

- 1500 immigrants; refusal of majority to leave exile.
- 479-78 Mixed marriages dissolved. Malachi (Ezra) prophecies.
- 466-65 Xerxes dies. Artaxerxes I Longimanous (the Artachashta of Nechemiah). Due to change of government, Ezra loses his power and deterioration sets in. Persecution of Jews under new Governor. Emergence of Samballat in Samaria, Tobia the Ammonite and Geshem the Arab as main antagonists. Enemies burn walls of Jerusalem. Many Jews flee the country. Poverty and corruption reign.
- 446-45 Nechemiah arrives, is appointed Governor by Artaxerxes. Walls of Jerusalem are repaired.
- 445-44 Spiritual restoration of Jewish community. Festive celebration of *Rosh Hashanah* and *Sukkos*. "Covenant of the faith."
- 435-34 Nechemiah leaves for Shushan. Deterioration sets in again.
- 433-32 Nechemiah returns. Dedication of Jerusalem wall. Ezra dies. Nechemiah dies. Biblical Canon closes. End of prophecy. Second period of *Anshei Knesses Hagedolah (Soferim)* begins.
- 410 Jeb Temple in Egypt destroyed.
- 406 Bagoas Governor of Judea. Yochanan high priest. Deliah, son of Samballat, in Samaria.
- 405-04 Ataxerxes II Mnemnon.

- 360-59 Artaxerxes III Ochus.
- 351-50 Final Temple restoration completed by Shimon Hatzaddik. Temple stands for 420 years.
- 339-38 Darius III Codemanus.
- 334-33 Alexander—Battle of Issus.
- 332-31 Alexander welcomed in Jerusalem by Shimon Hatzaddik.
- 334-23 Alexander dies.
- 320-19 Ptolemy (king of the south) conquers Jerusalem.
- 318-17 Beginning of Greek Era for 180 years.
- 316-15 Antigonus (king of the north) conquers Jerusalem.
- 313-312 Jerusalem reconquered by Ptolemy.
- End of hidden years; resume counting AM.**
- 3449 312-11 Battle of Gaza. Conquest of Eretz Yisrael by Selocus Nikator.
The Seleucid Era begins, also called *Minyan Shtaros*. (If we disregard the hidden years, the Seleucid Era begins in the first year after the one thousand after the Exodus.)
- 3594 168-67 Miracle of *Chanukah*.
- 3624 138-37 Commencement of Hasmonean Era (103 years).
- 3727 35-34 Commencement of Herodian Era (103 years).
- 3830 70 CE Destruction of Second Temple.
- 5751 1990-91 Present year.

Epilogue

- 1) All the foregoing is based on an essay which was

printed about thirty years ago in עטרת צבי (Rabbi Dr. Joseph Breuer Jubilee Volume, New York: Feldheim, 1962) and which was revised a few times. The purpose of this attempt was to assist the bewildered Torah-true students of Jewish history sitting on the horns of a dilemma, and to strengthen their *emunah*. Time and again, I was urged to publish this revised edition in order to serve a larger readership. But in the meantime many great doubts have bothered my mind and have made it mandatory for me to share my pangs of conscience with my readers.

a) "History" is either true or false. There is no middle ground. The events described in a history book have either happened or they haven't. The most ingenious theories which may have their place in philosophy or as a working thesis in the exact sciences have no meaning in the pursuit of historical evidence, which is a search for facts and which accepts no conjectures. A chronological time table is the backbone of any book on history which expects to be accepted by intellectually honest students.

b) If our forefathers wanted to hide a certain period in our history, because of a Divine mandate, who has the right to uncover the carefully concealed secret? Even with our best intentions to strengthen the faith of those who doubt the accuracy of our traditional method of counting the years לבריאת העולם, we still were not given the right to remove the veil for any reason. Therefore, I feel like the legendary king of the Khazars who was told a few times in a dream, "סתק רצויה" — אבל מעשיך אינם רצויים — Your intentions are acceptable, but your deeds are not."

c) The "hidden years theory" necessitates the assumption that the construction of the Second Temple lasted for a century and a half which, by the way, would explain the discrepancy between the measurements of the בית שני in *Ezra*

6:13 and those of מסכת מדרות. It would also explain why the אנשי כנסת הגדולה speak in the *Mishnah* (i.e. *Zevachim*, perek 5:1) of קלעים מן הקלעים instead of using the word עודה as in all other places. There were no קלעים (hanging curtains) except in the משכן which was built in the desert. But there may have been קלעים during the very long construction period of the Second Temple, which was not completed and upgraded to its proper size until the time of Shimon Hatzaddik, exactly 420 years before its destruction by the Romans. True, there's a reference to this in the book *Ben Sira*, but no clear evidence. Therefore, the assumption of such a minor בית שני, for 186 years, is totally unproven.

d) Josephus, who was not a faithful Torah Jew, and who lived only about 400 years after Alexander the Great, makes no mention of a large interval between Ezra and the Greek period. He would not have kept quiet had he known about that from the gentiles.

e) One letter-writer suggested to me that most ancient documents are so unclear, confusing and self-contradicting that we do not have to take the conclusion of modern historians seriously. In this, case no real conflict exists.

Another correspondent called my attention to the writings of Rav Saadiah Gaon in אמנות הדעת, Chapter 9, where he states that a certain "nation" has inserted over one hundred years and 17 additional kings in their history books, in order to place the founder of Christianity into a fitting historical context.

f) A very knowledgeable friend has called my attention to חשבון המולדות, the exact reckoning of the new moon, which we follow today, which could not be reconciled with the addition of 168 "missing" years. The computer shows that the מולד would be off by 1 1/2 days, by which time the moon is already visible.

The מאמרי חז"ל which deal with the *molad* at the time of creation, the so-called מולד תורה, would not tally if an additional 168 years are added. (Concerning the various methods of calculating the *molad*, see Rambam, *Kiddush Hachodesh* 6:8 and commentaries; *ibid*; *Torah Sheleimah* Vol. 11, chap.8, par. 110, also פתחי תשובה, אה"ז קכ"ז ס"ק"י מה שמביא בשם ספר גט פשוט).

The counter-argument is that our system of figuring out the *molad* dates back only to the time after Daniel, and our Sages went to great lengths to hide the true השבון by constructing a method which we follow today. Subsequently, the מולד תורה is figured out retroactively.

g) We are now counting the year 5751, and if we add 168 years, the real date for this year would be 5919, which leaves only 81 years till the end of the 6th millennium. This is most frightening, especially for all those born not so long ago, or those to be born in the near future, who would become the living witnesses of the "end of days." They will see with their own eyes whether the statement (*Rosh Hashanah* 31a, *Avodah Zarah* 9a, *Sanhedrin* 97) that "the world will exist only for six thousand years and then be destroyed" is meant to be taken literally, or has a different interpretation, as do many *Aggadic* pronouncements.

I am writing all this with awe and trepidation. On the other hand, if the "hidden years" never were, then mankind still has 250 years before the coming of the "end."

h) It is because of all these gnawing doubts that I have decided to put a big question mark after the words "Jewish Chronology." Let somebody with greater knowledge come and pick up the threads where I left off. Our traditional, universally accepted Jewish way of counting the years לבריאת העולם is sacred territory which only fools do not fear to tread upon.

This may be a disappointment to some, but on the other hand I muster the courage to belong to those who rather wish

to be honest to themselves than to be "right." I would rather leave a good question open than risk giving a wrong answer. And I follow the teachings of Rav Shimon (*Pesachim* 52b) who said, כשם שקבלתי שטר על הדישה כן אקבל שטר על הפרישה—Just as I was awarded for the research, so shall I be awarded for the retraction."

The historic material which I have assembled may still be somehow useful, even for those who will doubt whether there can ever be a Jewish chronology which would satisfy the non-believer in the wisdom of our Sages. So I fall back into the ranks of all שלומי אמוני ישראל. And to me "לבריאת העולם" means what it meant to our fathers. It is as simple as that. And while we may keep on searching for the answers, we pray that Hashem may enlighten our eyes.

זה יאיר עיני כל המזכירים לא אלהי קדוה במהרה בימינו אמן.