

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

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Overview of Four Time Periods

The history of the Old Testament can be understood as a cycle in which brief periods of righteousness, blessing, and prosperity are followed by long periods of religious and political decline.

The books of the Old Testament tend to be clustered chronologically at the turning points between cycles. When counting these periods by pages rather than years, it appears that these turning points of brief righteousness and resurgence were at least as long, if not longer, than the periods of decline. But when years are counted, it is seen that the periods of righteousness usually lasted no more than two or three generations, while the periods of decline lasted for centuries.

Echoes of this cycle appear three times during the time of the patriarchs, referred to here as Period 1. Three repetitions of this cycle then provide the backbone of Israel's history as a people in the Promised Land during Periods 2-4 from Moses to the New Testament:

- Period 1A from Adam to Noah (Genesis 1-6a);
- Period 1B from Noah to Abraham (Genesis 6b-10); and
- Period 1C from Abraham through the Sojourn in Egypt (Genesis 11-Exodus 2).
- Period 2 from Moses to Samson while ruled by judges and worshiping at the Tabernacle (Exodus - Judges);
- Period 3 from King Saul to the Babylonian Captivity while ruled by kings and worshiping at the first Temple of Solomon (Samuel - Kings); and
- Period 4 from the return to Jerusalem under the Persians to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in New Testament times while ruled by foreign powers and worshiping at the second Temple of Zerubbabel-Herod (Ezra - Matthew 23).

Period 1: The Patriarchs, the Sojourn in Egypt, and Altars. The Old Testament is concerned with Israel as a people. But Genesis recounts the time before Israel was a people, and it is therefore primarily concerned only with the individuals from whom Israel is descended. We have little information about this period except that the two initial covenant fathers were Adam and Noah, that Abraham is descended from them and received a great blessing from God, that Isaac and Jacob inherited the birthright to that blessing, and that Joseph brought Israel together as a people by forgiving his brothers and bringing them down to Egypt. So while echoes can be seen of this cycle of brief righteousness followed by lengthy decline, it is difficult to come to any certain conclusions.

During this time authority ran along patriarchal lines and was not clearly subject to outside political authority such as a local king. Worship is described only as occurring at rough hewn altars. Abraham was promised that his descendants would eventually possess the Promised Land of Canaan, but not until they had first spent 400 years in Egypt.

Period 2: From Moses to Samson: Judges and the Tabernacle. The first clear occurrence of the cycle of brief righteousness followed by lengthy decline occurred during the period from Moses to Samson. The ministries of Moses and his successor Joshua are recounted in great detail in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua. The books of Exodus and Numbers recount the purging of the faithless First Generation that came up out of Egypt with Moses, and its replacement by the faithful Second Generation that then conquered the Promised Land under Joshua. The faithfulness of this Second Generation is evident from two events. Near the beginning of the book of Joshua, after the miraculous conquest of Jericho, Israel failed to conquer the next city (Ai) until it rooted out the one single Israelite who had disobeyed God's instructions. At the end of the book, as the tribes dispersed to their newly conquered homes, the tribes residing in Israel proper were ready to destroy the tribes who lived across the Jordan River in response to a single event that was initially misinterpreted as idolatry. Under Joshua, Israel began to enjoy the Abrahamic Covenant's

promise of complete conquest and possession of the Land of Promise.

In contrast, the book of Judges is structured to highlight a downward spiral of apostasy and decline over the course of about three centuries during which Israel was usually under threat by its neighbors. At the beginning of the book, the Covenant of Complete Possession of the promised Land was replaced by a lesser Covenant of only Partial Possession due to the faithless Third Generation violating three key commandments: (1) no foreign alliances; (2) no intermarriage with foreigners; and (3) no idolatry. At the beginning of the book, at least the judges are portrayed as diligent leaders who had to stir up the faithless people to faithfulness. By the end of the book, even the judges are portrayed as faithless. The last judge in the book is Samson, a contemporary of Samuel who died shortly before Saul became king. Samson was the greatest physical hero in Israel's history, but he is depicted as being concerned with only his own personal interests, not with the welfare of Israel, and in the end he was destroyed by a harlot. The last two stories, which are clearly out of chronological order, recount the nearly complete destruction of the tribe of Benjamin at the hands of Israel itself, and the decision by the tribe of Dan to abandon its inheritance in the Promised Land. The book of Judges blames this outcome on the violation of the three key commandments and the absence of a king.

During most of this time, worship of God was focused at the Tabernacle, and Israel was ruled by an ad hoc series of judges or chieftains.

Period 3: From David to the Babylonian Captivity: Kings and the First Temple (of Solomon). The next occurrence of the cycle of brief righteousness followed by lengthy decline is recounted in Samuel and Kings. The book of Samuel recounts the reigns of Saul and David. While Saul had his faults, he was a faithful king to the extent that he: (1) did not make foreign alliances; (2) did not intermarry with foreigners; and (3) did not tolerate idolatry. Even when Saul sought out a witch at the end of his life, the point is made that it would be hard to find a soothsayer because Saul had been diligently putting them all to death. David did take some foreign wives, but his favorite was always an Israelite (Michal, then Bathsheba), he did not make foreign alliances, and he did not tolerate idolatry. Samuel thus recounts two generations of kings who largely kept these three commandments, and the result was that the covenant of Complete Possession of the Promised Land was restored, and Israel reached its greatest strength and size.

The book of Kings recounts three centuries of decline as Israel's kings frequently violated these three commandments. The book begins by recounting how Solomon, the man who built God's house: (1) made alliances with foreign rulers; (2) intermarried with the daughters of those foreign rulers; and (3) had his heart turned by them to idolatry. During Solomon's reign, that idolatry was only personal and was not official state policy. But upon Solomon's death, the kingdom was divided, and idolatry was always the official state policy of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The Northern Kingdom was ultimately conquered and wiped off the map by Assyria following an unbroken series of twenty idolatrous northern kings. In the Southern Kingdom of Judah (consisting mostly of Jews from the tribe of Judah), idolatry was also from time to time official state policy. The Southern Kingdom survived Assyria, but it was ultimately conquered and carried off by Babylon

as a result of idolatry and murder. By the end of this period, the covenant of Possession of the Promised Land had been revoked, first as to the Lost Ten Tribes of the Northern Kingdom who were carried off by Assyria, and then as to the Jews of the Southern Kingdom who were subsequently carried off by Babylon.

During most of this time, worship of God was focused at the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem, and Israel was governed by kings.

Period 4: From the Return to Jerusalem to the Destruction by Rome: Provincial Governors and the Second Temple (of Zerubbabel). Judah was subject to Babylon during the Babylonian Captivity for about 70 years before Babylon was in turn conquered by Persia. The Persian king soon allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple that had been destroyed by the Babylonians. This Second Temple was known as the Temple of Zerubbabel, named for one of the initial Jewish returnees. In all, three principal groups of Jews returned over the course of about 120 years. These events began the final cycle of brief righteousness followed by a lengthy decline. This righteous beginning and restoration of the Covenant of Possession of the Promised Land (at least for the tribe of Judah) is recounted in, among other books, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Malachi.

The Old Testament account of the cycle ends here because there is no canonized scriptural record of the four centuries between Malachi and the New Testament. The issue of foreign alliances became moot once Judah was reduced to the status of a conquered province. But Ezra, Nehemiah, and Malachi all preached against intermarriage with foreigners. The “Second Temple Judaism” depicted in the Gospels and Acts indicates that the Jews had by then learned, or perhaps even over-learned, the lesson against allowing affinity with foreigners to lead one away into idolatry. But we also learn from the New Testament that, six centuries after the Jews returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple, they had sufficiently apostatized as to reject Jesus Christ. The Second Temple was then destroyed in 70 AD, the Jews were driven out of Jerusalem in 135 AD, and the Covenant of Possession of the Promised Land was again revoked for 2,000 years until modern times.

Period 1: The Patriarchs

It is simpler to understand the opening events of the Old Testament in relation to each other by counting generations rather than years. Generations overlapped, since children were born before their parents died. And different people’s ancestral generations occurred at different rates since, for example, Isaac was born very late in the lives of his parents Abraham and Sarah.

Genesis recounts the history of the patriarchs, including the establishment of covenant “mankind,” God’s covenant with Abraham, the passing of that covenant down to Isaac and Jacob, and the establishment of the House of Israel as collective heir to that covenant. That history covers 24 generations.

- **Adam** and **Eve** (Generation 1), who were placed in the **Garden of Eden**. (Gen 2:18-25).
- **Cain** (Generation 2) who murdered his brother **Abel**. (Gen 4:1-16).
- **Lamech** (Generation 7) who, like his ancestor Cain, murdered a close relative. (Gen 4:18-24).
- **Enoch** (Generation 7) (Gen 5:18), who “walked with God.” (Gen 5:23-24).
- **Noah** (Generation 10) (Gen 5:28), who built the ark at the time of the **Flood**. (Gen 7:4).
- **Nimrod** (Generation 13) (Gen 10:8-10), who was king of **Babel**, though not necessarily when the language of mankind was confounded. (Gen 11:1-9).
- **Eber** (Generation 14) (Gen 11:14), ancestor of “all the children of Eber.” (Gen 10:21).
- **Abraham** the H-eb-r-ew (Generation 20) (Gen 11:26), who received the **Abrahamic Covenant** and traveled from Mesopotamia to Canaan, to Egypt, and then back to Canaan.
- **Isaac** (Generation 21) (Gen 21:5), his brother **Ishmael** (Gen 16:15-16), and their cousin **Lot**. (Gen 11:27).
- **Jacob** (Generation 22) and his twin brother **Esau**. (Gen 25:26).
- **Joseph** (Generation 23) (Gen 41:46), who was sold into Egypt, became second ruler of Egypt, and moved his father’s family, the House of Israel, to Egypt where they remained together as a single group, thus breaking the cycle by enabling the Abrahamic Covenant to be inherited by all of his father’s descendants.
- **Ephraim** and **Manasseh**, Joseph’s two sons (Generation 24) (Gen 48:5), who were the last generation to receive significant individual mention in Genesis.
- The **House of Israel** was in Egypt for four generations (Gen 15:16), which could mean either four lifetimes during 430 years, or four steps in ancestry during 215 years.¹ Israel at first enjoyed a position of favor in Egypt (Gen 47:5-13) but was later reduced to slavery. (Ex 1:7-15).²

Job may also be set during the time of the patriarchs. There is little to indicate when the book occurred. But it appears to be set earlier rather than later, likely even before the Exodus, since Job performed his own priestly sacrifices without any mention of Levitical priesthood, his wealth was measured in animals rather than precious metal, and he lived for an additional 140 years following a story that began after seven adult children had already moved out to live in their own homes.³

Period 2: Rule by Judges and Worship at the Tabernacle

Israel existed as a single nation for about 500 years. During the first year of Israel's wandering in the desert, the ark of the covenant and portable Tabernacle were built. At the very end of this period king Solomon built a permanent temple to replace the Tabernacle. During most of this period Israel was ruled by an ad hoc series of judges and was frequently threatened and subjugated by its immediate neighbors.

A. Exodus under Moses and Initial Conquest under Joshua (1446-1379 BC)

Five books – **Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua** – provide the account of Israel's deliverance from Egypt, its wandering in the wilderness, and its establishment as a nation in the promised land of Canaan. This history covers two generations, the faithless First Generation that came up out of Egypt with Moses, and the faithful Second Generation that entered Canaan with Joshua.

Moses, though a Hebrew, spent 40 years as a prince in Egypt (Acts 7:20-29), spent another 40 years in Midian with Jethro (Acts 7:29-30; Ex. 7:7), led the children of Israel out from Egypt on the occasion of the first **Passover** (Exodus 12),⁴ and then spent a final 40 years in the wilderness with the children of Israel, dying at the age of 120. (Ex. 7:7; Deut 34:7). The events recorded during this time fall into four chronological periods:

- **Exodus 1-2.** The first two chapters serve as a prologue and quickly cover the entire Egyptian Captivity and Moses' life through age 80.
- **Exodus 3 - Leviticus - Numbers 14.** The next two and a half books cover a compressed group of events that all occurred within the space of only about two years. Those events began with Moses' call to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 3:7-10) and continued into the second year of wandering in the wilderness. (Deut 2:14; Num 13:26; 14:33).⁵
- **Numbers 15-19.** The next five chapters mention only a few key events over the next 37 years of wandering. These chapters end with the deaths of the last surviving members of the faithless First Generation so that Israel now consists exclusively of the faithful Second Generation.
- **Numbers 20 - Deuteronomy 34.** The last book and a half cover another compressed group of events that all occurred during the final year of Moses' life. (Num 20:1; 33:38; Deut 1:3; 34:7).⁶

Joshua succeeded Moses and led the faithful Second Generation for about 27 years, including about 7 years of war as Israel entered and conquered much of Canaan (Josh 14:6-10), followed by about 20 years of peace.⁷ During this short time Israel fulfilled and began to enjoy the Covenant of Complete Possession of Canaan under the Abrahamic Covenant and the conditions spelled out in Deuteronomy.

King David's ancestor Salmon was apparently a member of this Second Generation since he married Rahab (Matt 1:4-5), the harlot who hid two Israelite spies in Jericho. (Josh 2:1).

B. Rule by Judges (1379-1049 BC)

The period of the judges provides the setting for **Judges**, **Ruth**, and **1 Samuel 1-8**.

The book of Judges tells the story of Israel's internal disintegration under an ad hoc series of judges or chieftains.

- **Judges 1-2.** The two opening stories serve as a prologue that contrasts the faithful Second Generation who conquered much of the Promised Land under Joshua with the faithless Third Generation who broke the Covenant of Complete Conquest through: (1) foreign alliances; (2) intermarriage with foreigners; and (3) idolatry. (Judg 2:2; 3:6-7; compare Deut 7:1-7). The Lord therefore revoked that covenant and replaced it with a lesser Covenant of Partial Possession, under which gentile nations would be left in the land to stir up Israel unto a remembrance of God. (Judg 2:20-23).
- **Judges 3-16.** The middle portion relates stories about six judges: Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson, also makes brief mention of six more judges, and tells of a would-be king named Abimelech. Three pairs of stories (Ehud-Deborah, Gideon-Abimelech, Jephthah-Samson) depict Israel's increasing wickedness, weakness, and inability to obtain deliverance and rest. This portion of Judges relates a chronology of about 329 years that overlaps into the beginning years of Israel's final judge, Samuel.⁸
- **Judges 17-21.** The last two stories tell how the entire tribe of Dan spiritually apostatized and physically abandoned its land of inheritance in the Promised Land (big symbolism here), and how the tribe of Benjamin was almost entirely destroyed at the hands of Israel itself. These last two stories feature grandsons of Moses (Judg 18:30 NIV) and Aaron (Judg 20:28), as though Israel's condition at the end of Judges can be blamed entirely on the faithless Third Generation. It is likely that these two stories are placed far out of chronological order for literary effect as a closing epilogue in which all of the Ten Commandments are violated, and the argument is made that Israel needs an unaccountable hereditary king to govern because it is unable to govern itself through accountable government in the form of non-hereditary judges or chieftains.

The account of Israel's last judge, **Samuel**, is recorded in **1 Samuel 1-8**. Although **Eli** is also identified as having "judged" Israel for 40 years (1 Sam 4:18), he may have functioned more as a priest than a military or political leader. (1 Sam 2).

This lengthy decline hits rock bottom with the loss of the portable Tabernacle when the Philistines capture and hold it for seven months. (**1 Sam 4-6**). The righteous judge Samuel then initiates the next period of righteous leadership in **1 Sam 7-8**.

King David's ancestors Boaz and **Ruth** lived during the time of the judges (Matt 1:5).

Period 3: Rule by Kings and Worship at the Temple of Solomon

A. United Kingdom (1049-931 BC)

Israel was a united and independent kingdom for only about 120 years under three kings: Saul, David, and Solomon. The account of that history is recorded in **1 Samuel 9 - 1 Kings 11** and again in **1 Chronicles 10 - 2 Chronicles 9**. The books of **Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon** likely also date from this period, though portions of some of these books were probably written later.

The historical books of Exodus-Esther emphasize the requirements for a people (or the king as their representative) to receive God's favor, namely: (1) no foreign alliances; (2) no intermarriage with gentiles; and (3) no idolatry. (Deut 7:1-7). In the Old Testament, it is in Genesis and in the poets and prophets that we find a personal relationship with God and exhortations to individual righteousness. While the poets and prophets do not provide the backbone of Jewish history, they do tell us much about how Jewish religion was to function on the level of the individual.

Saul (ruled 1049-1009 BC)⁹ spent much of his reign fighting the Ammonites to the east and the Philistines to the west, sometimes winning and sometimes losing. His reign began well, but because of pride he disobeyed instructions from the prophet Samuel and was rejected by the Lord in favor of David. His life ended tragically as he tried to kill David, did kill the Lord's priests, and ultimately committed suicide at the end of a losing battle with the Philistines. Saul's reign is detailed in **1 Samuel 9-31** and his death is briefly reviewed in **1 Chronicles 10**.

David (r. 1009-969 BC)¹⁰ is the great national hero of Israel. He was a great warrior. During his reign Israel went from being threatened by its neighbors to reaching its greatest physical size, and Israel enjoyed Complete Possession of the Promised Land of Canaan. David captured **Jerusalem**. He also transformed Israel from a rural, tribal kingdom into a cosmopolitan nation with a capital city, standing army, national bureaucracy, and systematic taxation. Like Saul, David sinned. But unlike Saul, he sought repentance rather than rebelling against the Lord. The greatest threat to his reign came from his own sons, who he failed to discipline when they committed crimes similar to his own. David's life and reign are detailed in both **1 Samuel 16 - 1 Kings 2** and **1 Chronicles 11-29**. Many of the **Psalms** are attributed to David.

Solomon (r. 970-931 BC)¹¹ succeeded his father David as king. The highlight of his reign was the construction of the **Temple of Solomon** and its dedication in October-November **961 BC**.¹² Solomon was known for his wealth and wisdom. He enjoyed the fruits of David's empire but sowed the seeds of its destruction through his: (1) foreign alliances; (2) many foreign marriages; and (3) tolerance of pagan idolatry. Solomon's reign is described in both **1 Kings 1-11** and **2 Chronicles 1-9**. Solomon is commonly identified as the author of **Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon**.

Following the death of Solomon in 931 BC, Israel split into two kingdoms. The Southern Kingdom of Judah had both good and bad kings. Eight of those twenty kings are briefly reviewed here: the first one, three who were unusually good, three who were unusually wicked, and one who was unusually wicked but repented. The Northern Kingdom of Israel, in contrast, had an unbroken string of twenty wicked kings, five of whom are briefly reviewed here. During the divided kingdoms period, the Temple of Solomon stood in Jerusalem, the capital of the Southern Kingdom. In the Northern Kingdom, idol worship was officially promoted as a way to keep the loyalty of its people away from Jerusalem in the Southern Kingdom. After two centuries, Assyria erased the Northern Kingdom in 723 BC. Another century later Babylon conquered the Southern Kingdom and in 587 BC destroyed the Temple of Solomon. That history is recorded in both **1 Kings 11 - 2 Kings 25** and **2 Chronicles 9-36**.

B. Division of the Kingdom (931-885 BC)

The story of how Israel was divided into two kingdoms, and how that division led to the official promotion of idolatry within Israel, is recorded in **1 Kings 11-14** and **2 Chronicles 9-13**.

Rehoboam (South #1) (r. 931-913 BC)¹³ was Solomon's heir and could have inherited the entire kingdom. At his coronation the northern tribes requested that he relax their tax burden, to which he arrogantly responded that he would instead increase their burden. The northern tribes promptly left the kingdom and selected a king of their own from the tribe of Ephraim, leaving Rehoboam and the House of David to rule only the Southern Kingdom of Judah, consisting primarily of Judah, Simeon, and eventually Benjamin.

Jeroboam (North #1) (r. 930-910 BC)¹⁴ was the first king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Jeroboam was promised the rule over ten tribes by a prophet of God. But once he became king, in order to discourage his subjects from traveling to the Southern Kingdom to worship at the Jerusalem temple, he set up golden calf idols at Dan in the north and at Bethel in the south of his kingdom, proclaiming that these two idols had brought Israel up out of Egypt. This is the "sin of Jeroboam" that the northern kingdom of Israel never overcame.

C. Elijah and Elisha (885-793 BC)

The ministries of Elijah and Elisha in the Northern Kingdom of Israel are recorded in **1 Kings 15 - 2 Kings 13** and **2 Chronicles 14-24**. These two prophets opposed the Omrid dynasty's efforts to promote worship of the foreign idol Baal. At the end of this period Jehu destroyed both the Omrid dynasty and Baal worship from the Northern Kingdom. But rather than promote the worship of Jehovah, king Jehu again promoted worship of the two golden calves at Dan and Bethel. Baal worship also enjoyed a brief period of official sanction in the Southern Kingdom, and it never went entirely away while the two kingdoms remained.

In the **NORTHERN KINGDOM**, **Omri (N #7)** (r. 885-874 BC)¹⁵ founded the Omrid dynasty, married his heir to a foreign princess, and founded the Northern Kingdom's new capital city of **Samaria**. (1 Kings 16:15-28).

Ahab (N #8) (r. 874-853 BC)¹⁶ succeeded his father Omri as king. Ahab was married to **Jezebel**, a foreign princess from Sidon. He went beyond Jeroboam's local brand of idolatry by promoting his wife's foreign brand of pagan Baal worship. This is the "sin of the House of Ahab." He also tried to kill the prophet Elijah. (**1 Kings 16-22** and **2 Chronicles 18**).

The prophet **Elijah** ministered during the reign of Ahab and the brief reign of his son Ahaziah, or during about 874-852 BC.¹⁷ He caused a famine by sealing the heavens so that Israel did not receive rain for three and a half years, miraculously multiplied a widow's grain and oil, raised her son from the dead, and called down fire from heaven upon the priests of Baal. (**1 Kings 17 - 2 Kings 2** and **2 Chronicles 21**).

Jehu (N #11) (r. 841-814 BC)¹⁸ was anointed to become king by the prophet Elisha. Jehu overthrew the Omrid dynasty, and he killed all the priests and worshipers of Baal. But while he rejected the sin of the House of Ahab and its worship of Baal, he did not promote the worship of Jehovah, and instead returned to the sin of Jeroboam by promoting the local brand of idolatry that worshiped the two golden calves at Bethel and Dan. (**2 Kings 9-10** and **2 Chronicles 22:7-9**).

The prophet **Elisha** ministered during the reigns of Jehoram and Jehu, or during about 852-814 BC. He died during the reign of Jehoash, or not earlier than 798 BC.¹⁹ Elisha's ministry often paralleled that of his mentor Elijah. Elisha prophesied a seven year famine, miraculously multiplied a widow's oil, raised a woman's son from the dead, and healed the Syrian general Naaman of leprosy. (**2 Kings 2-10, 13**).

In the **SOUTHERN KINGDOM**, the influence of the Omrid dynasty and the sin of the House of Ahab began to be felt just as it was being wiped out of the Northern Kingdom.

Jehoram (S #5) / Athaliah (S #7) (r. 852-841 / 841-835 BC).²⁰ Jehoram was the first really wicked king of the Southern Kingdom. He was married to Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, and he began his reign by killing off all his brothers. Elijah sent him a prophecy of his death. Jehoram was succeeded, after a brief interval, by his queen Athaliah, who openly promoted the worship of Baal in the Southern Kingdom. Athaliah also sought to kill off potential rivals, including her grandsons, but she missed the infant Joash who was hidden in the Holy of Holies of the Temple. Athaliah brought the Southern Kingdom to the brink of disintegration before being killed. (**2 Kings 8:16-24** and **2 Chronicles 21**).

Joash (S #8) (r. 835-796 BC)²¹ was the surviving grandson of Jehoram and Athaliah. He was a righteous king. He refurbished the temple for the first time, more than a century after its original construction. (**2 Kings 12** and **2 Chronicles 23-24**).

D. Assyrian Invasions and the Lost Ten Tribes (793-687 BC)

By the 700's BC, Israel and Judah were increasingly caught between two great powers, Egypt to the south and Assyria to the north. Assyria was very cruel and very much feared. Egypt was often seen as a richer and kinder ally who could provide protection against Assyrian advances. This provides the setting for **2 Kings 14-20** and **2 Chronicles 25-32**, as well as for five (or perhaps six) prophetic books: **Amos, Jonah, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah**, and perhaps also **Joel**.

The **NORTHERN KINGDOM** of Israel continued on its wicked way for another seven decades until it was wiped out by Assyria.

Jeroboam II (N #14) (r. 793-753 BC),²² reigned at a time of strength and prosperity for Israel, in large part because the great powers of the region were occupied in other directions. **Jonah** prophesied that under Jeroboam II's rule Israel would again grow to its ideal territorial borders, which it did. (2 Kgs 14:25). Jonah was also sent to warn Ninevah to repent in order to avoid destruction. Jonah's lack of interest in saving the Assyrian capital is understandable, but Ninevah repented sufficiently to be spared. Israel's prosperous and secure condition at this time made it easier to dismiss the prophetic warning given by **Amos** during 768-753 BC near the end of Jeroboam II's reign that the Northern Kingdom would be not only conquered, but utterly destroyed.²³ Jeroboam II's reign receives brief mention at the end of **2 Kings 14**.

Jeroboam II was followed by a series of six kings in only thirty years (753-723 BC).²⁴ During that time the powers Syria, Assyria, and Egypt all gained in strength, so that increasingly Israel had to either rely on God for protection or be destroyed. In **723 BC** the Northern Kingdom of Israel was conquered by **Assyria**.²⁵ Tens of thousands of Israel's elites were carried off and became the **Lost Ten Tribes**. Assyria also brought in large numbers of foreign settlers who intermarried with the remaining Israelite peasants, and their mixed descendants became known as **Samaritans**. This ended the history of the Northern Kingdom. (**2 Kings 15, 17**).²⁶ Following an unbroken string of twenty wicked kings who violated the terms of the Covenant of Possession as explained in Deuteronomy, the Ten Tribes of the Northern Kingdom did not possess the land of Canaan at all.

The **SOUTHERN KINGDOM** of Judah was also invaded by Assyria, but it barely survived through divine intervention.

Hosea ministered during the reigns of the Judean kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, or at least during 740-716 BC.²⁷

Isaiah received his call as a prophet in 740 BC, the year that king Uzziah died and was succeeded by his son Jotham. (**Isaiah 6**).²⁸ Isaiah preached a new covenant regarding Israel's possession of Canaan. Not Complete Possession, and not even Partial Possession, but rather Scattering and eventual re-Gathering. This new covenant was also preached by many other prophets. (Also see Deut 4:23-31; 28:58-68).

Micah ministered during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Like Isaiah, Micah is associated in particular with the Assyrian invasion of Judah in 701 BC. Micah thus ministered at least during 736-701 BC.²⁹ Micah's ministry began soon after, and largely overlapped with, the ministries of Hosea and Isaiah. Micah also taught about Scattering and Gathering.

We have almost no information about the historical setting of **Joel**. He might have ministered at almost any time when there was a temple in Jerusalem, from the days of Elisha down to the post-exilic period following Malachi (but not during the Babylonian Captivity when there was no temple). Since he also taught about Scattering and Gathering, he is placed here with Isaiah and Micah.³⁰

Ahaz (S #12) (r. 735-716 BC)³¹ was a particularly wicked king. He openly rejected the worship of Jehovah, closed the temple, erected pagan altars throughout Jerusalem, and participated in child sacrifice. Like queen Athaliah before him, king Ahaz brought Judah to the brink of destruction. In the opening years of Ahaz's reign, Syria and the Northern Kingdom of Israel jointly invaded the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Isaiah prophesied to the Southern king Ahaz that the invasion would fail, which it did. (**Isaiah 7**). Ahaz made alliance with the great power Assyria, and Assyria soon conquered Syria in 732 BC and then the Northern Kingdom of Israel a decade later in 723 BC. The last five verses of **Isaiah 14** were received in the year that Ahaz died.³² Ahaz's reign is recorded in **2 Kings 16** and **2 Chronicles 28**.

Hezekiah (S #13) (r. 716-687 BC)³³ cleansed and reopened the temple within months of becoming king. In 701 BC Assyria also conquered most of the Southern Kingdom of Judah and laid siege to Jerusalem with a massive army.³⁴ Isaiah prophesied that Jerusalem would soon be free (**Isaiah 36-39**), and the Assyrian army was destroyed by a plague. Hezekiah then sought to increase Judah's security by allying with Babylon. Hezekiah's reign is recorded in **2 Kings 18-20** and **2 Chronicles 29-32**.

E. Twilight of the Southern Kingdom's Independence (687-605 BC)

Following the Assyrian invasions, and then the death of Hezekiah in 687 BC, the Southern Kingdom of Judah survived for nearly another century until 605 BC. This final century before the Babylonian conquest and destruction of the temple is the setting for **2 Kings 21-25** and **2 Chronicles 33-36**, as well as four prophetic books: **Nahum**, **Zephaniah**, **Habakkuk**, and part of **Jeremiah**. Three kings ruled Judah during almost all of this time.

Manasseh (S #14) (r. 687-643 BC)³⁵ promoted idolatry, defiled the temple, participated in child sacrifice, and murdered many people including his grandfather, the prophet Isaiah. Manasseh was captured and taken to Assyria. While in captivity he had a change of heart and repented. Upon being restored to the throne he attempted to undo the damage from earlier in his reign. But the wicked condition of Judah when it fell to Babylon a half century later was nevertheless blamed on "the sins of Manasseh." (2 Kgs 23:26). Manasseh's reign is recorded in **2 Kings 21** and **2 Chronicles 33**.

During Manasseh's reign over Judah, Assyria invaded Egypt. The Egyptian city of Thebes (Luxor) fell to Assyria in 663 BC. **Nahum** subsequently prophesied that, like Thebes, the Assyrian capital Ninevah would also fall. This prophecy was later fulfilled by the Babylonian conquest of Ninevah in 612 BC.³⁶

Manasseh was succeeded as king by his son Amon (S #15), who reigned for only two years before being assassinated. Amon was then succeeded by his son Josiah.

Josiah (S #16) (r. 641-610 BC)³⁷ was only eight years old when he became king. Twelve years later in 629 BC he began to purge idolatry out of Judah. **Jeremiah** began his ministry that same year. (**Jeremiah 1**). Another six years later in 623 BC Josiah renovated the temple,³⁸ which led to the discovery of a copy of the Torah. This triggered further reforms such as reinstating the celebration of Passover. In 612 BC a combined army of Babylonians and Persians (Medes) conquered the Assyrian capital Ninevah. Josiah, who was allied with Babylon, died two years later while trying to prevent an Egyptian army from advancing northward along the Mediterranean coast to assist the retreating Assyrians.³⁹ Josiah's reign is recorded in **2 Kings 22-23** and **2 Chronicles 34-35**.

Zephaniah was a second great grandson of Hezekiah and prophesied during the reign of Josiah, likely before the temple was renovated in 623 BC.⁴⁰ Zephaniah prophesied judgment against Judah in the near term, and eventual restoration when it repented.

Josiah was succeeded by his son Jehoahaz (S #17). But as the Egyptian army returned southward toward Egypt three months later, it stopped to depose him in favor of his brother Jehoiakim.

Jehoiakim (S #18) (r. 609-598 BC)⁴¹ was a very wicked king at a very precarious moment in Judah's history. In the first year of Jehoiakim's reign, Jeremiah prophesied the destruction of the temple, which at the time was over 350 years old. (**Jeremiah 26**).⁴² Jehoiakim continued as king of Judah into the Babylonian period. His reign is recorded in **2 Kings 24** and **2 Chronicles 36**.

Habakkuk lamented the wicked state of society in Judah and was informed that the Lord would employ the Babylonians to punish Judah for that wickedness. His prophecy is typically dated to the last days before the Babylonian conquest, most commonly to the reign of Jehoiakim, but possibly earlier during the reign of Josiah or even Manasseh.⁴³

This lengthy period of decline hit rock bottom with the Southern Kingdom's twentieth king. His reign ended with the third Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple of Solomon in 587 BC. The Babylonian Captivity lasted until 538 BC.

Period 4: Rule by Foreign Empires and Worship at the Second Temple of Zerubbabel-Herod

Following the Babylonian conquest, the Southern Kingdom of Judah was ruled as a province by a series of four great powers: (1) Babylon, (2) Persia, (3) Greece, and (4) Rome. During the Babylonian Captivity, the Jews were without a temple or homeland. The Persians, however, allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. This Second Temple stood for several hundred years under the Persians, Greeks, and Romans until shortly after the ministry of Jesus, when Rome destroyed the Second Temple and dispersed the Jews from Jerusalem.

A. Babylonian Captivity (605-539 BC)

Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, and probably **Obadiah** are each set, at least in significant part, during the Babylonian Captivity of 605-539 BC. Two Babylonian kings are important to the Old Testament.

Nebuchadnezzar (r. 605-562 BC) decisively defeated the combined armies of Assyria and Egypt in mid **605 BC** at the battle of Carchemish. He soon returned to Babylon to succeed his father as king, and then before the end of the year invaded Judah. The Jewish king Jehoiakim submitted to Babylon, and Nebuchadnezzar carried off a large number of Jewish captives⁴⁴ including **Daniel** and his three friends. Daniel's refusal to eat the king's food occurred upon his arrival in Babylon. During the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign Daniel interpreted the king's dream of the statue, which is widely understood today to refer to Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. (**Daniel 1-2**). During the same year as this first Babylonian invasion, Jeremiah prophesied that Judah would serve Babylon for seventy years and also announced prophecies against several other nations. That year he also dictated the prophecies he had received so far to his scribe Baruch. King Jehoiakim burned the scroll on which the prophecies were written, so Jeremiah dictated them all to Baruch a second time. (**Jeremiah 25, 36, 45-51**).⁴⁵

King Jehoiakim (S #18) of Judah soon rebelled against Babylonian rule, and Nebuchadnezzar invaded a second time, conquering Jerusalem on 16 March 597 BC. The rebellious Jehoiakim died during the siege and was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin (S #19). But upon taking the city, the Babylonians replaced the new Jewish king with his uncle Zedekiah (S #20). **Jeremiah 24, 29** and **1 Nephi 1** date from the initial months of Zedekiah's reign.⁴⁶ Following this second invasion, the Babylonians carried off most all but the poorest of the Jews and resettled many of these exiles on the Chebar River about 50 miles southeast of the capital Babylon.⁴⁷ Six years later **Ezekiel** received his call as a prophet while among these exiles on 31 July 593 BC, and he received several more revelations over the following two years. (**Ezekiel 1-23**).⁴⁸ About the same time, likely 595-94 BC, Nebuchadnezzar sentenced Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to the fiery furnace. (**Daniel 3**).⁴⁹

By 594 BC the Jewish king Zedekiah was plotting to rebel against Babylon, contrary to the counsel of Jeremiah (**Jeremiah 27-28**) and Ezekiel. (**Ezek 17:13-16**). Nebuchadnezzar responded by invading Judah for the third time and in 589 BC again laying siege to Jerusalem. Jeremiah was in Jerusalem during this siege,

though he tried to leave when the siege was temporarily lifted, and this appears to be the setting for **Jeremiah 21-23, 32-35, 37-40**. Also during this siege Ezekiel, still in exile on the Chebar River in Babylonia, received several of the prophecies recorded in **Ezekiel 24-31**.⁵⁰ After besieging Jerusalem for two and a half years, the Babylonians again took the city. A month later on 28 August **587 BC** they destroyed the Temple of Solomon. (**Jeremiah 52; 2 Kings 25; 2 Chronicles 36**).⁵¹ Soon after receiving news of Jerusalem's fall, Ezekiel announced the prophecies recorded in **Ezekiel 32-39**.⁵²

Jeremiah left the fallen city of Jerusalem to live at Mizpah with the Jewish governor of Babylonian Judah. Several months later the governor was assassinated. Those who fled to avoid reprisal also carried away Jeremiah with them to Egypt, where he announced his last prophecy. (**Jeremiah 41-44**).⁵³

Jeremiah also wrote **Lamentations** regarding the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple.

Obadiah is a short prophecy of destruction against Edom in consequence of its behavior when Jerusalem was pillaged, likely at the time of the Babylonian conquest.⁵⁴

Near the end of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Ezekiel received his vision in 574 BC of a new temple (**Ezekiel 40-48**) and then his final prophecy in 572 BC against Egypt. (**Ezek 29:17-30:19**).⁵⁵ Nebuchadnezzar's period of insanity (**Daniel 4**) would have occurred late in his reign, likely at some point during 573-569 BC,⁵⁶ though many scholars believe the episode happened instead to the later Babylonian king Nabonidus.⁵⁷

Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded by three kings of lesser importance over the course of only six years (562-556 BC).

Nabonidus (r. 556-539 BC) was the last Babylonian king. Beginning in probably 553 BC his son **Belshazzar** ruled in his place as co-regent. In the first and third years of Belshazzar's reign, probably 553 BC and 551 BC, Daniel received his two visions of beasts, also widely understood today as referring to Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. (**Daniel 7-8**).⁵⁸ A decade later in 539 BC, Belshazzar hosted a feast during which he publicly disrespected Jehovah by drinking out of vessels captured from the Jerusalem temple. A hand appeared and wrote words on the wall, which Daniel interpreted as a prophecy that Babylon would be overthrown. (**Daniel 5**).⁵⁹

During the Babylonian Captivity, the exiled Jews were prohibited from returning to Jerusalem.

B. Persian Conquest and the Return to Jerusalem (539-332 BC)

There are eight "post-exilic" or "Second Temple" books in the Old Testament: part of **Daniel** plus all of **Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi**. These books were created no earlier than the first century of Persian rule over the Jews. Four Persian kings are significant to the Old Testament.

Cyrus the Great (r. 559-530 BC) conquered Babylon on 12 October **539 BC**. This was the conquest prophesied the previous evening during the Babylonian king Belshazzar's feast. References in Daniel to "Darius the Mede" who conquered Babylon at age 62 (Dan 5:31-6:1; Dan 9:1) mean Cyrus the Great, who did in fact conquer Babylon when 62 years old. Thus it was Cyrus who planned in the first year of his reign over Babylon, 539 BC, to set Daniel as head overseer of the 120 provincial governors, and who was tricked instead into sentencing Daniel to the den of lions. (**Daniel 6**). That same year Daniel also received his vision of Jerusalem's future history. (**Daniel 9**). Two years later, in 537 BC, Daniel received his final recorded vision of two warring kingdoms. (**Daniel 10-12**).⁶⁰

Meanwhile, in **538 BC**, Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild the temple, thus ending the Babylonian Captivity about 70 years after the first wave of Babylonian deportations.⁶¹ The first large group of exiles to return to Jerusalem was led by the new Jewish governor Sheshbazzar who had charge of the temple vessels, by **Zerubbabel** who later succeeded him as governor, and by the high priest Joshua. This group arrived at some point during 538-530 BC and soon rebuilt the temple altar. (**Ezra 1-3**).⁶² When the returning Jews refused to let the Samaritans assist in rebuilding the temple, the offended Samaritans raised opposition to the Jews throughout the reigns of Cyrus and Darius, including writing a letter to the king that caused construction on the temple and city wall to stop. (**Ezra 4**).

Cambyses II (r. 530-522 BC)⁶³ briefly succeeded his father Cyrus as king of Persia but died eight years later in the midst of rebellion.

Darius I (r. 522-486 BC) emerged in 522 BC as the next Persian king. Soon after, during 29 August to 18 December 520 BC, **Haggai** received a series of five recorded revelations at Jerusalem that prompted the Jews to resume construction on the temple. The first half of **Zechariah** also dates from October-November 520 BC to 7 December 518 BC at Jerusalem. The Second Jerusalem Temple, or **Temple of Zerubbabel**, was soon completed, and it was dedicated on 12 March **515 BC**, a little more than 70 years after its destruction by the Babylonians in 587 BC. (**Ezra 5-6**). Darius, near the end of his reign, invaded Greece but was prevented from advancing further by his defeat at the battle of Marathon in 490 BC.⁶⁴

Xerxes (r. 486-465 BC) succeeded his father Darius as king of Persia. The 180 day banquet at which Xerxes put away his queen Vashti (**Esther 1**) occurred during the third year of his reign, likely winter 483-482 BC, and would be consistent with gathering his nobles to make plans during that time for a second Persian invasion of Greece. Xerxes did briefly occupy Athens before returning home, but the invasion failed a year later when the Persian army and navy that he left behind suffered twin defeats on the same day in 479 BC. Esther was then presented to king Xerxes soon after during the seventh year of his reign in about January 478 BC. (**Esther 2**). The main action of the story involving Haman at the royal court occurred about four years later during Xerxes' twelfth year in April-June 474 BC. (**Esther 3-9**). The Jews then prevailed over their enemies on 5 April 473 BC, and the next day they celebrated Purim for the first time.⁶⁵

Artaxerxes I (r. 465-424 BC) succeeded his father Xerxes as Persian king.⁶⁶ During his reign, in **458 BC**, Ezra led a second large group of Jewish exiles in returning to Jerusalem. Upon his arrival he instituted religious reforms. (**Ezra 7-10**).⁶⁷ Thirteen years later, in **445 BC**, Nehemiah led the third and last major group of returning exiles and then rebuilt the city wall of Jerusalem. (**Nehemiah 1-12**). Nehemiah was the governor of Judea from 445 to 433 BC, after which he went back to the Persian court. He returned a second time to Jerusalem in probably late 429 or early **428 BC** and instituted religious reforms similar to those previously instituted by Ezra. (**Nehemiah 13**).⁶⁸ Similar reforms were also advocated by **Malachi**, and there is general agreement that his book also dates from the reign of Artaxerxes I, who died in 424 BC.⁶⁹ Malachi and Nehemiah mark the close of the Old Testament.

The book of **Chronicles** was also written during the Persian period. Chronicles covers the same historical ground as Genesis - Kings, from Adam down to the Babylonian Captivity.⁷⁰

During the Babylonian Captivity, large Jewish communities were established in Babylon, in the Nile delta of Egypt, and in many other locations outside of Judah. This led to increased importance being given to aspects of religious practice that did not require a national temple, aspects such as reading from written scripture, observing the Sabbath, and the local synagogue. Even after the return from Babylon and the dedication of the Second Temple, most Jews (even as the term was narrowly defined by those who returned) continued to live outside of Judah among the scattered Diaspora. Thus, even after the Babylonian Captivity ended, the still-conquered Jews became less a geopolitical entity defending a piece of land from foreign armies, and more an ethno-religious identity defending itself against impurity, whether in the form of intermarriage with foreigners or unorthodox religious practices. During this period of **Second Temple Judaism**, the period of Jewish history into which Christ was later born, Jewish national identity was concerned much more than it had been previously with exclusivity based upon ethnic and religious purity.⁷¹

C. Greek Conquest (332-164 BC)

While Artaxerxes I ruled in Persia and Nehemiah was governor in Judah, Socrates (b.469 BC-d.399 BC) lived in Greece during Athens' golden age. Socrates taught his student Plato, who in turn taught Aristotle. During 343-340 BC Aristotle taught his most famous student, **Alexander the Great**. Alexander inherited the throne of Macedon in 336 BC. Two years later his army swept out of Greece to spend the next decade conquering most of the known world, including Egypt, Persia, and part of India. In **332 BC**, a century after the last of the recorded prophets, Alexander took possession of Jerusalem.⁷²

A decade later Alexander died at age 32 in 323 BC. Decades of warfare among his generals resulted in four Greek empires based in Macedon, Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt. In 198 BC the Greek Ptolemaic empire in Egypt lost control of Palestine, including Jerusalem, to the Greek **Seleucid Empire** that had its capital at Antioch in Syria. During this time the land of Judah came to be known by the Greek form of its name: Judea.⁷³

D. Maccabean Independence (164 BC - 63 BC)

The Seleucid emperor **Antiochus IV Epiphanes** (r. 175-164 BC) outlawed Judaism, and on 6 December **167 BC** he had the Jerusalem Temple intentionally desecrated. This led to a Jewish revolt led by the Maccabees family, the cleansing of the temple, and on 14 December 164 BC the rededication of the temple. De facto Jewish independence was largely achieved by 162 BC and was formally claimed in 142 BC. That independence lasted for a hundred years under the Maccabees (also known as the Hasmoneans).⁷⁴

E. Roman Conquest (63 BC - 135 AD)

Jewish independence ended in **63 BC** when the Roman general Pompey entered Jerusalem at the invitation of competing factions within the ruling Maccabean family. A generation later Augustus, the heir of Pompey's rival Julius Caesar, became the first Roman emperor from 27 BC until 14 AD. Maccabean rulers remained in place under the Romans until Herod the Great was appointed as king in 36 BC. Herod ruled Judea under the Romans for three and a half decades from 36-1 BC. During this time he greatly enlarged the Second Temple of Zerubbabel so that it became known as the **Temple of Herod**, but it was still the Second Temple.⁷⁵

Jesus Christ was born and ministered in Judea. Most scholars place his birth in either **4 or 1 BC** and his death and resurrection thirty three years later in either **30 or 33 AD**.⁷⁶

Another forty years later, while the New Testament was still being written, the Second Jerusalem Temple was destroyed by Rome in **70 AD** following a Jewish revolt. In **135 AD** the Romans put down yet another Jewish revolt and barred all Jews from entering Jerusalem except on one certain day per year. A large Jewish Diaspora had existed since at least the Babylonian Captivity more than six centuries earlier. By the time of Jesus, two-thirds of all Jews in the Roman Empire lived outside of Judea. But 70 AD marked the end of the Jerusalem Temple, and 135 AD marked the end of Jerusalem as a Jewish city for nearly two thousand years until modern times. Israel was now fully scattered until the gathering began in modern times.⁷⁷ While other empires would rule over Jerusalem during the interim, they held Jerusalem as a gentile city rather than a Jewish city.

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Endnotes

When there is disagreement, dates here follow Steinmann rather than Thiele or Finegan. This will explain many disagreements of only one or two years with other sources.

1. Scholars are divided over whether the House of Israel was in Egypt: (1) for four generations of lifetimes over 430 years, or (2) for four generations of births over 215 years. (1) In favor of four lifetimes over 430 years: (A) In the initial statement to Abraham that his seed would be in Egypt, four generations is expressly equated with four hundred years (Gen 15:4-5, 13, 16). (B) That is how the verse was understood by Stephen (Acts 7:6). (C) The account of the Exodus states that Israel left Egypt exactly 430 years to the day after its sojourn began (Ex 12:40-41). (D) Paul's statement in Gal 3:17 that the 430 years of sojourning prior to the Exodus began counting when the Abrahamic Covenant was confirmed can be explained as meaning that the covenant was confirmed when Israel moved to Egypt. (E) Paul's statement, according to most English translations of Acts 13:17-20 (NIV, NASB), that the time down to dividing the land under Joshua was about 450 years, should be understood as beginning with Israel's entry into Egypt, which would yield about the same amount of time in Egypt, about 403 years, after subtracting 40 years under Moses (Ex. 7:7; Deut 34:7) and 7 years under Joshua (see note below on length of Joshua's leadership). (F) This longer time period is possible according to the genealogies given in Chronicles that identify Moses' contemporaries Bezalel as the 7th generation from Jacob (Ex. 31:2; 1 Chron 2:2-20) and Elishama as the 10th generation and his grandson Joshua as the 12th generation from Jacob (Num 1:10; 1 Chron 7:22-27). (G) This longer time period would allow Israel's population of 70 at the time it moved to Egypt (Ex. 1:5) to grow to 603,550 during the Exodus (Num 1:46; also see Ex. 12:37) within 16 generations occurring on

an average of every 25 years with only 3.5 children per couple reaching adulthood and in turn reproducing, whereas four generations of births would require 19 surviving offspring per couple in each generation. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 67-70; Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 203-04. (2) In favor of four generations of births over 215 years: (A) Paul's statement in Gal 3:17 that the 430 years of sojourning prior to the Exodus began counting when the Abrahamic Covenant was confirmed is most easily understood as referring to its first confirmation upon Abraham himself. Twenty five years then passed before Isaac was born (Gen 12:4; Gen 21:5), Isaac was 60 at Jacob's birth (Gen 25:26), and Jacob was 130 when he moved to Egypt (Gen 47:9). So of Paul's 430 years, half, or 215 years, passed before the House of Israel moved to Egypt, leaving only another 215 years in Egypt. (Gen 15:16). (B) Paul's statement, according to most English translations of Acts 13:17-20 (NIV, NASB), that the time down to dividing the land under Joshua was about 450 years, is most easily understood as beginning with the promise to Abraham "choosing our fathers." Subtracting the same 215 years, as well as another 40 years in the desert under Moses (Ex. 7:7; Deut 34:7) and the first 7 years under Joshua (see note below on length of Joshua's leadership), would yield about the same amount of time in Egypt, about 188 years. (C) This shorter time period accords with the genealogies given in Matthew and Luke that identify Naason, who as Rahab's father in law would have left Egypt with Moses, as the 5th generation from Jacob (Matt 1:3-5; Luke 3:32-33), and in Ex 6:16-20 that identifies Moses as the 5th generation from Jacob, although Moses' generation may have been shortened to identify only his tribe, clan, and family group while omitting intervening generations. Two hundred years would be a long but not unreasonable time for four generations to be born in Egypt, whereas four hundred years would be unreasonable at a hundred years per generation. Jones, *The Chronology of the Old Testament*, 49-60; Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 204-05.

2. Joseph was age 30 when he interpreted Pharaoh's dream, age 39 when his father's family moved to Egypt, and age 110 when he died 71 years after Israel moved to Egypt (Gen 41:46, 53; Gen 45:6; Gen 50:22). At least those 71 years would not be included in the time Israel spent in servitude.

3. 1:2-5; Job 42:7-8, 16; Alden, *New American Commentary, Vol. 11: Job*, 25-28, noting that there are no conclusive hints about dating in the book of Job itself and that dates have therefore been suggested even as late as after Malachi; Hughes, *New Bible Companion*, 215.

4. Scholars are divided whether the Exodus occurred in 1446 BC or in 1250 BC. Biblical, historical, and archeological data is cited on both sides. Since it is widely accepted that Moses and Joshua led Israel for about 67 years, and that Saul then began to reign as king in about 1049 BC, the question may be rephrased as whether the intervening period recorded in Judges lasted about 134 years or about 330 years. The earlier date of 1446 BC is followed here since 134 years simply seems too short to accommodate any dating scheme for the entire book of Judges. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 45-65 argues for 1446 BC, Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 201-03, 227-28, 244-45 reviews the arguments without clearly taking sides.

5. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 81-86. Also see Num 9:1-2; Num 10:11, which clearly refer to events early in the second year of wandering. The Kadesh of Num 13:26 is again equated with the Kadesh-barnea of Deut 2:14 in Num 32:8 and Josh 14:7.

6. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 86.

7. Joshua, Caleb, and the other Israelite spies were sent to Canaan during Israel's second year in the wilderness (Deut 2:14; Num 13:26; Num 14:33). Forty five years later, as the conquered land was being divided, Caleb requested that Joshua give him Horeb as an inheritance (Josh 14:7-10). This would thus have occurred in the forty seventh year after leaving Egypt, or in the seventh year after Joshua succeeded Moses. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 89; Jones, *The Chronology of the Old Testament*, 90. Caleb was age 85 when the land of Canaan was divided at the conclusion of Joshua's military campaigns (Josh 14:7-10). Joshua lived to age 110. (Josh 24:29; Judg 2:8). Joshua and Caleb were contemporaries, and Joshua lived to an age 25 years greater than Caleb's age when the land was divided, so it is reasonable to assume that

Joshua led Israel for about 25 years after the land was divided, or a total of about 32 years after succeeding Moses and first entering the land of Canaan. Josephus reports that Joshua in fact led Israel for 25 years, Eusebius reports that Joshua led for 27 years, and the Seder Olam Jewish chronology reports that Joshua led for 28 years. Jones, *The Chronology of the Old Testament*, 89-90 citing these ancient sources. It thus appears that Joshua was about 5 years older than Caleb and led Israel for about 7 years of war plus about 20 years of peace, or a total of about 27 years.

8. (1) Prior to the judgeship of Jephthah, the book of Judges recounts an uninterrupted chronological sequence of 290 years (Judg 3:8 to 10:5). Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 95-96, 103, 106-07 (subtracting one year from each notice of elapsed time on the assumption that the inclusion of partial event years leads to double-counting transitional calendar years). This is consistent with Jephthah's statement that in his day 300 years had passed since the Israelites first occupied Gilead (Judg 11:26) beginning not earlier than the last year of Moses' life (Numbers 32), or not more than eight years before the land was divided under Joshua (see the two previous notes). Judges then relates that the Israelites were oppressed by the Ammonites for 18 years and the Philistines for 40 years (Judg 10:7-9; Judg 13:1). So the total time covered by Judges would be $290 + 17 + 39 = 346$ years. (2) Again subtracting transitional years, the judgeships of Jephthah (6 years - Judg 12:7), Ibzan (7 years - Judg 12:8-10), Elon (10 years - Judg 12:11-12), Abdon (8 years - Judg 12:13-15) and Samson (20 years - Judg 15:20; Judg 16:31) total only $51 - 4 = 47$ years, a little short of the combined $58 - 1 = 57$ years of Ammonite and Philistine oppression (Judg 10:7-9; Judg 13:1). Significantly, it was not prophesied that Samson would deliver Israel from the Philistines, but only that he would begin to do so. (Judg 13:5) Josephus states that Samuel was a judge for 12 years, slightly more than the 10 years required to round out the Ammonite and Philistine oppressions and then deliver Israel from the Philistines (1 Sam 7:9-15) before anointing Saul as king. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 97-103, citing Josephus, *Antiquities*, 6:294. (3) Jephthah fought the Ammonites to the east for the first six years of the Ammonite oppression (Judg 12:7). Samson, however, was not even born until after the Philistine oppression began (Judg 13:1-5) and then had to grow to maturity before beginning to deliver Israel from the Philistines to the west (Judg 13:5) during his judgeship of twenty years (Judg 15:20; Judg 16:31) during the latter part of the forty year Philistine oppression. That leaves sufficient time for the 25 years of intervening judgeships by Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon during the last 12 years of the Ammonite oppression and first 13 years of Philistine oppression, followed by 20 years of judgeship by Samson and 7 more years of Philistine oppression during the judgeship of Samuel. (4) Steinmann suggests that the Ammonite and Philistine oppressions were actually concurrent and that Samson's judgeship overlapped with probably Elon and Abdon who judged after Jephthah. With regard to the Ammonite and Philistine oppressions introduced in Judg 10:7-9 and Judg 13:1, he argues that the phrase "that year" means these two oppressions were concurrent rather than sequential, notes that the Philistine oppression introduced at the beginning of the Jephthah cycle does not actually appear until the Samson cycle, and that the Hebrew grammar of this reintroduced Philistine oppression does not necessarily require that the two cycles be chronologically sequential. If correct, both the time of the oppression and the sequence of judgeships would be reduced by about two decades, and the total length of time covered by Judges would be $290 + 39 = 329$ years, to which the remaining years of Samuel's judgeship after defeating the Philistines would still have to be added. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 96-107. This calculation accords with 1 Kgs 6:1, which places the fourth year of Solomon's reign 480 years after the Exodus. Subtracting 40 years in the desert under Moses, 27 years under Joshua, 40 years under Saul, 39 years under David, and the first 4 years under Solomon similarly leaves 330 years, though already including the latter portion of Samuel's judgeship after defeating the Philistines. (While the King James translation of Acts 13:20 states that the period of the judges lasted 450 years, other translations (NIV, NASB) clarify that the 450 years ended rather than began with the division of the land under Joshua, and so occurred prior to the time of the judges).

9. Saul ruled for probably forty years (Acts 13:21). It is possible, however, that a more accurate number is 42 years. The calendar dates are calculated by counting backward from King Solomon's reign. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 106 & n.165, 114-15.

10. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 111-12, noting that the reigns of David and Solomon overlapped in a short co-regency (1 Kgs 1:32-2:10; 1 Chron 23:1-2).

11. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 37-45, noting that these dates for Solomon's reign are widely accepted as one of the principal known anchor points from which the rest of the Old Testament chronology can be calculated; Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 249-50; Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 67-78.
12. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 124.
13. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 141, following Young, "Tables of Reign Lengths from the Hebrew Court Recorders," 246.
14. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 141, following Young, "Tables of Reign Lengths from the Hebrew Court Recorders," 246.
15. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 142.
16. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 142.
17. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 142, 154.
18. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 142.
19. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 142, 154.
20. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 141, following Young, "Tables of Reign Lengths from the Hebrew Court Recorders," 246.
21. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 141, following Young, "Tables of Reign Lengths from the Hebrew Court Recorders," 246.
22. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 142.
23. Amos 7:7-9; Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 151.
24. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 142.
25. The date of the Assyrian conquest of the Northern Kingdom is often stated to be 721 BC or 722 BC, but the date of 723 BC appears to be more accurate. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 136, 141, 156.
26. Pasachoff & Littleman, *A Concise History of the Jewish People*, 29; Coogan, *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, 340-42.
27. Hosea 1:1; Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 141, following Young, "Tables of Reign Lengths from the Hebrew Court Recorders," 246.
28. Isa 6:1; Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 141, 155, following Young, "Tables of Reign Lengths from the Hebrew Court Recorders," 246.
29. Micah 1:1; Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 141, 156-57, following Young, "Tables of Reign Lengths from the Hebrew Court Recorders," 246; Waltke, *Micah*, 591-93.
30. Dillard, *Joel*, 240-43, briefly surveying the wide range of dates proposed by various scholars.

31. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 141, following Young, "Tables of Reign Lengths from the Hebrew Court Recorders," 246.
32. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 141-42, 156, following Young, "Tables of Reign Lengths from the Hebrew Court Recorders," 246; Coogan, *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, 314-16.
33. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 141, 156, following Young, "Tables of Reign Lengths from the Hebrew Court Recorders," 246.
34. 2 Kgs 19:20-36; Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 251; Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 156-57.
35. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 141, following Young, "Tables of Reign Lengths from the Hebrew Court Recorders," 246.
36. Patterson, *Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary*, 3-7.
37. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 141, following Young, "Tables of Reign Lengths from the Hebrew Court Recorders," 246.
38. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 141, 157-58, following Young, "Tables of Reign Lengths from the Hebrew Court Recorders," 246.
39. Coogan, *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, 346-47.
40. Zeph 1:1; Patterson, *Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary*, 275-79.
41. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 141, 157-58, following Young, "Tables of Reign Lengths from the Hebrew Court Recorders," 246.
42. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 158-59.
43. Patterson, *Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary*, 115-17.
44. Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 252-53; Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 158-59, 172.
45. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 158-59, 164.
46. Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 257-58, 264; Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 162, 167.
47. 2 Kgs 24:1-14; Coogan, *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, 371; Pasachoff & Littleman, *A Concise History of the Jewish People*, 43; Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 264.
48. The date of 31 July 593 BC is widely accepted. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 163-64, 167; Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 264.
49. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 159-60.
50. 2 Kgs 24:20; Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 159-68, 174; Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 258-59.

51. The consensus date for the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple has been 17 August 586 BC. Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 259; Coogan, *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, 371; Pasachoff & Littleman, *A Concise History of the Jewish People*, 43. Steinmann appears, however, to be correct in building upon that earlier work to advocate a date one year earlier, 28 August 587 BC, discussing especially Ezek 26:1-2. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 136-38, 164-69.
52. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 172, 174.
53. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 167.
54. Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*, 1:280-85.
55. These dates from Steinmann are again one year earlier than the previous consensus view. Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 265; Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 172.
56. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 173-74.
57. Hartman, *The Anchor Bible: Daniel*, 178-79.
58. The consensus view favors 553 BC as the beginning of Belshazzar's reign as co-regent, but some scholars argue instead for 550 BC. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 172, 175; Coogan, *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, 375-77.
59. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 175.
60. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 175-79; Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 266; Coogan, *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, 376.
61. Pasachoff & Littleman, *A Concise History of the Jewish People*, 44; Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 179-80.
62. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 188-91 (also 180-87). Some scholars argue that Sheshbazzar led a group of returnees that was distinct from and earlier than the group led by Zerubbabel and Joshua. But that would contradict the statement in Neh 7:5-7 that the first group returned with Zerubbabel. Others suggest that Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel were the same person. But that is unnecessary and would contradict the ancient understanding in 1 Esdras 6:17 that the temple vessels were turned over to two people named Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel. The simplest solution requiring no correction of the text is simply that Sheshbazzar returned with the temple objects as governor (Ezra 1:8; Ezra 5:14), Zerubbabel returned at the same time and exercised much actual power in leading the people (Ezra 3:8) under Sheshbazzar's governorship (Ezra 5:16), and then at some point by the reign of king Darius, Zerubbabel succeeded Sheshbazzar as governor (Hag 1:1). The likely year of return is calculated from a consistent pattern of sabbatical years in Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 188-91.
63. Coogan, *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, 388.
64. Coogan, *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, 388, 403; Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 267; Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 165-67, 192.
65. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 192-95; Coogan, *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, 397, 403-04, 415. The title "Ahasueras" simply means "mighty king," and thus could refer to any of the Persian kings, but the scholarly consensus view places the beginning of the story of Esther in the third year of the reign of Xerxes. Jones, *The Chronology of the Old Testament*, 199, 205. However, Jones argues instead for Darius's third year, stating that the Hebrew grammar of Esther 2:5-6 indicates that it was Mordecai rather than his grandfather Kish who came out of Jerusalem about the same

time as Daniel. If Mordecai was age ten in 586 BC when Babylon carried off the third wave of deportees from Jerusalem, then by the third year of Darius' reign in 520 BC Mordecai would be age 76, but by the third year of Xerxes' reign in 484 BC he would be age 112, clearly too old for active service in the palace. Jones, *Chronology of the Old Testament*, 199-205.

66. Coogan, *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, 397, 401.

67. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 195-209, 214, noting that this date for the return of Ezra to Jerusalem is both the traditional view and the view most widely accepted today among scholars, and addressing alternative dates.

68. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 209-14, noting that the reference in Neh 1:1 to "the twentieth year" is not to the twentieth year of Artaxerxes I's reign, and that scholars do not know or agree on what it does refer to.

69. Glaziere-McDonald, *Malachi: The Divine Messenger*, 16-17 noting that a date between 470-450 BC is the majority view of scholars while arguing for a date shortly before Nehemiah.

70. Authorship of Chronicles is traditionally attributed to Ezra, Breneman, *New American Commentary, Vol. 10: Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, 32-33, but the "cautious scholarly consensus" is that Chronicles was written later in the Persian period. Coogan, *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, 373.

71. Coogan, *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, 367-70; Pasachoff & Littleman, *A Concise History of the Jewish People*, 45, 51, 63-69.

72. Brown & Holzapfel, *Between the Testaments*, 38; Coogan, *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, 417, 422-24; Pasachoff & Littleman, *A Concise History of the Jewish People*, 49-50.

73. Coogan, *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, 424; Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 216; Brown & Holzapfel, *Between the Testaments*, 43; Pasachoff & Littleman, *A Concise History of the Jewish People*, 51.

74. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 217, 225-26; Coogan, *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, 436-37; Pasachoff & Littleman, *A Concise History of the Jewish People*, 53-54; Brown & Holzapfel, *Between the Testaments*, 51-52, 58-60.

75. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 221-34; Coogan, *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, 450-51, 473, 477; Pasachoff & Littleman, *A Concise History of the Jewish People*, 58, 61-62; Brown & Holzapfel, *Between the Testaments*, 69-71, 79-80.

76. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul*, 220, 238, 249, 280; Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 291, 353, 366-68.

77. Coogan, *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, 503-07, 563-64; Pasachoff & Littleman, *A Concise History of the Jewish People*, 51, 67-69, 85-88, 96-97.

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