

## THIELE'S BIBLICAL CHRONOLOGY AS A CORRECTIVE FOR EXTRABIBLICAL DATES

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The outstanding work of Edwin R. Thiele in producing a coherent and internally consistent chronology for the period of the Hebrew Divided Monarchy is well known. By ascertaining and applying the principles and procedures used by the Hebrew scribes in recording the lengths of reign and synchronisms given in the OT books of Kings and Chronicles for the kings of Israel and Judah, he was able to demonstrate the accuracy of these biblical data.

What has generally not been given due notice is the effect that Thiele's clarification of the Hebrew chronology of this period of history has had in furnishing a corrective for various dates in ancient Assyrian and Babylonian history. It is the purpose of this essay to look at several such dates.<sup>1</sup>

### 1. *The Basic Question*

In a recent article in *AUSS*, Leslie McFall, who along with many other scholars has shown favor for Thiele's chronology, notes five vital variable factors which Thiele recognized, and then he sets forth the following opinion:

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.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Although much of the information provided in this article can be found in Thiele's own published works, the presentation given here gathers it, together with certain other data, into a context and with a perspective not hitherto considered, so far as I have been able to determine.

<sup>2</sup>Leslie McFall, "Some Missing Coregencies in Thiele's Chronology," *AUSS* 30 (1992): 40. The factors he notes on pp. 38-40 are "Two New-Year's Days," "Two Systems for Counting

The scenario presented by McFall is not correct in Thiele's case. In this article I deal briefly with six of the dates mentioned by McFall: 853, 841, 723, 605, 597, and 586. Contrary to McFall's surmise, at the time when Thiele was formulating his chronological reconstruction, these dates were not the most commonly accepted ones for the events involved. In fact, in all six cases Thiele's work corrected erroneous or disputed dates that were then widely held by OT scholars and other specialists in ancient Near Eastern history.

I omit discussion of only one date noted by McFall: 701, the year of Assyrian King Sennacherib's invasion of Judah during his third military campaign. This date had already been rather firmly established by the time Thiele was doing his chronological work and therefore needs no treatment here.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Some Preliminary Matters

In order to have an adequate framework for discussion of the six dates indicated above, we need to consider several preliminary matters: (1) the time frame when Thiele established his chronological pattern for the monarchs of Israel and Judah, (2) Thiele's procedure in developing that chronological pattern, and (3) the nature of the data from which Assyrian and Babylonian chronology is reconstructed.

### *Time Frame of Thiele's Work*

The time frame for Thiele's solution to the chronology of the Hebrew Divided Monarchy is important, for the question before us is not the Assyrian and Babylonian dates that are presently accepted but the dates that were accepted when Thiele was producing his chronological pattern. That time frame is simple to determine, for Thiele's chronological findings were first published in *JNES* in July of 1944.<sup>4</sup> Recognizing the time lapse usually needed for articles to go through the refereeing and publication processes, we can safely assume

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Regnal Years," "Switches between the Counting Systems," "Two Source Documents and Scribal Use of Them," and "Coregencies."

<sup>3</sup>See, e.g., Daniel David Luckenbill, *The Annals of Sennacherib* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1924), 10-12. Cf. L. L. Honor, *Sennacherib's Invasion of Palestine* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1926). For a thorough discussion of opinions and evidence regarding whether Sennacherib made one or two invasions of Palestine, see W. H. Shea, "Sennacherib's Second Palestinian Campaign," *JBL* 104 (1985): 401-418; and Christopher Begg, "Sennacherib's Second Palestinian Campaign: An Additional Indication," *JBL* 106 (1987): 685-686. In any case, the dating of the 701 campaign remains intact.

<sup>4</sup>Edwin R. Thiele, "The Chronology of the Kings of Judah and Israel," *JNES* 3 (1944): 137-186.

that his work was done prior to 1944, except for one last-minute reference added to the article, presumably in its galley-proof stage.<sup>5</sup>

After 1944, Thiele published a number of further pieces regarding aspects of his chronological discoveries. The most elaborate and well known is his *Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, which first appeared in 1951. Two subsequent editions of this work have also been published.<sup>6</sup> In these later editions Thiele omitted some of the more technical ancillary material of the first edition, added numerous helpful diagrams, and called attention to new information that has come to light since 1951. Although in this article I shall occasionally cite editions of *Mysterious Numbers*, the basic focus will be on the results Thiele had achieved by 1944.

### *Thiele's Procedure*

As Thiele undertook and progressed with his work on the chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah, there was a certain amount of "trial and error" in his methodology,<sup>7</sup> but this was not in the sense which McFall has suggested. Although Thiele was well versed in the history of the ancient Near East, he determined not to allow that knowledge to influence his work. His only "trial-and-error" procedure was in seeing how the variable factors used by the Hebrew scribes were involved in producing the numbers given in the MT for the lengths of reign and synchronisms of the monarchs of the two Hebrew kingdoms. No dates whatever—either biblical or extrabiblical—were placed in his charts until he had established a pattern of internal consistency based solely on the biblical data.

He discusses his rationale and procedure in some detail in the "Preface" to the first edition of *Mysterious Numbers*,<sup>8</sup> and summarizes it as follows in the "Preface to the Second Edition":

Let me once more call attention to the fact that in the production of

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 182, n. 104 (also 183, n. 108), shows that Thiele added an item that had just come to light in January of 1944 from Albrecht Goetze, "Additions to Parker and Dubberstein's *Babylonian Chronology*," *JNES* 3 (1944): 44.

<sup>6</sup>Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951). Later editions carry the same title as that of 1951; they appeared in 1965 and 1983, published respectively by Eerdmans and Zondervan in Grand Rapids, MI. Citations of the three editions will henceforth be *Myst. Numbers*, followed by a superscript "1," "2," or "3." In addition to these, Thiele published some dozen articles on various specific matters, plus a short popular book, *A Chronology of the Hebrew Kings* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977).

<sup>7</sup>Thiele, "Chronology," 140-141.

<sup>8</sup>*Myst. Numbers*<sup>1</sup>, vi-ix; also in *Myst. Numbers*<sup>2</sup>, vi-ix; and *Myst. Numbers*<sup>3</sup>, 16-18.

the pattern here set forth, the original purpose was to secure an arrangement of reigns [of the Hebrew kings] in harmony with the data themselves, without attention to contemporary chronology. Charts were prepared without dates of any kind, patterns showing the interrelationships of the rulers of Israel and Judah, but without indications of the overall passage of time. Only at the end was there to be a check with the known years of ancient history.<sup>9</sup>

### *The Bases for Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Chronology*

As we now turn our attention to Assyria and Neo-Babylonia, two main questions confront us: How have B.C. dates been ascertained for events in Assyrian and Babylonian history, including those for contacts with Israel and Judah? And how reliable are such dates?

*Assyria.* The massive array of documents brought to light from excavations at several Assyrian capitals, as well as discoveries from other regions of the Assyrian Empire and elsewhere (for instance, Babylon), has furnished a wealth of information that is useful in providing a chronological structure for Assyrian history. First, and in some ways foremost, among such records are the "eponym" or *limmu* lists. A certain government official was designated each year as the eponym or *limmu* for that year, and thus a year-by-year list of eponyms was developed. A number of such lists are extant in more-or-less fragmentary state, and from them an "Eponym Canon" has been produced, giving the names of all the *limmus* in unbroken sequence from 892 until 648 B.C.<sup>10</sup> This Canon, as published in the standard translation of D. D. Luckenbill,<sup>11</sup> is fully reliable and uncontrovertible with only one exception. This single flaw, which affects all the dates prior to 786, derives from the Assyrian source lists themselves and is discussed below in our treatment of the year 853. As we shall see, Thiele was able to correct the Eponym Canon.

For most of the period pertinent to this study (853-723 B.C.), not only is the eponym named, but his office is given: for example, "field-marshal," "chief cup-bearer," "high-chamberlain," "governor of Calah," "king of Assyria," etc. (during the ninth century and in the eighth, up to and including Tiglath-pileser III [745-727], a pattern was followed in

<sup>9</sup>*Myst. Numbers*<sup>2</sup>, xiv; also in *Myst. Numbers*<sup>3</sup>, 21, in a slightly abbreviated form.

<sup>10</sup>The name of the eponym for 892 (earlier given incorrectly as 893) is fragmented, appearing only as ". . . shar. . . ." The first clear name is that of Urta-zarme for the following year. Prior to 892 there is a break in the list for the reign of Adad-nirari II, and beyond that the listing is rather sketchy.

<sup>11</sup>Daniel David Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1926-27). Hereafter cited as *AR*. The eponyms are listed in 2:427-439 (sects. 1195-1198).

which the king was eponym during his second official regnal year). Also, for the entire time period of interest to us here, a major event of the year is indicated.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, the fragmentary state of the original source lists has at times left us without the office of the eponym and/or the event of the year. Restoration can frequently be made, however, from other considerations or documentation.

A second major source for Assyrian chronology is what has been called the "annals" of the Assyrian kings. It is preferable, however, to refer to these documents as annalistic-type records, for they do not necessarily always give a year-by-year account of major developments and activities during a particular king's reign. Some monarchs (or their scribes) structured their annalistic-type records on the basis of major military campaigns. Such is the case, for example, in regard to Sennacherib (705-681) and Ashurbanipal (669-627).

Two major lists of Assyrian kings are now extant. These are the Khorsabad King List and the SDAS King List, the former being the only one published before Thiele produced his chronology.<sup>13</sup> It covers the period from Assyrian beginnings until the end of the reign of Assurnirâri V (745 B.C.), and the latter traverses the same ground, plus two further reigns: those of Tiglath-pileser III (745-727) and Shalmaneser V (727-722). An important feature of these lists is that they indicate the lengths of reign of the various Assyrian monarchs.

In addition to extant documents of the three major types noted above, archaeology has uncovered thousands of tablets pertaining to business matters and other transactions. The "Babylonian Chronicle" also records certain events in Assyrian history, particularly when reference is made to contacts or relationships between Assyria and Babylonia.

We have now surveyed the kinds of ancient documents from which a general or overall chronology is built for Assyrian history. But how, then, are we able to put that chronology *into our own "B.C." terms*?

Fortunately, the Eponym Canon notes a solar eclipse as one of two major "events of the year" in the eponymy of Bur-Sagale during the reign of Assur-dân III. This eclipse took place in the "month of

<sup>12</sup>This begins with the eponymy of Tâb-bêl, 859 B.C., when Shalmaneser III became king. Frequently the event was a military campaign. Rarely more than one event is noted, but for the eponymy of Bur-Sagale (in the reign of Assur-dân III), 763, there are two events, as we shall notice later (see note 14, below).

<sup>13</sup>Arno Poebel, "The Assyrian King List from Khorsabad," 3 parts, *JNES* 1 (1942): 247-306, 460-492; and 2 (1943): 56-90. For the actual list see 2:85-88. Both lists were later published by Ignace Gelb, "Two Assyrian King Lists," *JNES* 13 (1954): 209-230. A cast of the SDAS list is in the Horn Museum of Andrews University (the original was returned to the Middle East).

*Simanu*.”<sup>14</sup> Modern astronomy has fixed the exact date as June 15, 763 B.C. By moving eponym by eponym through the Canon in both directions from this year, we can ascertain the basic B.C. structure of Assyrian history for the entire period in which we are interested.

*Neo-Babylonia*. A significant chronological source for the history of the Neo-Babylonian Empire is the *Canon* of Ptolemy, a Greek astronomer in ancient Egypt (A.D. 70-161).<sup>15</sup> This *Canon* begins with the “Nabonassar Era” in 747 B.C., the accession year of Neo-Babylonia’s first king, Nabonassar. That era covers both the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods, reaching to the time of Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great. Further subsections of the *Canon* carry the chronology down to Ptolemy’s own time.<sup>16</sup> Of particular interest to us in this essay is the fact that Ptolemy listed both the lengths of reign of the Neo-Babylonian monarchs and the corresponding year numbers of the Nabonassar Era for the first and last regnal years of each king.

Ptolemy’s *Canon* takes on special importance because of correlations that can be made with astronomical information given in his *Almagest*. The latter, which is specifically an astronomical work, provides more than eighty dated references to positions of the sun, moon, and planets. It includes five eclipses from Neo-Babylonian times and three from the Persian period.<sup>17</sup> One lunar eclipse is of particular interest to us: namely, that which occurred on the night of 29/30 Thoth during the 1st year of Babylonian King Mardokempados (Marduk-appaliddin), which was also the 27th year of the Nabonassar Era. This eclipse has been determined through modern astronomical means to have occurred on the night of March 19, 721 B.C.

The special importance of this eclipse is that it furnishes the basis for an exact B.C. chronological correlation of Babylonian history with Assyrian history. Mardokempados reigned twelve years. His successor to the throne of Babylon was Sargon II of Assyria. The Assyrian Eponym Canon notes that during the eponymy of Mannu-ki-Assur-li’, which was Sargon’s 13th year on the Assyrian throne, this Assyrian

<sup>14</sup>AR 2:435 (in sect. 1198). The other event was a revolt in the city of Ashur.

<sup>15</sup>The *Canon* is given in F. K. Ginzel, ed., *Handbuch der mathematischen und technischen Chronologie: Das Zeitsrechnungswesen der Völker* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1906), 1:139. It is discussed on the previous and several following pages. Thiele also provides the section of it from Nabonassar through Darius III (Appendix G in all three editions of *Myst. Numbers*).

<sup>16</sup>The Philip Era began on Nov. 12, 324 B.C.; and the Augustan Era was from August 30, 31 B.C., until A.D. 160.

<sup>17</sup>For the complete listing with B.C. dates, see Appendix H in any of the editions of Thiele’s *Myst. Numbers*.

monarch "took the hand of Bel" (became king of Babylon).<sup>18</sup> From Ptolemy's work we are able to establish this event as taking place in the year 709 B.C. From Assyrian chronology, using the 763 B.C. date for the solar eclipse during the eponymy of Bur-Sagale, we also arrive at this very same date, 709. Thus the accuracy of both the Assyrian and Babylonian chronologies has a double confirmation on the basis of these two recorded eclipses.

Numerous Babylonian records "flesh out" the Babylonian chronology. These include the "Babylonian Chronicle" and many dated documents of various sorts.

*The Reliability Question.* From the foregoing discussion it should be apparent that a firm chronological base has been established for both Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian history. But does this *overall reliability* of the chronological framework for the history of those two ancient Near-Eastern empires assure us also that the dates assigned by modern scholars for *specific* events in Assyrian and Babylonian history are always and invariably correct? Hardly so. A variety of factors may impinge on our efforts to secure correct dates for specific events. Among these are lack of extant information, incomplete or fragmented records, erroneous data provided by ancient scribes (either wittingly or unwittingly), and our own failure to understand precisely how chronological data should be construed or interpreted. Thus, to claim absolute validity for every date assigned by modern specialists to particular events or developments in Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian history is folly.

### 3. *Review of Dates in Assyrian History*

Of the six dates we set out to review in this article, three pertain to Assyrian history. These, as now established (and given by McFall), are 853 B.C. for the battle of Qarqar, in which a coalition of western kings fought against Shalmaneser III; 841 for Jehu's payment of tribute to that same Assyrian monarch; and 723 for the fall of Samaria and the demise of the Hebrew Northern Kingdom.

#### *The Battle of Qarqar—854 or 853?<sup>19</sup>*

The earliest precise correlation between Assyrian history and Israelite history for which there is extant information is the battle of Qarqar. This battle took place in the 6th year of the reign of Shalmaneser III.<sup>20</sup> In it Ahab of Israel played an important role in the

<sup>18</sup>AR 2:437 (in sect. 1198).

<sup>19</sup>Discussed in Thiele, "Chronology," 145-147, 149.

<sup>20</sup>Several Assyrian records refer to the battle at Qarqar, the most specific for our

western coalition. At the time when Thiele formulated his chronological pattern, the majority of scholars in the field considered the year of this battle to be 854 B.C., though some dissenters in Europe chose 853. Thiele, as he himself points out, had accepted the earlier date.<sup>21</sup> This was, after all, the date required by the basic reconstruction of the Eponym Canon by Luckenbill, George Smith, R. W. Rogers, and A. T. Olmstead.<sup>22</sup>

It came as a surprise to Thiele that his biblical chronology required, instead, the year 853 for this important battle. Even a one-year adjustment of his biblical-chronology pattern, which was entirely cohesive and internally consistent, would have led to confusion for all datings in both directions from 853. The end result would have been a huge number of adjustments to the biblical data in the books of Kings and Chronicles, significant disruption of Thiele's already-consistent chronology, and the need to resort repeatedly to speculation. Thiele's intellectual honesty would undoubtedly have led him to a full reconsideration of the pattern he had established, if such were necessary. But to him it was uncanny—indeed, almost inconceivable—that a pattern so perfect in itself could be out of step with Assyrian history, and therefore to him it made the best sense to give that history a closer look.

This he did, and in the process he discovered that the disputed dating of the battle of Qarqar had arisen because of confusion in the eponym source lists concerning the period between 788 and 784 B.C., during the reign of Adad-nirâri III (then dated as 810-781, but now dated as 809-781). For this period, one ancient *limmu* source list includes an additional name, Balatu, beyond the names given in several other such lists.<sup>23</sup> Since it seemed more likely that a name had been dropped rather than added, most scholars favored the longer chronology.

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interests being that of the Monolith Inscription. This gives the date (the year of Daiân-Assur) and mentions Ahab by name. See AR 1:222-223 (sect. 610) for the relevant text.

<sup>21</sup>See *Myst. Numbers*<sup>1</sup>, viii; *Myst. Numbers*<sup>2</sup>, viii; and *Myst. Numbers*<sup>3</sup>, 17. Those who had accepted 853 were a few German and British historians, though this date was certainly not universally accepted in Europe. In America, 854 was always the year given in sources available to Thiele.

<sup>22</sup>AR 2:431 (in sect. 1198); George Smith, *The Assyrian Eponym Canon* (London: Bagster and Sons, [1875]), 31; Roger William Rogers, trans. and ed., *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament* (New York and Cincinnati: Abingdon, 1926), 226; and A. T. Olmstead, "The Assyrian Chronicle," *JAOS* 34 (1915): 360.

<sup>23</sup>C<sup>3</sup> on the one hand, and C<sup>6</sup>, C<sup>b2</sup>, and C<sup>c</sup> on the other, in the classification of the *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* (1938), s.v. "Eponymen."



However, some researchers had come to the conclusion that the shorter lists were chronologically correct. For example, in 1915 Emil Forrer had made the suggestion that Balatu, assigned to 787 in the longer list, was an individual who had been appointed as eponym for 786 but had died before taking office, so that Nabû-shar-usur was the eponym who actually served that year.<sup>24</sup>

Thiele himself carefully reviewed this evidence, and deemed Forrer's conclusion to be reasonable. However, he also took into account a further source of evidence just coming to light as he was doing his work, the Khorsabad King List. Since according to the longer eponym chronology there would have been 115 years from the accession of Shalmaneser III to the death of Assur-nirâri V—i.e., from 860 B.C. to the firm date of 745—but only 114 years according to the Khorsabad King List, the shorter eponym chronology must be correct. This being the case, the accession of Shalmaneser actually took place in 859, making his 6th regnal year 853. Thus the battle of Qarqar was fought in 853, not 854.

But the Khorsabad King List also made evident that the precise place where the longer chronology had gone astray was during the reign of Adad-nirâri III. According to the longer chronology this king would have reigned 29 years, from 810 to 781, whereas the King List gives his reign as 28 years. And it is, of course, precisely during this monarch's reign that the variance in the original eponym source lists occurs.

Thiele thus not only certified the year 853 as the date for the battle of Qarqar, but also was able to prepare a corrected Eponym Canon, now included as Appendix F in the three editions of his *Mysterious Numbers*. His assigning both Balatu and Nabû-shar-usur to the year 786, as Forrer had suggested, is undoubtedly the most feasible solution for the eponym-list problem. But for our purposes, his establishing the short eponym chronology as over against the long one is the vital matter, for it is the correctness of the short chronology that establishes 853 as Shalmaneser's 6th year and thus the date of the battle of Qarqar.

#### *Jehu's Payment of Tribute to Shalmaneser—842 or 841?*<sup>25</sup>

According to the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III, this Assyrian monarch collected tribute from King Jehu of Samaria, and a text

<sup>24</sup>There are technicalities beyond our scope here, but these have been set forth clearly and adequately by Thiele not only in "Chronology," 145-146, but also in all three editions of his *Myst. Numbers* (see, e.g., *Myst. Numbers*<sup>1</sup>, 73-74). Thiele's reference to Forrer's work is the latter's "Zur Chronologie der neuassyrischen Zeit," in *Mitteilungen der vorderasiatischen Gesellschaft*, 20 (1915).

<sup>25</sup>Discussed by Thiele, "Chronology," 149.

fragment from Calah provides the date as Shalmaneser's 18th year.<sup>26</sup> Since the battle of Qarqar had taken place twelve years earlier, during Shalmaneser's 6th year, to determine the time of Jehu's payment of tribute was a simple matter of subtraction. The renowned American scholars who accepted 854 as the date for the battle of Qarqar considered 842 to be the date of the tribute payment by Jehu. Thus the matter stood when Thiele was developing the pattern for his Hebrew chronology.

However, on the same grounds mentioned above for correcting the date of the battle of Qarqar to 853, Thiele corrected also the date for Jehu's tribute payment to 841. According to Thiele's chronology, this was the very year when Jehu came to the throne, an especially appropriate time for Shalmaneser to demand tribute from his new vassal.

Moreover, since Thiele's chronology also required precisely twelve years as the interval between the death of Ahab and the accession of Jehu, it was now clear, as well, that Ahab died in 853. This was at the battle of Ramoth-gilead (1 Kgs 22:1-37), not long after Ahab's participation in the battle of Qarqar.

### *The Fall of Samaria—721/722 or 723?*<sup>27</sup>

When Thiele entered into his chronological chart the date for the fall of Samaria and the dethronement of Hoshea, the Hebrew Northern Kingdom's last monarch, he was surprised to find that in his sequential pattern of biblical dates the year turned out to be 723 B.C., not 722 or 721. Virtually every important scholar who dealt with the history of the ancient Near East believed, on the basis of Assyrian records, that Sargon II, who acceded to the Assyrian throne toward the end of December 722, was the monarch who defeated Hoshea and brought the northern Hebrew nation to its end. Documentation from late in Sargon's reign made this almost indisputable, so the modern scholars felt, for the king seemed categorically to declare that he had attacked Samaria "at the beginning of my rule."<sup>28</sup> The time would have been very late in December of 722 B.C. or very early in the year 721. Virtually every

<sup>26</sup>For the text of the Black Obelisk, see *AR* 1: 200-211 (sects. 555-593, the mention of Jehu being in sect. 590); for the text of the Calah fragment, see *AR* 1:243 (sect. 672). The statement in this fragment is that Shalmaneser received tribute from the inhabitants of "Tyre, Sidon and of Jehu, son of Omri."

<sup>27</sup>Discussed in Thiele, "Chronology," 173-174.

<sup>28</sup>The text, badly mutilated at this point, is given in *AR* 2:2 (sect. 4). Several other late inscriptions from no earlier than Sargon's 15th and 16th years appear to refer to the same supposed event.

specialist in the field *knew* that this was the correct dating for the event.<sup>29</sup>

Again Thiele was puzzled, for his chronology absolutely required the year of Samaria's fall to be 723. And once more he turned his attention to the pertinent Assyrian data, noting also that at least one prominent Assyriologist, Albert T. Olmstead, had already adopted 723 as the correct date.<sup>30</sup> Olmstead's conclusion rested basically on what he considered a correlation between certain Assyrian and biblical data, coupled with a consequent rejection of Sargon's claim (after all, if Sargon had indeed captured Samaria at the beginning of his rule, why was this important achievement not recorded early in his reign?). Olmstead observed that the biblical account in 2 Kgs 17:3-6 refers by name to Shalmaneser as coming against Hoshea and making the latter his vassal. Then the account continues with a number of references to "the king of Assyria." When Hoshea failed to pay tribute, "the king of Assyria" besieged Samaria for "three years" until the 9th year of Hoshea, when the Assyrian king captured Samaria and deported the Israelites to Assyria. Although the name "Shalmaneser" appears only once in this passage, with the term "the king of Assyria" used repeatedly thereafter, Olmstead deduced that a logical reading of the biblical passage requires that the same Assyrian monarch is referred to throughout the entire account. This would make Shalmaneser V, rather than Sargon II, the destroyer of the Hebrew Northern Kingdom.

But there was also Assyrian evidence to notice: namely, that for the three years 725, 724, and 723 in the Eponym Canon, Shalmaneser carried on military campaigns (or perhaps, rather, one extended three-year campaign).<sup>31</sup> Unfortunately, the text of the Canon is mutilated at precisely this point, leaving us without the name of the place (or places) which Shalmaneser attacked during those three years. The striking feature is that both the biblical record and the Assyrian Eponym Canon refer to three successive years of military campaigning, with Shalmaneser as the Assyrian monarch in each instance. It seemed to

<sup>29</sup>W. F. Albright, in speaking of the tentativeness of datings in his own chronology of the Hebrew Divided Monarchy, has made the assertion that "the only date which is absolutely certain is that of the Fall of Samaria"; this he sets forth as "between the accession of Sargon in December, 722, and the end of his accession year in the spring of 721" ("The Chronology of the Divided Monarchy of Israel," *BASOR*, no. 100 [Dec. 1945]: 17, and 22, n. 27).

<sup>30</sup>A. T. Olmstead, "The Fall of Samaria," *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 21 (1904-05): 179-182; Olmstead mentions the matter also in some of his other writings, such as "Bruno Meissner," *Archiv für Orientforschung* 5 (1928-29): 30.

<sup>31</sup>*AR* 2: 437 (in sect. 1198).

Olmstead that the same Assyrian military activity was in view in both the biblical and Assyrian records.

But Olmstead also noted still another piece of important information bearing on the question. A statement in the Babylonian Chronicle 1:28 indicates that Shalmaneser destroyed "Sha-ma-ra-'i-in." This, for Olmstead, was Samaria. Although relatively few other scholars believed that this place should be identified as Samaria, it is interesting to observe that in his edition of the Eponym Canon, Luckenbill supplied "Samaria" for the years 725, 724, and 723.<sup>32</sup>

As plausible as Olmstead's argument was, drawing as it did upon three distinct lines of evidence, scholars in the field generally ignored it, choosing rather to accept the claim made by Sargon. Thiele, however, once he had studied the matter carefully for himself, recognized the strength of the evidence favoring Shalmaneser as the Assyrian monarch who brought the kingdom of Israel to its demise. He adopted the date 723 for this event. Moreover, through the publication of his chronological work, especially his *Mysterious Numbers*, he gave Olmstead's thesis new life. The fact that the year 723, and no other, would harmonize with Thiele's internally consistent biblical chronology furnished an added important support in favor of this date.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, it is fair to say that Thiele's chronological research was a significant factor in calling attention to 723 as the correct date for the fall of Samaria and to Shalmaneser V as the monarch who was responsible for terminating the Hebrew Northern Kingdom. Consequently, it also became evident that Sargon's claim to be the conqueror of Samaria at the beginning of his rule (during his accession year) was invalid.

The clinching argument from Assyrian sources that this was indeed the case did not surface, however, until some fifteen or more years subsequent to Thiele's discovery. In 1958 Hayim Tadmor published a study of the annalistic records of Sargon revealing that Sargon did not engage in any foreign military activity until 720 B.C.<sup>34</sup> In that year he

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>It is interesting to note that so distinguished a work as *Cambridge Ancient History* has included in its 2d ed. a statement by T. C. Mitchell that "the fall of Samaria is likely to have taken place before the end of his [Shalmaneser's] reign" (3/2 [1991]: 340). This is in striking contrast to Sidney Smith's statement in the earlier edition that it "is clear that Shalmaneser died before Samaria actually fell" (*Cambridge Ancient History* 3 [1929]: 42).

<sup>34</sup>Hayim Tadmor, "The Campaigns of Sargon II of Assur: A Chronological-Historical Study," *JCS* 12 (1958): 38-39. Sargon's annalistic records had, of course, been treated earlier too (e.g., by A. T. Olmstead, "The Text of Sargon's Annals," *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 47 [1930-31]: 259-280), but without the impact which Tadmor's study has made.

attacked Elamite armies to the south and then marched against a western alliance. Late in the year he visited Samaria to deport its inhabitants and transplant people from elsewhere to become the backbone of the Assyrian province named "Samerina."

#### 4. *Review of Dates in Neo-Babylonian History*

As we turn our attention to Neo-Babylonian contacts with the Hebrew kingdom of Judah, three events and their dates concern us. The events are the three military assaults against Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, as mentioned in Dan 1:1-6, 2 Kgs 24:8-17, and 2 Kgs 25:1-21. In each of these attacks, Jewish captives were taken to Babylon.

The three "absolute dates" for these events, according to McFall, are 605, 597, and 586 B.C., dates which, in his opinion, were necessary for Thiele to use in developing his biblical chronology. The fact is, of course, that at the time Thiele did his initial work, none of these dates was generally accepted; and moreover, Thiele himself was the scholar who had a large role in giving them credibility.

#### *Preliminary Observations*

Three preliminary observations will expedite our discussion of Nebuchadnezzar's military attacks on Jerusalem. First, Thiele recognized that because the biblical accounts date these Babylonian assaults (or Hebrew captivities) to specific years in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar and/or a particular Hebrew monarch, the time intervals between them are readily determined. The first interval would be 8 years (from Jehoiakim's 3d to 11th year, plus about three months for the reign of Jehoiachin), and the second one, 11 years (the number of years of Zedekiah's reign). This means that a firm date for any of the three assaults should also fix the dates for the other two (much as in the case of the 12-year interval between the battle of Qarqar and Jehu's payment of tribute to Shalmaneser III).

Second, readers of Thiele's *Mysterious Numbers* in its 2d or 3d editions should keep in mind that certain specific Babylonian datings which he has given in these publications were not available when he did his original work. They came to light only when D. J. Wiseman in 1956 published some Babylonian tablets in the British Museum whose content had earlier been unknown to the scholarly world.<sup>35</sup>

Third, in order to get a correct chronological picture, it is essential to proceed on the basis of the procedures used by the scribes who recorded the pertinent data. By a careful and thoroughgoing analysis of

<sup>35</sup>D. J. Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldaean Kings (626-556 B.C.) in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1956).

the chronological notations in the OT books of Kings, Chronicles, Daniel, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, Thiele derived the following pattern: (1) In stating regnal years, the records in Kings, Chronicles, and Daniel reveal the use of Tishri-to-Tishri reckoning for Nebuchadnezzar as well as for the Hebrew monarchs. Judah's actual regnal years were from the Tishri to Tishri, but Babylon's practice was to begin regnal years in Nisan. (2) The Babylonian scribes gave their regnal data to according their own Nisan years. (3) Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel also set forth Babylonian regnal years in the Nisan-to-Nisan mode, except in material obviously taken from the same records as 2 Kings 24:18-25: 21 (e.g., Jer 39:1-14 and 52:1-27).<sup>36</sup> (4) The "calendar" year of both nations was, and regularly had been, Nisan to Nisan. (5) Also, at this time Judah was using postdating (the accession-year system) for enumeration of a monarch's years of reign, the standard system used in both Assyria and Babylonia. Although all these five considerations are vital, the most important one for us to keep in mind is that the OT books of Kings, Chronicles, and Daniel use Tishri-to-Tishri reckoning for Babylonia as well as for Judah. As we shall see, confusion over this matter has led some scholars to retain a partially incorrect chronology for Nebuchadnezzar's attacks on Jerusalem, in spite of Thiele's work and the new information brought to light by Wiseman.

*Nebuchadnezzar's First Assault on Jerusalem*<sup>37</sup>

At the time of Thiele's study, available chronicle information about Babylonian military activity concluded with the year 608 B.C., prior to Nebuchadnezzar's first assault on Jerusalem.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, biblical scholars tended to believe that there was such an attack before 600 B.C., based on information in Jeremiah. Most such scholars, however, either rejected the record in Daniel or considered it dubious. A common date given was 604, but W. F. Albright suggested 603/02.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup>Alberto R. Green, "The Chronology of the Last Days of Judah: Two Apparent Discrepancies," *JBL* 101 (1982): 57-73, has concluded that the book of Jeremiah may be using Tishri-to-Tishri reckoning throughout. Green's most important contribution, in my opinion, is his elucidating the fact that the captivities mentioned in Jer 52:28-29 are not necessarily identical with those mentioned in Kings and Chronicles (63-67).

<sup>37</sup>Discussed in Thiele, "Chronology," 181-182.

<sup>38</sup>This latest chronicle material available to Thiele was B.M. 21901, published by C. J. Gadd, *The Fall of Nineveh* (London: British Museum, 1923). Wiseman has provided a new transliteration and translation of this tablet (54-65).

<sup>39</sup>The date 604 occurs in a number of older publications. W. F. Albright gave the date as "603/2" in his article "The Seal of Eliakim and the Latest Preëxilic History of Judah, with Some Observations on Ezekiel," *JBL* 51 (1932): 86; he has reiterated it in "The Nebuchadnezzar and Neriglissar Chronicles," *BASOR*, no. 143 (Oct. 1956): 31, though

Thiele noted the datum in Dan 1:1 that Nebuchadnezzar's attack on Jerusalem took place in Jehoiakim's 3d year. If this was correct (and Thiele believed that it was), the date could not have been later than 605. Thiele also noted that the Babylonian historian Berosus (ca. 300 B.C.), as quoted by Josephus, furnished the following important information: Nebuchadnezzar was crown prince at the time of a western campaign during which he learned of the death of his father, Nabopolassar, in the latter's 21st year of reign. Thereupon Nebuchadnezzar hastened across the desert so as to reach Babylon as quickly as possible to claim the throne. The "prisoners—Jews, Phoenicians, Syrians, and Egyptians"—and the "heavily armored troops and the rest of his belongings" were left in the hands of friends to escort to Babylon.<sup>40</sup> The fact that there were Jewish prisoners gives evidence that Judah was among the places attacked.

Thiele concluded that the records of Daniel and Berosus refer to the same Jewish captivity and thus corroborate each other. Moreover, the testimony is that of two independent, unbiased witnesses, a fact which should make that testimony all the more reliable.

It now remained only to determine the time of the transition in Babylonian rulership from Nabopolassar to his son Nebuchadnezzar II. The latest two extant documents dated to Nabopolassar's 21st year were from Aiaru 2 and Abu 1 (May 12 and August 8) of the year 605.<sup>41</sup> The first dated extant one from Nebuchadnezzar's accession year was from Duzu, the fourth Babylonian month (specific day lacking), which ended on August 7, 605, and the next one was from Ululu 12 (September 18) of that year.<sup>42</sup> It was now clear to Thiele that the transition in rulership took place somewhere in or near the month of August in 605. Thanks to the subsequently published documents by Wiseman, we now know the exact dates for Nabopolassar's death and Nebuchadnezzar's accession to the throne: Abu 8 and Ululu 1 (August 16 and September 7), respectively.<sup>43</sup>

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also now allowing the possibility that "the first conquest of Judah by the Chaldaeans . . . may have been in 604/3 instead of 603/2" (28, n. 4).

<sup>40</sup>Berosus, quoted in Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.19.

<sup>41</sup>Richard A. Parker and Waldo H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology, 626 B.C.-A.D. 45* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), 9. Thiele adjusted the first date to Aiaru 6 (May 16).

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, and Goetze, 44.

<sup>43</sup>Wiseman, 46, 68, 69. The tablet is B.M. 21946. For Babylonian texts, I use the Babylonian month names, even though Wiseman's translation gives the Hebrew month names.

Thus, for Thiele the time of Nebuchadnezzar's first major attack on Jerusalem, when captives were taken to Babylon, was 605. He had arrived at this date by giving due consideration to the biblical evidence, Berosus' account, and the Babylonian documentation available to him. It is fair to say that his careful work has swung the pendulum somewhat in favor of the date 605 instead of 604 or later. Not all scholars have accepted 605, however, and most notably so Albright, who still, after Thiele's publication of 1944, could declare, "I should consider it unlikely that Judah was actually invaded until some time in 603/2."<sup>44</sup>

*Nebuchadnezzar's Second Major Assault on Jerusalem*<sup>45</sup>

Nebuchadnezzar's second major military assault on Judah and Jerusalem occurred in what 2 Kings 24:12 refers to as Nebuchadnezzar's 8th year. After a reign of only three months (three months and ten days, according to 2 Chron 36:9), Jehoiachin king of Judah was removed from his throne by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kgs 24:8-12). Jehoiachin, his family, and numerous others from Judah were carried captive to Babylon (vv. 14-16); and Mattaniah, whom Nebuchadnezzar renamed "Zedekiah," was placed on the throne (v. 17). According to 2 Chron 36:10, this took place "at the turn of the year" (*litšubat haššanāh*), which Thiele interpreted to be the spring season (Nisan) rather than the autumn (Tishri), a conclusion supported by several lines of evidence. One of these evidences, a datum in Ezek 40:1, establishes the very month and day of Jehoiachin's captivity as Nisan 10 (April 22).<sup>46</sup>

Since this captivity (and Jerusalem's capture which preceded it) occurred within Nebuchadnezzar's 8th year, Tishri-to-Tishri reckoning, that year would have to be 597 B.C. This dating, however, was by no means universally accepted when Thiele was doing his chronological research, as a glance at **figure 2** reveals. A more frequently given year was 598.

As we have noted earlier, at the time when Thiele was delving into this matter, no clear confirmation had come to light from Babylonian records concerning this Babylonian attack on Jerusalem. Such documentation did come, however, in Wiseman's publication of 1956. Babylonian tablet B.M. 21946 furnishes the information that in the 7th

<sup>44</sup>Albright, "Nebuchadnezzar and Neriglissar," 31; Cf. n. 39, above.

<sup>45</sup>Discussed in Thiele, "Chronology," 182.

<sup>46</sup>Another evidence for the spring season noted by Thiele is the comment in Jer 36:30 that Jehoiakim's dead body would be exposed to "the frost by night." Thus the death of Jehoiakim would have taken place in winter, with the Babylonian attack on Jehoiachin coming some three months later.



year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (Nisan reckoning, which was the 8th year in Jewish Tishri reckoning), Nebuchadnezzar led a military expedition to the Hatti-land in the month of Kislimu (December 17, 598, to January 15, 597) and captured Jerusalem on the 2d day of Addaru (March 16, 597).<sup>47</sup> We thus find once again that Thiele was able to provide a correct extrabiblical date prior to the time when the precise extrabiblical evidence for it was available.

*Nebuchadnezzar's Destruction of Jerusalem*<sup>48</sup>

According to 2 Kings 25:1-21, Nebuchadnezzar's next (third and final) major military campaign to Jerusalem resulted in the capture of the city and dethronement of Zedekiah, who was taken captive to Babylon after seeing his sons killed and then having his own eyes gouged out. The date given for the breaching of the city walls is the 9th day of the 4th month in the 11th year of Zedekiah (vv. 3-4); the date indicated for the arrival in Jerusalem of Nebuzaradan, Nebuchadnezzar's deputy who destroyed the city with fire and sent the captives into exile, was the 7th day of the 5th month in Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year (vv. 8-11).

It would seem clear that these events should therefore be eleven years subsequent to Nebuchadnezzar's previous invasion, when he had placed Zedekiah on the throne of Judah. Scholars who had dated the preceding invasion to 598 usually opted for 587 as the date for Jerusalem's destruction and the end of the kingdom of Judah. Thiele's date was 586.

Although there is a gap in the Babylonian record for this period,<sup>49</sup> the Babylonian evidence brought to light by Wiseman for the year 597 firmly establishes also, so it would seem, the date 586 as the correct one for the final fall of Jerusalem and the termination of the Hebrew Southern Kingdom. However, some distinguished scholars in the field, most notably among them Albright and some of his former students, still retained 587 as the year when these decisive events in Judah's history took place.<sup>50</sup> This would be possible *if* the regnal-year dating in

<sup>47</sup>Wiseman, 72, 73. Regarding the month names, see n. 43, above.

<sup>48</sup>Discussed in Thiele, "Chronology," 182-183.

<sup>49</sup>The extant portion of B.M. 21946 concludes with a military campaign of Nebuchadnezzar in his 11th year (thus in 594 B.C.). The next information, chronologically, is found in B.M. 25124 and pertains to Neriglissar's 3d year (557 B.C.). See Wiseman, 48-49.

<sup>50</sup>Albright, "Nebuchadnezzar and Neriglissar," 32; D. N. Freedman, "The Babylonian Chronicle," *BA* 19 (1956): 54-55; and John Bright, *A History of Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 309, and also later editions.

2 Kgs 24 and 25 were Nisan to Nisan and *if* Zedekiah ascended the throne prior to Nisan 1 in the year 597. But the regnal year in 2 Kings is Tishri to Tishri, as evidenced by the harmony of all the data if this reckoning is recognized, a harmony which falls apart on the basis of a Nisan regnal year. Tishri reckoning makes Zedekiah's 11th year begin in the fall of 587, with the summer events of that year occurring in 586.

Moreover, it is likely that Nebuchadnezzar put Zedekiah on the throne after Nisan 1, 597, for the Babylonian monarch would undoubtedly first have spent several weeks in rounding up the captives (including Jehoiachin) and completing certain other tasks. The sequential arrangement of the biblical text in mentioning Jehoiachin's captivity before Zedekiah's accession (2 Kgs 24:15-17 and 2 Chron 36:10) is an indication, I believe, that the latter was not enthroned until the former was exiled, therefore on or after Nisan 10, 597. The somewhat elaborate account of Josephus also supports such a scenario.<sup>51</sup> In this case, even on a Nisan-to-Nisan basis, Zedekiah's 11th year would include the summer of 586.

There are other pieces of evidence noted by Thiele which cannot be accommodated to the 587 date. Such, for instance, is the datum of Ezek 40:1, indicating that the 25th year of Jehoiachin's (and Ezekiel's own) captivity was also the 14th year "after the city [Jerusalem] was conquered" (RSV). Another problematical datum for those who hold the 587 date is the statement in 2 Kgs 25:8-9 that Nebuzaradan arrived in Jerusalem and torched the city during Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year. The summer of that year would be in 586 on either the Tishri or Nisan regnal-year basis, as indicated in **figure 1**.

Albright recognized this anomaly for his reckoning and said the year should be Nebuchadnezzar's 18th, not 19th.<sup>52</sup> His suggestion was that in Judah Nebuchadnezzar was viewed as *de facto* king prior to actual enthronement because during the final year of his father's reign he alone was leading the troops while Nabopolassar remained in Babylon. This is an untenable suggestion, in my opinion, for the Jewish scribes, who took great pains to be accurate, could hardly have been so confused and unrealistic about the political events of their time.

Thiele's date of 586 runs into none of the problems mentioned above. Although some scholars have refused to accept this date, many specialists in OT studies have adopted it as the best, or even only viable,

<sup>51</sup>Josephus, *Antiquities* 10.7.1. He refers to a time lapse between Jehoiachin's surrender and the rounding up of captives by Nebuchadnezzar's generals. The captives were then brought to Nebuchadnezzar, who "kept them in custody and appointed Zedekiah, Jehoiachin's uncle, as king."

<sup>52</sup>Albright, "Nebuchadnezzar and Neriglissar," 32.

reconstruction from the evidence. For these scholars, the date 586 serves as a welcome corrective for both OT and Babylonian chronology.

### 5. *Analysis and Evaluation*

We have now taken note of three events in Assyrian history and three in Babylonian history wherein contacts occurred between one or the other of the Hebrew monarchies and either Assyria or Babylonia. In each case, Thiele provided evidence to bring correction to widely held incorrect dates. He was led to his conclusions because the internally consistent chronological pattern he had formulated caused him to see and investigate the problems he encountered with the extrabiblical datings. His refusal to enter any dates into his charts until he had arrived at a cohesive self-consistent pattern for the entire regnal history of the two Hebrew kingdoms was what enabled him to see the need for restudy of the extrabiblical erroneous dates so widely held at the time he was doing his work.

In this article I have purposely dealt only with dates noted by McFall—dates that McFall himself and many other scholars now accept, thanks in large part to Thiele's work. But Thiele's chronology has led to other clarifications, as well, such as the contacts of Tiglath-pileser III with Azariah of Judah and Menahem of Israel, to be dated as either 743 or 742 B.C. instead of the commonly held 738,<sup>53</sup> and the same monarch's placing Hoshea on the throne of Israel in 732/31.<sup>54</sup>

As a point of interest, we may observe some of the results of two late nineteenth-century and six twentieth-century scholars who have tried seriously to reconstruct the chronology of the Hebrew Divided Kingdom by taking note of extrabiblical information from Assyria and Neo-Babylonia (see figure 2).<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup>Discussed in Thiele, "Chronology," 155-163. Albright, in "Chronology of Divided Monarchy," 18, remarks that Thiele's "careful analysis of the records of Tiglath-Pileser III, showing that Azariah of Judah appears in connection with the events of 743 B.C.," is "the most important forward step for many years." However, Albright still dates Menahem's payment of tribute to Assyria in 738 (21, n. 24).

<sup>54</sup>Discussed in Thiele, "Chronology," 167.

<sup>55</sup>This very small list is excerpted from the extensive tables provided by Thiele, *Myst. Numbers*<sup>1</sup>, 254-255 (technical material not repeated in the later editions). The specific works are not given in connection with the tables, but the citations may be found in footnotes to Thiele's accompanying text. The titles are also included in his bibliography in *Myst. Numbers*<sup>3</sup>, 233-242. Omitted from my sampling, but included in Thiele's tables, is the chronology of Martin Anstey, whose work (published in 1913) in no way measures up to that of the other scholars listed (a fact that Thiele himself makes very clear). Anstey had access to the same basic extrabiblical sources available to the other chronologists, but still could go so far afield as to date Ahab's death to 904 B.C., fifty-one years before that king's participation in the battle of Qarqar! I have also omitted James Ussher's chronology

In addition to the comments made in connection with **figure 2** itself, we here consider just a few further items. Of the eight chronologers listed, only Rühl, Coucke, and Mowinckel date the division of the Hebrew Kingdom (and therefore the accession of Rehoboam and Jeroboam) to 931, Thiele's date; the maximum divergence is 15 years. Only Kugler gives 12 years between the death of Ahab and the accession of Jehu, as required by the biblical data, but his dates are a year too early, 854 and 842. All the other chronologers have either lengthened or shortened the time, with a maximum divergence of 9 years. Finally, not even one of these eight scholars gives the correct date for Hoshea's dethronement, 723 B.C. (they choose 724, 722, or 721).

The point of all this is that Thiele could, and did, achieve his harmonious results only by strictly adhering to the procedure which he indicates that he used. His results would undoubtedly have matched in mistakes those of the serious scholars listed in **figure 2** if he had utilized their procedures. Thankfully, he did not.

### 5. Conclusion

The purpose of this essay has been to show how Thiele's biblical chronology has provided correctives to extrabiblical chronology. This purpose has been accomplished, and we have also seen that Thiele was able to make the proper adjustments only because of the procedure he followed. As a fitting conclusion to our study, we may take note of the importance of that procedure by examining what the case would have been if he had used the methodology attributed to him and other chronologers by McFall—that is, "trial and error in fitting the biblical data" around the so-called "absolute dates" of Assyrian and Babylonian history.

First of all, Thiele would have found himself in the same state of confusion as were the chronologers who used that process. He would have faced the necessity of making almost endless adjustments to his biblical chronology and the underlying biblical data. His cohesive and internally consistent pattern for Hebrew chronology would have been shattered, and he would inevitably have found himself speculating as to which biblical data should be considered reliable and which should not.

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(published 1650-54), since it was worked out prior to the massive archaeological data made available in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. My purpose here has been to sample the work of *serious* scholars who were able to utilize such extrabiblical evidence. The two nineteenth-century scholars in the list obviously did not have as much of this evidence available as did the six twentieth-century chronologers; but we must remember that a considerable amount of the basic textual material had been published and/or discussed prior to 1883 by such eminent authorities as H. Rawlinson, A. H. Layard, George Smith, and others.

Second, his biblical-chronology reconstruction would have been invalid by being in harmony with erroneous extrabiblical dates. His chronological reconstruction obviously could be no better than the incorrect extrabiblical information to which it had been made to conform.

Third, Thiele would not have been able to rectify the erroneous extrabiblical dates that we have noted, for he would have taken for granted that they were already correct. And therefore he would not have rendered the kind of service to Assyrian and Babylonian history and chronology that we have surveyed in this article.

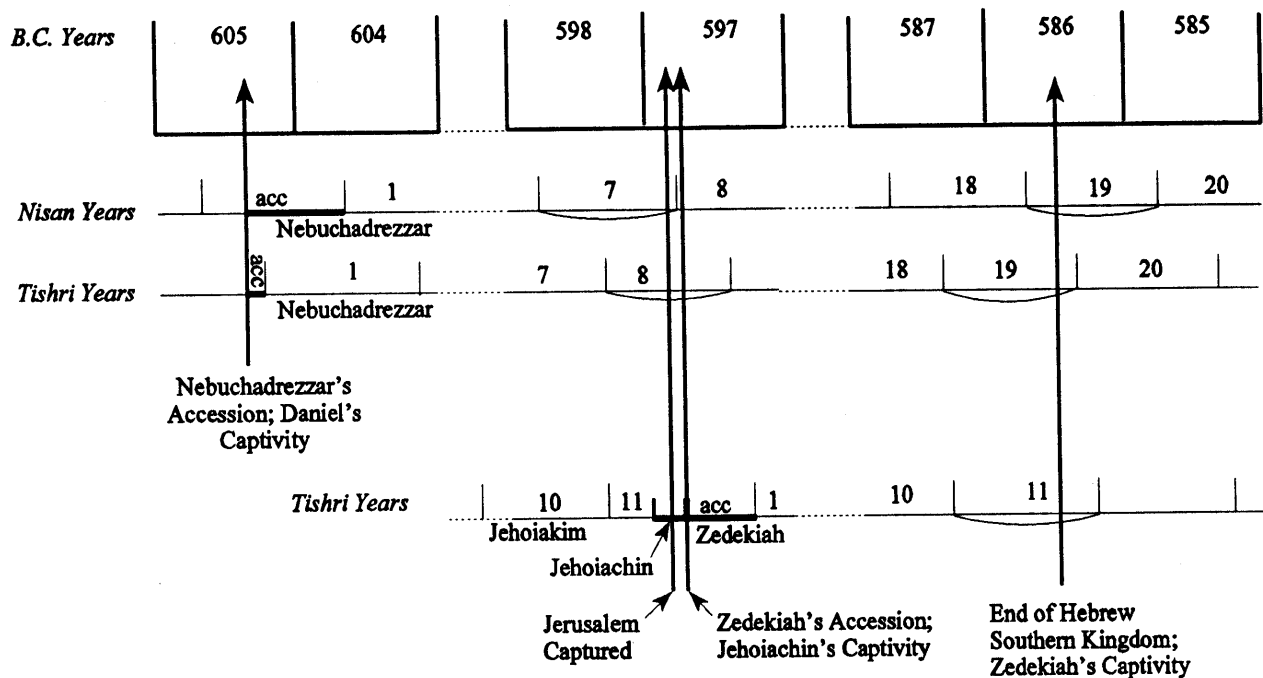


FIGURE 1. THREE BABYLONIAN ASSAULTS ON JERUSALEM

	KAMPHAUSEN	RÜHL	KUGLER	COUCKE	LEWY	BEGRICH	MOWINCKEL	ALBRIGHT
	1883	1894	1922	1925	1927	1929	1931	1932, 1945
The Schism	937	(931)	929	(931)	922	926	(931)	922
Ahab's Death	857	854	854	(853)	847	852	852	850
Jehu's Accession	842	(841)	842	846	(841)	845	843	842
Number of Years	15	13	(12)	7	6	7	9	8
Hoshea's Dethronement	722	721	724	722	724	724	722	724
Zedekiah's Accession	596	596	(597)	598	(597)	(597)	598	598
End of Zedekiah's Reign	(586)	587	587	588	(586)	587	587	587
Number of Years	10	9	10	10	(11)	10	(11)	(11)

*Note:* The source from which this table has been compiled is indicated in n. 56 to the main text. The dates and year totals that agree with Thiele's results are encircled so as to make them quickly visible. It is evident that (1) only a relatively small fraction (23.4%) of the figures match Thiele's, (2) there is no basic agreement among the eight scholars themselves, (3) not even one of them has a preponderance of correct information, and (4) they all have altered biblical data.

This table gives only a very small sampling inasmuch as it is limited almost entirely to dates and year totals of particular interest to the present study (the one exception is the dates given for the schism). The total chronological picture set forth by these eight chronologists displays a similar degree of erroneous and conflicting data.

**FIGURE 2. A SAMPLING OF DATA FROM MODERN CHRONOLOGERS**