 2 Kings 17:1, "In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah Hoshea the son of Elah began to reign in Samaria over Israel, and he reigned nine years." This was an unfortunate translation, in that the clause "and he reigned" does not have any Hebrew text behind it. It was introduced by the translators of the RV and the RSV. Hoshea did not *begin* his reign in the 12th year of Ahaz's *sole reign*; he *ended* his reign in the 12th year of Ahaz's *coregency*. The Hebrew text reads:

בשנת שנים עשרה לאחז מלך יהודה מלך הושע בן-אלה
בשמרון על-ישראל חשע שנים:

The LXX follows the Hebrew word order slavishly at this point. The Hebrew would yield this English rendition: "In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Israel ruled Hoshea son of Elah in Samaria over Israel nine years." Given such a translation, and its obvious implications once the intrusive words "began to reign" are deleted, it was not surprising that no commentator could make sense of the synchronisms in 2 Kings 17 and 18 in the older, faulty translations.³⁵

To clear up the difficulties inherent in this and the other relevant texts, it might be better to paraphrase them as follows (if ambiguity—not to mention inaccuracy—is to be avoided). See also **Chart 2** on page 51, which graphically portrays the relevant data from these texts.

No. 1, 2 Kings 18:9: "In the fourth year from the coregency of King Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah, king of Israel, Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria and besieged it."

³⁵Among early valiant attempts to make sense of the synchronisms of 2 Kgs 17-18 are A. Purver (1764); S. Patrick (1727); Th. Haak (1657); and Wall (1734), 1:257. Greswell, 3:493-498, understood there to be an interregnum of nine years between the 4th year of Ahaz and the accession of Hoshea. *The Revised English Bible* (1989) is no better than the *NIV* in that it too uses the 12th year of Ahaz as the *beginning* of Hoshea's nine-year reign. In general, chronologists have assumed that Hezekiah's reign began in the 3d (or 4th) year of Hoshea (cf. Kerr, 241-257) and have numbered his 29-year reign from that point. However, upon the discovery that the 14th year of Hezekiah must be dated to 701 B.C.—the year of Sennacherib's invasion—this position soon became untenable.

No. 2, 2 Kings 15:30: "Then Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy . . . in the twentieth year *from the coregency* of Jotham the son of Uzziah."

No. 3, 2 Kings 18:1-2: "In the third year of Hoshea son of Elah, king of Israel, Hezekiah the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, *became coregent*. He was twenty-five years old when he *became king*, and he reigned twenty-nine years *as king* in Jerusalem." (He was coregent from Tishri 729 to about Adar 715 B.C., and from the latter date to 687/6 B.C. he was king.)

No. 4, 2 Kings 17:1: "In the twelfth year *from the coregency* of Ahaz king of Judah Hoshea the son of Elah had reigned nine years in Samaria over Israel."³⁶

No. 5, 2 Kings 17:6: "In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria captured Samaria" (i.e., between Nisan and Tishri 723 B.C.).

No. 6, 2 Kings 18:10: "In the sixth year *from the coregency* of Hezekiah, which was the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken."

No. 7, 2 Chr 29:3: "In the first [pre-regnal] year *of his kingship*, in the first month, he [Hezekiah] opened the doors of the house of the Lord." Hezekiah's "first year" was the remainder of Ahaz's 20th year (Tishri 716-Tishri 715 B.C.).

No. 8, 2 Kings 18:13: "In the fourteenth year *of the kingship* of King Hezekiah Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them" (i.e., between Tishri 702 and Tishri 701 B.C.).

It may be noted here that A. E. Steinmann's defense³⁷ of Thiele's treatment of 2 Kings 17 and 18 against K. A. Kitchen and T. C. Mitchell (both of whom postulated a coregency for Hezekiah) is based in part on a mistake in their *NBD* article, which otherwise keeps very close to Thiele's chronology. They state: "732/31-816/15:Ahaz (Coregent from 744/43; senior partner from 735) and

³⁶The LXX here uses the aorist indicative to translate the Hebrew "had reigned." An English version that comes close to the Hebrew is that of Robert Young, *The Holy Bible, Consisting of the Old and New Covenants* (Edinburgh, 1862), which reads: "In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah reigned hath Hoshea son of Elah in Samaria, over Israel—nine years."

³⁷Steinmann, 393.

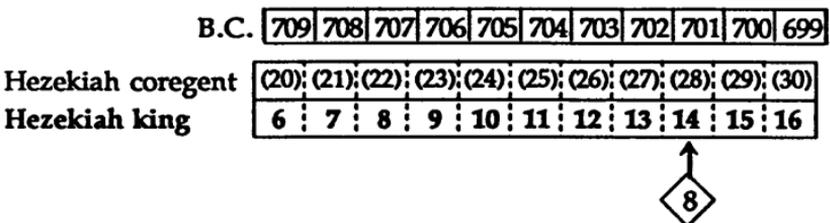
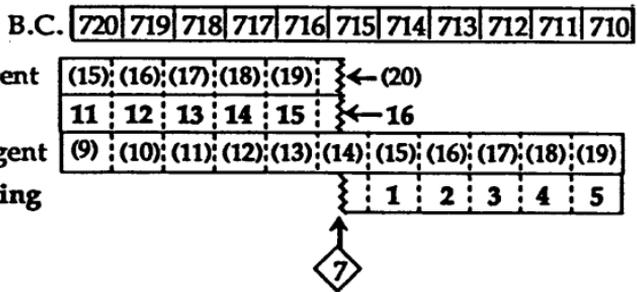
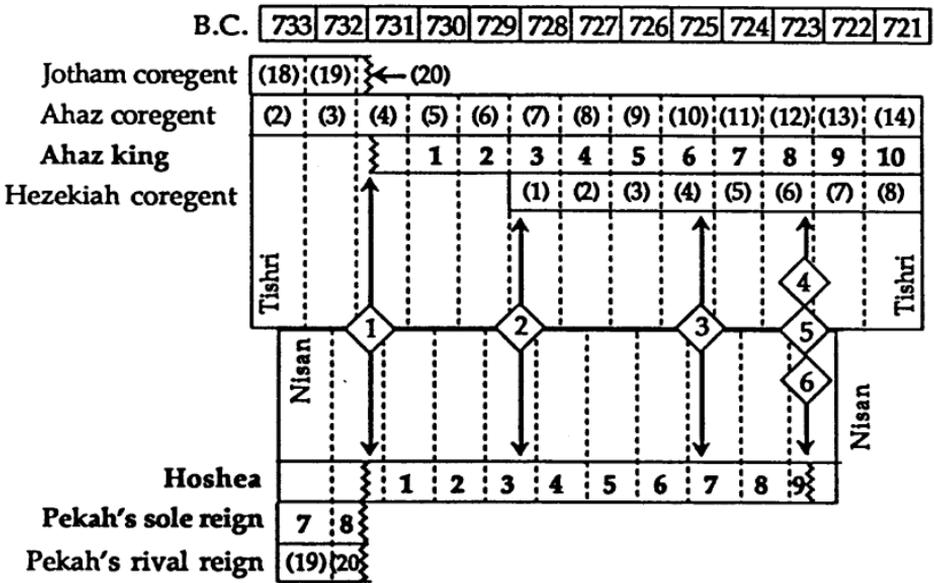


CHART 2. COREGENCY AND SOLE REIGN OF HEZEKIAH.

"716/15-687/86: Hezekiah (Coregent from 729).³⁸ This is hardly correct inasmuch as it would mean that there were two coregents and a king ruling at the same time (from 744 to 739 B.C.).³⁹

Coregency of Jehoash of Israel

Before examining Thiele's explanation for the apparent discrepancy in the numbers relating to the accession of Jehoash, we should take note of the fact that both Judah and Israel were using the nonaccession-year system before Amaziah of Judah and Jehoash of Israel became sole rulers. It is this fact that establishes an alternative case for Jehoash having had a two-year coregency in opposition to the view put forward by Thiele, whose reconstruction cannot be proved or disproved conclusively, as is also the case with regard to the alternative one I am setting forth here. The point I wish to make is that the data are open to two interpretations: one which permits a coregency and another which excludes it. My view is that the first of these alternatives not only deserves attention, but also is the preferable one. Chart 3 sets out the relevant data.

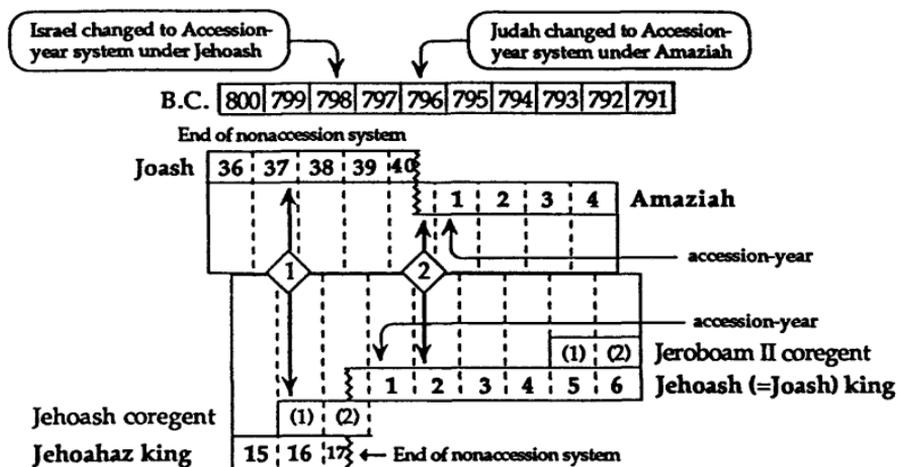


CHART 3. THE COREGENCY OF JEHOASH OF ISRAEL

³⁸K. A. Kitchen and T. C. Mitchell in *New Bible Dictionary* (1967), 220. This article has mistakenly omitted the name and reign of Ahaziah of Judah in the same table which shows no changes from Thiele's chronology for the kings of Israel but which has seven minor changes (presumably deliberate) in the case of dates relating to Judah's kings. *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, revision ed. N. Hillyer (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980), Part 1, 269-277, has corrected only the omission of the details pertaining to Ahaziah.

³⁹See Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, 3d ed., chart on p. 217.

No. 1, 2 Kings 13:10: "In the thirty-seventh [nonaccession] year of Joash king of Judah Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz *became coregent* over Israel in Samaria, and he reigned sixteen years *as king*."

No. 2, 2 Kings 14:1-2: "In the second [accession] year *of the kingship* of Joash [or: Jehoash] the son of Joahaz, king of Israel, Amaziah the son of Joash, king of Judah, became king."

We noted earlier that the fourth factor affecting the chronology of the kings of Judah and Israel was the existence of two chronicles, each of which was written up using the court scribe's own dating system rather than the dating system employed in the other kingdom. It so happens that in this case both kingdoms were using the same nonaccession-year system, according to Thiele,⁴⁰ and consequently the court scribes in Israel and Judah were using the same dating procedure. Since this assumption is not in dispute, the 37th year of Joash of Judah cannot be interpreted as the 37th *accession-year* of Joash from the standpoint of the scribe living in the 37th year of Joash and recording the commencement of the coregency of Jehoash of Israel. That much is clear if we are to be consistent in our understanding of the fourth factor.

If we were to put ourselves in the place of the scribe who was writing the "Chronicles of the Kings of Israel" and had to record a coregency for Jehoash of Israel which began in Nisan in the 16th year of Jehoahaz, how would it be worded? The first item that would affect the court entry would be that the synchronism must be in terms of Israel's dating system operative at that time. That system, Thiele states, was the nonaccession-year system (and the total of 17 nonaccession years for Jehoahaz's reign confirms it); consequently, the synchronism must be in terms of nonaccession-year reckoning. Thus the court entry would be exactly as it is recorded in 2 Kings 13:10, where the first year of Jehoash and the 37th year of Joash are thus correlated. As confirmation of this procedure compare the entry for the accession of Jehoahaz to the throne "in the twenty-third [nonaccession] year of Joash" (2 Kings 13:1).⁴¹

⁴⁰Ibid., 56-57.

⁴¹Ibid., 105. On the basis of the Rimah stela, which appeared to place Jehoash in 805 B.C., William H. Shea moved the commencement of Jehoash's reign back seven years by reducing Jehoahaz's 17-year rule to 10 years ("Adad-nirari III and Jehoash of Israel," *JCS* 30 [1978]: 101-113). A. Cody tried to solve the problem by

It would appear that because the date of Jehoash's coregency was so close to the date of his kingship, Thiele assumed that 2 Kings 13:10 referred to the kingship of Jehoash and that it should be translated, "In the thirty-seventh year of Joash [accession-year system]."⁴² Thus, in order to accommodate 2 Kings 14:1, which Thiele has read (and I would not disagree), "In the second year [accession-year system] of the kingship of Joash the son of Joahaz, king of Israel, Amaziah the son of Joash, king of Judah, became king."⁴³ Thiele noted that if he interpreted the 37th year of Joash as based on accession-year reckoning, this would push the numbering of Joash's regnal years forward by one year so that the last six months of Joash's 38th year would overlap with the first six months of the 17th (and last) year of Jehoahaz.⁴⁴ There is no difficulty with this as a possibility, but it is not the most natural interpretation to which the data are open under Thiele's own method of interpretation.

Thiele's case rests on the assumption that the court scribe was inconsistent when he recorded the synchronism with the 37th year of Joash; the case being presented here is that the scribe was not acting inconsistently and consequently the onus lies on Thiele to prove his case. My opinion in the matter is that Thiele overlooked the presence of a two-year coregency for Jehoash because of its proximity to the year when he became sole king.

If, in contrast to Thiele's reconstruction, the scribe understood the 37th year of Joash as a regnal year under the nonaccession-year system, then we have in 2 Kings 13:10 the first recorded instance of a coregency in the Northern Kingdom. This is not surprising, given the fact that it occurs in Jehu's dynasty. This was a dynasty guaranteed to last for four generations and thus to terminate with

postulating a coregency for Jehoash which went back to 806 B.C. ("A New Inscription from Tell al-Rimah and King Jehoash of Israel," *CBQ* 32 [1970]: 325-340). If the biblical evidence points to a coregency for Jehoash beginning in Nisan 799 B.C. at the earliest (as I think it does), then this rules out Cody's longer coregency, which does not pretend to have any biblical support. Shea observes that there is a nine-year discrepancy between the Assyrian and biblical chronology for the 45 years between Jehu's 1st year and Jehoahaz's 17th year. If this could be cleared up it might remove the difficulty.

⁴²See *ibid.*, 111.

⁴³See *ibid.*, 113.

⁴⁴See *ibid.*, 109.

Jeroboam II. Jehoash had made his son Jeroboam II coregent with himself in 793 B.C.

If, on the other hand, the scribe interpreted the 37th year of Joash under the accession-year system, this would mean that on this occasion he had departed from the actual state of affairs. What he had done was to use a system of dating that was not in use in the 37th year of Joash.

Coregency of Ahaziah of Judah

The relevant texts for the time of Ahaziah are paraphrased below. These give evidence for a one-year coregency for Ahaziah of Judah.⁴⁵ See also Chart 4.

No. 1. 2 Kings 9:29: "In the eleventh [nonaccession] year of Joram the son of Ahab, Ahaziah became coregent over Judah."

No. 2. 2 Chr 22:2: "Ahaziah became king forty-two years from the time Omri became king over Israel, and he reigned one [non-accession] year as coregent and king." 2 Kings 8:26 records that Ahaziah was 22 years old when he became king.

No. 3. 2 Kings 8:25: "In the twelfth [nonaccession] year of Joram the son of Ahab, king of Israel, Ahaziah the son of Jehoram, king of Judah, became king."

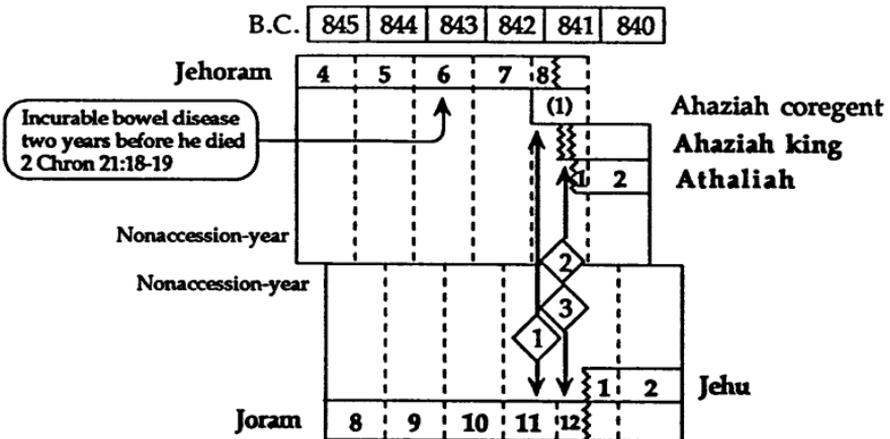


CHART 4. THE COREGENCY OF AHAZIAH OF JUDAH

⁴⁵Wall, 1:251, was aware of the possibility of a one-year coregency here, but he dismissed it with the remark that the scriptural record is not pedantically accurate for parts of a year and that 11 or 12 is essentially the same.

Thiele understood Judah and Israel to be using the non-accession-year system at this time, and this conclusion is assumed to be correct for the purpose of the following discussion.

Thiele approached the data relating to Ahaziah in the same manner as he did Jehoash's details: namely, because the date for Ahaziah's coregency and his kingship were so close together, Thiele assumed that only one accession was in view and that this was a kingship and not a coregency. If the gap between Ahaziah's coregency and his kingship had been much wider (say, three or four years distant), Thiele would undoubtedly have fallen back on his normal procedure for dealing with two systems of numbering in the life of the same king, namely, that one was used for dating coregency years and the other for years as king.

The fault in Thiele's approach was that instead of keeping to the discovered fact that both kingdoms were using the non-accession-year system at this time, he imposed a new idea on the data—namely, that the account of Ahaziah's reign was written up twice, once using the accession-year system (an ideal history) and once using the nonaccession-year system (the actual history), with the scribe who composed the canonical record inadvertently copying the synchronism for Ahaziah's accession according to both systems.⁴⁶

The formulation of Thiele's duplicate-record theory was, I believe, a pragmatic reaction on his part to the problem that these two texts created for his system if (as he assumed) they referred to the same event, the accession of Ahaziah to kingship. It would make havoc of Thiele's whole system if such a theory were applied to other sets of data. Given the consistent nature of the biblical record and the practice of creating coregencies in Judah, why should we depart from the natural interpretation in this case? There is no textual or other evidence, only Thiele's conjecture, that an ideal record was kept, using the accession-year system throughout the period when Judah began to use Israel's non-accession-year system.

There is some internal evidence which might support a one-year coregency for Ahaziah. First, Jehoram, the father of Ahaziah, developed a fatal bowel disease two years before his death (2 Chr 21:18-19). This would have put pressure on him to appoint a successor. Second, all of Jehoram's sons (including the heir apparent) except Ahaziah (the youngest) were killed by Arab

⁴⁶Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, 3d ed., 58, 99.

raiders just before Jehoram developed his fatal disease. This left only Ahaziah to become Jehoram's successor (2 Chr 21:7; 22:1). Third, Jehoram suffered great pain and passed away "with no one's regret" (2 Chr 21:20), indicating that he was not a popular king. The people of Jerusalem took it upon themselves to appoint Ahaziah as Jehoram's successor (2 Chr 22:1). This appointment may well have taken place during the last few months of Jehoram's debilitating disease, a disease which would have prevented him from carrying out his royal duties as well as making him ceremonially unclean.⁴⁷

Ahaziah's coregency began in Tishri 842 B.C. (the regnal first month). Some months later he was made king, a position he held for only a few months before he was slain, and Athaliah succeeded him in the same regnal year (i.e., between Tishri 842 and Tishri 841). Consequently we ought to translate 2 Kings 8:26 as follows: "Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he *became king* [or coregent], and he reigned one year [nonaccession-year system] *as coregent and king* in Jerusalem."

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, it must be noted that the establishment of four new coregencies does not affect the basic validity of the chronology that Thiele has given because his chronology is based in these cases on the sole rule of the Hebrew kings. Claims for corruption of the Hebrew text are a characteristic feature of ancient and modern treatments of Hebrew chronology, and each case must be examined on its own merits.⁴⁸ Thiele has done more to reestablish trust in the accuracy of the numbers in Kings and Chronicles than any scholar before him. He has whittled down the number of alleged corruptions to only the chronological data relating to Hezekiah and Jehoiachin. This was quite an achievement. If, however, a closer examination of these data (in addition to the data for the other two kings covered in this article) leads to the discovery of coregencies

⁴⁷Medical opinion has identified Jehoram's disease as an intussusception caused by a polyp, tumor, regional enteritis, or parasites. This condition would have led to gangrene of the bowels (cf. Green, "Regnal Formulas," 176, n. 31).

⁴⁸For an older and unfortunate demonstration of a purely mathematical approach which ignores coregencies, see Julius Oppert, "A Mathematical Demonstration of the Exactness of Biblical Chronology," *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 20 (1898): 24-47.

for them, then the last remaining evidence for corrupt numbers in Kings and Chronicles is gone.

The four coregencies being suggested in this paper are consistent with a larger issue, namely, that when the editors of Kings and Chronicles abstracted material from the "Chronicles" of Israel and Judah, they did so without interfering with the chronological data in their sources. A further consideration that has been mentioned in this study is that the data in Kings and Chronicles were not given primarily for chronological purposes, so that the fact that we can construct a chronology for Israel and Judah from these data is purely fortuitous—a bonus. The editors had a higher interest in mind than seeking to provide a continuous chronological history of the Hebrew Kingdom to satisfy the insatiable desire of twentieth-century scholars for this type of material. The writer of the book of Judges incorporated chronological data into his work, but in this case we cannot reconstruct a continuous chronological history for that period.