# CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES FROM THE SECOND TEMPLE PERIOD

## 2 - THE MISSING 168 YEARS

**בית כנסת הנשיא**

### A] TRADITIONAL JEWISH CHRONOLOGY - SEDER OLAM (S.O.)

1. כִּי־כֹה֚ אָמַ֣ר ה' כִּ֥י לְפִֽי־מְלֹ֖את לְבָבֶ֣ל **שִׁבְעִ֑ים שָׁנָ֗ה אֶפְקֹ֤ד אֶתְכֶם֙** וַהֲקִמֹתִ֣י עֲלֵיכֶ֔ם אֶת־דְּבָרִ֖י הַטּ֣וֹב לְהָשִׁ֔יב אֶתְכֶ֖ם אֶל־הַמָּקֹ֥ום הַזֶּֽה

**ירמיהו כט:י**

2. בִּשְׁנַ֤ת אַחַת֙ לְדָרְיָ֣וֶשׁ בֶּן־אֲחַשְׁוֵרֹ֔וש מִזֶּ֖רַע מָדָ֑י אֲשֶׁ֥ר הָמְלַ֖ךְ עַל־מַלְכ֥וּת כַּשְׂדִּֽים׃ בִּשְׁנַ֤ת אַחַת֙ לְמָלְכֹ֔ו אֲנִ֥י דָנִיֵּ֖אל בִּינֹ֣תִי בַּסְּפָרִ֑ים מִסְפַּ֣ר הַשָּׁנִ֗ים אֲשֶׁ֨ר הָיָ֤ה דְבַר־ה' אֶל־יִרְמְיָ֣ה הַנָּבִ֔יא לְמַלֹּ֖אות לְחָרְבֹ֣ות יְרוּשָׁלַ֑ם שִׁבְעִ֖ים שָׁנָֽה

**דניאל ט:א-ב**

3. וַיַּ֥עַן מַלְאַךְ־ה' וַיֹּאמַ֕ר ה' צְבָאֹ֖ות עַד־מָתַ֣י אַתָּ֔ה לֹ֥א־תְרַחֵ֖ם אֶת־יְרוּשָׁלַ֑ם וְאֶת עָרֵ֣י יְהוּדָ֔ה אֲשֶׁ֥ר זָעַ֖מְתָּה **זֶ֥ה שִׁבְעִ֖ים שָׁנָֽה**

**זכריה א:יב**

4. (ו) הַ֣וּא עֶזְרָ֣א עָלָ֔ה מִבָּבֶ֖ל וְה֣וּא־סֹפֵ֑ר מָהִ֗יר בְּתֹורַ֤ת מֹשֶׁה֙ אֲשֶׁר־נָתַ֣ן ה' אֱלֹהֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל וַיִּתֶּן־לֹ֥ו הַמֶּ֖לֶךְ כְּיַד־ה' אֱלֹהָ֥יו עָלָ֖יו כֹּ֥ל בַּקָּשָׁתֹֽו׃ פ (ז) וַיַּֽעֲל֡וּ מִבְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל֩ וּמִן־הַכֹּהֲנִ֨ים וְהַלְוִיִּ֜ם וְהַמְשֹׁרְרִ֣ים וְהַשֹּׁעֲרִ֗ים וְהַנְתִינִים֙ אֶל־יְרוּשָׁלִַ֔ם **בִּשְׁנַ֥ת־שֶׁ֖בַע לְאַרְתַּחְשַׁסְתְּ֣א הַמֶּֽלֶךְ**׃ (ח) וַיָּבֹ֥א יְרוּשָׁלַ֖ם בַּחֹ֣דֶשׁ הַחֲמִישִׁ֑י הִ֖יא שְׁנַ֥ת הַשְּׁבִיעִ֖ית לַמֶּֽלֶךְ׃

**עזרא ז:ו-ח**

5. בֵּאדַ֨יִן בְּטֵלַ֜ת עֲבִידַ֣ת בֵּית־אֱלָהָ֗א דִּ֚י בִּירוּשְׁלֶ֔ם וַהֲוָ֖ת בָּטְלָ֣א **עַד֙ שְׁנַ֣ת תַּרְתֵּ֔ין לְמַלְכ֖וּת דָּרְיָ֥וֶשׁ מֶֽלֶךְ־פָּרֶֽס**

**עזרא ד:כד**

6. (ב) וְעַתָּ֕ה אֶמֶ֖ת אַגִּ֣יד לָ֑ךְ הִנֵּה־עֹ֗וד שְׁלֹשָׁ֤ה מְלָכִים֙ עֹמְדִ֣ים לְפָרַ֔ס וְהָרְבִיעִ֖י יַעֲשִׁ֣יר עֹ֑שֶׁר־גָּדֹ֗ול מִכֹּ֤ל וּכְחָזְקָתֹו֙ בְּעָשְׁרֹ֔ו יָעִ֕יר הַכֹּ֖ל אֵ֥ת מַלְכ֥וּת יָוָֽן׃ (ג) וְעָמַ֖ד מֶ֣לֶךְ גִּבֹּ֑ור וּמָשַׁ֖ל מִמְשָׁ֥ל רַ֛ב וְעָשָׂ֖ה כִּרְצֹונֹֽו

**דניאל יא:ב-ג**

7. **(ב) הנה עוד שלשה מלכים וגו'** - רז"ל אמרו בסדר עולם זה כורש ואחשורוש ודריוש שבנה הבית ומה ת"ל רביעי? רביעי למדי .... **(ג) ועמד מלך גבור** - זיון הוא אלכסנדרוס מוקדון

**רש"י שם**

8. ..... הרי הוא אומר *כי לפי מלאת לבבל שבעים שנה* (ירמיה כט:י) *למלאות לחרבות ירושלם שבעים שנה* (דניאל ט:ב). חמשים ושתים שנה לאחר חרבן הבית עשו ישראל במלכות כשדים ונפקדו ועלו. **ג' של כורש וי"ד של אחשורוש ושתים של דריוש** ובשנת ג' לדריוש נבנה הבית. וכן זכריה אמר *ויען מלאך ה' ויאמר ה' צבאות עד מתי אתה לא תרחם את ירושלם וגו' אשר זעמתה זה שבעים שנה* (זכריה א:יב). כל ארבע שנים היה הבית נבנה .... ובאותו הזמן לשנה הבאה עלה עזרא מבבל וגלות אחרת עמו, שנאמר *הוא עזרא עלה מבבל וגו' ויעלו מבני ישראל וגו' אל ירושלם בשנת שבע לארתחשסתא המלך*... ובא והבדיל את ישראל מן הנשים הנכריות

**סדר עלום רבה פרק כט**

9. ימי אוהל מועד שבמדבר ארבעים חסר אחת, ושבגלגל ארבע עשרי שנה, ושבשילה שלש מאות ושבעים חסר אחת, ושבנוב ובגבעון חמשים ושבע. בבית עולמים ארבע מאות ועשר לבנינו הראשון, ארבע מאות ועשרים לבנינו האחרון

**תוספתא מסכת זבחים (צוקרמאנדל) פרק יג:הלכה ו**

- From the defeat of Bavel by Persia to the Greek period = 52 years
- These 52 years span 3 Persian +1 Medean king
- Second Temple was built in 351 BCE and destroyed in 69 CE = 420 years
- Second Temple period of 420 years = 34 Persian + 386 Greek/Hasmonean/Roman
- This year is 5776

## B] ACADEMIC CONVENTIONAL CHRONOLOGY (C.C.)

- From the defeat of Bavel by Persia to the Greek period = 207 years
- These 207 years span 10 Persian kings
- Second Temple was built in 520 BCE and destroyed in 69 CE = 589 years
- Second Temple period of 589 years = 188 Persian and 401 Greek/Hasmonean/Roman
- Is this year is 5944?

## C] RESOLUTION 1 - S.O. IS CORRECT AND C.C. IS INCORRECT

- Mesorah of Chazal - confidence in Talmudic tradition
- Relevance to Jewish calendar - חשבון המולד
- Irrelevance of scientific data - unreliable? unimportant? awareness of data?
- Could the CC have been purposely adjusted?

10. שנות בית שני בטוח מדברי חז"ל ..... ועל האדם לגרש מקרבו הרהורים בדבר ואשרי מי שלא קרא בספרים החיצונים

**חזון איש, קובץ אגרות א:רו**

C1] RAV SAADIA GAON - CHRISTIAN MANIPULATION

11. I have found, then, that the advocates [of the Christian doctrine] had no other means [of supporting their theory] except the contention that an addition is to be made in the chronological calculation. They maintain, namely, that the government of the Persians over Palestine existed for a period of something like 300 years before that of the Greeks and that the number of their kings during this period was seventeen. However, I have refuted this contention on their part from the text of the book of Daniel itself, [pointing out] that it was impossible that between the time of the government of Babylon and that of the Greeks more than four Persian kings should have ruled over Palestine. .....

These are, then, the arguments that may be offered in refutation of the doctrine of the Christians, aside from the objections to be raised against their theory of the suspension of the laws of the Torah and those that might be urged against them on the subject of the Unity of God, and other matters, which cannot properly be presented in this book. The eight treatise has hereby been complete

**Emunot V'Deot, Chapter 9 'Treatise of Redemption' (pg 322 Yale English Edition)**

12. (כד) שָׁבֻעִים שִׁבְעִים נֶחְתַּךְ עַל־עַמְּךָ וְעַל־עִיר קָדְשֶׁךָ לְכַלֵּא הַפֶּשַׁע וּלְהָתֵם חַטָּאת וּלְכַפֵּר עָוֹן וּלְהָבִיא צֶדֶק עוֹלָמִים וְלַחְתֹּם חָזוֹן וְנָבִיא וְלִמְשֹׁחַ קֹדֶשׁ קָדָשִׁים׃ (כה) וְתֵדַע וְתַשְׂכֵּל מִן־מֹצָא דָבָר לְהָשִׁיב וְלִבְנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם עַד־מָשִׁיחַ נָגִיד שָׁבֻעִים שִׁבְעָה וְשָׁבֻעִים שִׁשִּׁים וּשְׁנַיִם תָּשׁוּב וְנִבְנְתָה רְחוֹב וְחָרוּץ וּבְצוֹק הָעִתִּים׃ (כו) וְאַחֲרֵי הַשָּׁבֻעִים שִׁשִּׁים וּשְׁנַיִם יִכָּרֵת מָשִׁיחַ וְאֵין לוֹ וְהָעִיר וְהַקֹּדֶשׁ יַשְׁחִית עַם נָגִיד הַבָּא וְקִצּוֹ בַּשֶּׁטֶף וְעַד קֵץ מִלְחָמָה נֶחֱרֶצֶת שֹׁמֵמוֹת׃ (כז) וְהִגְבִּיר בְּרִית לָרַבִּים שָׁבוּעַ אֶחָד וַחֲצִי הַשָּׁבוּעַ יַשְׁבִּית זֶבַח וּמִנְחָה וְעַל כְּנַף שִׁקּוּצִים מְשֹׁמֵם וְעַד־כָּלָה וְנֶחֱרָצָה תִּתַּךְ עַל־שֹׁמֵם׃ פ

**דניאל ט כד-כז**

*Daniel's prophecy here is based on 70 sets of 7. This is the foundation of the 490 years from the destruction of the First Temple to the destruction of the Second Temple. According to the Gemara (in the uncensored versions!) Yeshu HaNotzri was the student of Yehoshua b. Perachia, who lived around 150 years before the conventional Christian chronology. Rav Saadia suggests that the calendar was manipulated to bring the Christian narrative in line with the 490 year prophecy of Daniel.*

C2] RABBI ALEXANDER HOOL - GREEK MANIPULATION

*Rabbi Hool, in an extremely detailed new book on the issues, argues from hundreds of academic sources that in fact much of the Persian period ran at the SAME TIME as the early Greek period. Thus the two time-scales run concurrently. Conventional Chronology has Alexander the Great defeating Darius III and ending the Persian Empire. In fact, Rabbi Hool argues that Alexander defeated Darius I and the Persian Empire limped on for many years after that. Thus many of the Persian kings referred to in the conventional records are far later than most people think. He claims that the Greek establishment manipulated the records to show the total destruction of Persia, perhaps for political reasons or with a religious agenda in order to discredit the prophecies of Daniel which also talk about the end of the Greek empire. It is generally accepted that records were subject to manipulation in the ancient world. Rabbi Hool's suggestions are however speculative, but his evidence is thorough and it will be interesting to see if his work is subjected to academic analysis*

## D] RESOLUTION 2 - C.C. IS CORRECT AND S.O. IS INCORRECT

13. **(ב) הנה עוד שלשה מלכים וגו'** – רז"ל אמרו בסדר עולם זה כורש ואחשורוש ודריוש שבנה הבית ומה ת"ל רביעי רביעי? אבל בספר יוסף בן גוריון כתוב שהיה לו בן לכורש שמלך תחתיו לפני מלוך אחשורוש ושמו בשבשר

**רש"י שם**

- Other possible ways of reading S.O. - midrashic?
- Textual variations of S.O.?
- Is it relevant to the halachic Jewish calendar?
- The scientific data for C.C. is very strong irrefutable and verifiable - Greek and Roman historian, Persian cuneiform, astronomic data
- Did Chazal have access to data?
- Other opinions in Chazal which do not follow S.O. (nor C.C.)
- Orthodox thinkers - Rishonim and Acharonim - who have not followed S.O. [1]

## E] RESOLUTION 3 - C.C. IS CORRECT AND S.O. WAS CONSCIOUSLY ADJUSTED

E1] RABBI SHIMON SCHWAB - MESSIANIC MANIPULATIONS

*See attached sheets. Rabbi Schwab suggests that the 168 years were consciously removed from the Jewish calendar in order to obscure the date for the coming of Mashiach*

14. וְאַתָּה דָּנִיֵּאל סְתָם הַדְּבָרִים וַחֲתֹם הַסֵּפֶר עַד־עֵת קֵץ יִשֹּׁטְטוּ רַבִּים וְתִרְבֶּה הַדָּעַת

**דניאל יב:ד**

E2] EPSTEIN/DICKMAN/WILAMOWSKY - 2000 YEARS OF TORAH

*In this article, the authors suggest that the SO chronology was adjusted to ensure that the '2000 years of Torah' would come to an end at the formation of the Mishna*

15. תנא דבי אליהו: ששת אלפים שנה הוי עלמא, שני אלפים תוהו, שני אלפים תורה, שני אלפים ימות המשיח

**סנהדרין צז:**

16. ואח"כ פסקה תורה מא"י כי אחר זמן זה לא מצינו עוד ישיבות גדולות שם. ונשלם דור תנאים שהיו שונים כמשה מפי הגבורה ונתחדש דור אמוראים שנעשית תורה כשתי תורות. גם מן אז והלאה אזלת יד וגבר ותוקף הגלות - בגוים אין תורה

**הגהות יעב"ץ שם ד"ה שני אלפים תורה**

1. Mitchel First's book (see Further Reading below) gives a comprehensive account of over 100 different Jewish responses on this issue! He lists a number of respected orthodox thinkers who take different positions. These include: (i) some who follow the C.C. without even mentioned S.O., such as R. Hertz in his Chumash, R. Shlomo Riskin, and R. Emmanuel Rackman; (ii) some who quote both systems, without deciding in either direction, such as R. Aryeh Kaplan and R. Ya'akov Meidan; (iii) some who consider that SO is not to be taken literally, such as R. Mordechai Breuer and ; (iv) many who reject C.C. and uphold S.O. It is interesting to note that the Da'at Mikrah Tanach published by Mossad HaRav adopts C.C.

17. והגרחה לפרש הדברים כפשטן כי בחמת חחר שגלו ישרחל גלות גמורה חין בהם תורה, כדכתיב *מלכה ושריה בגויס חין תורה*. מ"מ קע"ג שניס חחר בית שני מקרי עדיין מיכת שנת תורה כי חז היו דור התנחיס ועדיין לח נתדלדלו היסיבות עד חחר שמת רבי וגבר הגלות ורבו הלרות וכלו ימי תורה. ומשם ואילך מתוך הגלות והלרות בכל חותו זמן רחוי לבח משיח וימי חבלי משיח מיקרי

**ח'א מהרש'א שם ד"ה ב' אלפים תורה**

18. We suggest that the Chachamim were concerned about the acceptance of the Mishnah. To ensure its unequivocal adoption, they wanted the completion of the Mishnah to occur approximately 2000 years after the start of the Torah period. In this way they were promulgating that the 2000 year interval sandwiched between Avraham at age 52 and the completion of the Mishnah represented the era of Torah, and that the Mishnah punctuated the end of this creative Torah period. It also meant that the *amoraim* who were to follow would not be included in the creative period of Torah. If this meant chronologically shortchanging the time of the Second Temple, so be it. The author of the chronology .... was Rebbe Yosi bar Chalafta, Rebbe's teacher. The idea for the Mishnah did not start with Rebbe, but rather came to complete fruition with him.

*A Y2K Solution to the Chronology Problem,* Epstein, Dickman and Wilamovsky - Hakira Journal Vol 3 p.80

## E3] RABBI MENACHEM LEIBTAG - ADJUSTMENT TO CONNECT JEWISH YEARS WITH MINYAN SHTAROT

*Rabbi Liebtag suggests that Seder Olam adjusted the Jewish chronology so that, the Minyan Shtarot count would be exactly 1000 years after Yetziat Mitzrayim. That way, when the Jews used the Greek count, they would effectively also be counting from the Exodus (plus 1000 years)*

19. In the last two weeks we presented Seder Olam Rabbah and its chronology. We showed how its approach to texts and history reveals a consistent methodology, if it does not match conventional dating. With all that we mentioned above, there still must be a reason why Seder Olam skipped so much. While it is a minimalist work, there still should be justification for this course of action. Several suggestions are given, and we will present two that seem to be the most compelling. .....

The first answer has to do with Minyan Shetarot, also known as the Seleucid era or the *Anno Graecorum* ("Greek year"). This is the dating system that Jews accepted in the latter half of the Second Temple period. This count began in what we today refer to as 312 BCE. During this year was fought the Battle of Gaza, leading to Seleucus's successful conquering of Babylonia. The Greeks decided that this year would be "Year One." Along with the Seleucid Empire and other Hellenistic civilizations, the Jews adopted the system. Throughout the Talmud there is evidence of documents being dated with respect to this year.

At first glance the year 312 BCE is not especially significant for Jewish history. The Vilna Gaon points out, though, that as per the Seder Olam calculation, 313 BCE (the effective "Year Zero") is found to be exactly 1,000 years after Yetziat Mitzrayim (2448)! Because of Seder Olam, the Seleucid year was effectively sanctified. A document dated with this count to the 45th year, for example, suddenly became synonymous with 1,045 years since Yetziat Mitzrayim. Support for this can be found in the line at the end of Seder Olam, 'UVeGolah Kotevin BiShtarot LeMinyan Yevanim Alfa' - 'and in the exile they write on Shetarot of the Greek count (Minyan Shetarot) - One Thousand'

**http://sabbahillel.blogspot.co.il/2015/05/rabbi-leibtag-shiurim-hebrew-calendar.html**[2]

## E4] RABBI MENACHEM LEIBTAG - ADJUSTMENT TO HIDE THE FAILURE OF JEWS TO RETURN TO ZION

20. Another apparent justification for Seder Olam's skipping over 165 years is the assumption that years without Jewish progress, particularly in the context of the second Beit HaMikdash, are effectively removed from Jewish history, as they are not worthy to have existed. This notion can explain the three sets of years which we have shown to be skipped over by Seder Olam. .....

Moving slightly forward in history, modern history reveals that the Purim story probably took place after the Second Beit HaMikdash was already built ..... Rather than leaving the exile even after the Beit HaMikdash's construction, Jews were living and thriving in Shushan HaBirah. The Pasuk 'Ish Yehudi Hayah BeShushan HaBirah UShemo Mordechai' - 'There was a certain Jew in Shushan the capital, whose name was Mordechai' (Esther 2:5), should be read with shock rather than with pride! Mordechai is a leader in Persian politics when his nation has the ability to return to Israel. Even his name is derived from the Persian deity Marduk.

..... By moving Achashveirosh from after Daryavesh to before Daryavesh (see previous installments to understand how this was possible), the years of Jewish history when the Jews failed to return to Israel were effectively erased from the count.

Even well after the Mikdash was built, though, Jewish history failed to significantly progress toward the Divine goal. The Mikdash is completed in Year 6 of Daryavesh (Ezra 6:15), after which Jewish life was weak and leaderless for several decades until Ezra's ascent in Year 7 of Artachshasta (Ezra 7:7).

2. Note that this is a version of Rabbi Leibtag's shiur written up by students. The specific wording is not approved by Rabbi Leibtag's and thus may not fully reflect his intentions

For thematic reasons, the book of Ezra closes the gap on these years in which there was no progress. Seder Olam takes the next step and makes it that these years never existed. Seder Olam puts these two dates immediately next to each other, thus skipping nearly 60 years of history. Again, the purpose of this skip was to demonstrate that years in which Jewish history stalemated are not worthy to have existed. According to Seder Olam, they effectively did not.

Seder Olam's goal may not be primarily to give a comprehensive and precise history of all time, but rather to use history as a tool for teaching. The book assumes that its readers were aware of history. Likely, they knew when exactly the Purim story happened. Given this, it does not need to match up with secular dating. On the contrary, its adjusting of chronology not only remains loyal to the literal sense of the canonized texts, it also yields two tremendous benefits – making Yetziat Mitzrayim be the point of reference for all Jewish dating, and (on a more subtle level) teaching an important lesson about Ge'ulah and the goals of the Jewish future, what needs to happen next.

**ibid**

21. **משנה ג**: אנטיגנוס איש סוכו קבל משמעון הצדיק. הוא היה אומר ..... **משנה ד**: יוסי בן יועזר איש צרדה ויוסי בן יוחנן איש ירושלים קבלו מהם[3] .....

**משנה מסכת אבות פרק א**

## F] FINAL THOUGHTS ON AGENDAS

22. A peculiar problem arises regarding the dating of events in this early part of Jewish history. Baldly put, it is very difficult to reconcile the generally accepted systems of historical dating - and therefore the times of certain events within the system - with the traditional Jewish system of dating those very events. .....

I have nothing new to add to the debate regarding this problem. I accept the traditional Jewish system of dating the events of this period, and thus in this book, the First Temple's destruction is dated not 516 BCE but 423 BCE .... It is the combination of my faith in the collective memory of the Jewish people and the convenience of following such a dating system that has led me to adopt this time sequence system in this book.

There is actually a major philosophical undercurrent involved in this matter. In my opinion, this conflict regarding the historical dating of the beginning of the Second Commonwealth is representative of a deeper issue of faith which lies at the core of differing perspectives of Jewish history. ..... History, unlike mathematics and other exact sciences, always contains a bit of error, bias, misinformation, disinformation and selective reporting. Yet somehow there always emerges from this inexact subject called history a clear and informative pattern of civilizations rising and falling, of shifting circumstances of life and events, of changing directions and value systems. The existence of some discrepancies or conflicting evidence, therefore, is a 'problem', but it does not refute the entire structure. So too in the traditional Jewish chronology.

... Nevertheless, almost with a perverse glee, secular Jewish historians, and many non-Jewish historians, upon encountering problems such as this 166-year Second Commonwealth discrepancy, have rejected as inauthentic and inaccurate the entire traditional and Talmudic-oriented view of Jewish history.

One's view of Jewish history depends upon one's own personal agenda of life. Therefore, people of faith and belief, who view the Jewish story in its miraculous totality, will walk upon the paths of the Lord, and will be able to live with the apparent inconsistencies, inexact recollections and the possibility of particular factual errors which, nonetheless, in no way change the overall story of God and Israel. But Jews fleeing from their heritage, frightened of their past and unsure of the future, rejecting the notion of Providence in the affairs of humans, will naturally fall and trip upon discovering any inexactitude and discrepancy in traditional sources. The great Yiddish aphorism about life in general is that 'noone dies because of a contradiction'. If only this would be the attitude toward Jewish history as well.

**Rabbi Berel Wein, Echoes of Glory pp(x-xi)**

## G] FURTHER READING

- *Jewish History in Conflict*, Mitchel First, 1997
- *The Challenge of Jewish History,* Alexander Hool, 2015
- *A Y2K Solution to the Chronology Problem,* Epstein, Dickman and Wilomovsky - Hakira Journal Vol 3 p.67[4]
- *Universal Jewish History,* Philip Biberfeld, 1948
- *Comparative Jewish Chronology*, Rabbi Shimon Schwab, Ateret Tzvi Jubilee Volume in honor of Rabbi Joseph Breuer (Feldheim 1962) p177 and Epilogue in *Selected Speeches p281*
- *Fixing the History Books,* Dr Chaim S Heifetz[5]

3. Rav Dovid Tzvi Hoffman saw this as a possible hint to the missing years
4. Available for download at - http://www.hakirah.org/Vol%203%20Epstein.pdf
5. Available at http://www.simpletoremember.com/other/History166.htm

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| First Temple begun | " | 2928 |
| First Temple destroyed | " | 3338 |
| Second Temple dedicated | " | 3408 |

In the course of our further deliberations we should be able to follow this last method without encountering any difficulty.

3. There can be no doubt as to the objective historical truth of marking the secular year 70 CE as the year of the destruction of the Second Temple. The circumstances surrounding the *churban* are illuminated by the clear evidence of Roman history. No serious scholar will therefore doubt the correctness of the chronological equation whereby the Jewish year 3830 *Aera Mundi* (AM) corresponds to the year 70 CE and, consequently, our present Jewish year 5722 AM to the secular year 1962 CE.

Since, according to our Talmudic tradition, the Second Temple stood for only 420 years,[2] we must of necessity assume—reckoning backward in time—that the Second Temple was consecrated in the year 352-351 BCE and that the Babylonian Captivity began immediately after the destruction of the First Temple in 422-421 BCE.

In this manner we should now be able to equate the Jewish and non-Jewish data and arrive at the following conclusion (למודי בהר"ד):

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Year of Creation | 1 AM | 3760 BCE |
| Flood | 1658 AM | 2103 BCE |
| Birth of Isaac | 2050 AM | 1711 BCE |
| Exodus from Egypt | 2450 AM | 1311 BCE |
| First Temple begun | 2930 AM | 831 BCE |
| First Temple destroyed | 3340 AM | 421 BCE |
| Second Temple consecrated | 3410 AM | 351 BCE |
| Second Temple destroyed | 3830 AM | 70 CE |
| Present Year | 5722 AM | 1962 CE |

4. The Torah-true historian is now confronted with a truly

[2] The 420 years of the Second Temple are calculated by our Sages in *Abodah Zarah*, 9a, 10b, based on *Seder Olam*, as follows:
34 years for the remainder of the Persian Era
180 years for the Greek Era
103 years for the Hasmonean Era
103 years for the Herodian Era





vexing problem. Ancient history of the Babylonian and Persian Empires presents us with completely different data. These figures can hardly be doubted for they appear to be the result of painstaking research by hundreds of scholars and are borne out by profound erudition and by ever-increasing authoritative evidence. Sometimes small discrepancies of a year or two at the most have yet to be accounted for, but complete agreement seems to be almost within reach at the present time. Here is a short list of universally accepted chronological data:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Nebuchadnezzar destroys Jerusalem and First Temple | 587 | BCE |
| Cyrus conquers Babylonia | 539 | BCE |
| Reign of Cyrus | 539-530 | BCE |
| Cambyses | 530-523 | BCE |
| Darius I | 522-486 | BCE |
| Xerxes I | 486-465 | BCE |
| Artaxerxes I | 465-425 | BCE |
| Xerxes II | 425 | BCE |
| Darius II | 424-404 | BCE |
| Artaxerxes II | 404-359 | BCE |
| Artaxerxes III | 358-338 | BCE |
| Darius III | 336-331 | BCE |
| Alexander the Great conquers Persia | 334 | BCE |
| Alexander the Great dies | 323 | BCE |

Since, according to *Ezra* 6:15, the Second Temple was completed in the sixth year of Darius I, the date, following the secular chronology, must have been 517 BCE; i.e. exactly 70 years after the date (again, established by secular historians) for the destruction of the First Temple (587 BCE). Consequently, the first year of the era of the Second Temple was 517 BCE and *not 351* BCE. As long as we cannot doubt the date given for the destruction of the Second Temple (70 CE) we are compelled to admit that the בית שני must have existed for *no less than 586 years* instead of the 420 years given by tradition. This amounts to a *discrepancy of over 165 years* compared with our Jewish way of reckoning!

5. Furthermore, there are *at least nine* Persian kings beginning with Cyrus (seven of these reigned subsequent to the consecration of the Temple) until the beginning of the Greek Era, during a





period of well over 200 years. Compare with these figures the statements of Seder Olam and of Talmudic-Rabbinic literature (*Seder Olam* XXX, *Rosh Hashanah* 3b) which know of only *four* Median-Persian kings ruling over a period of not more than *52 years*, of which only *34 years* belong to the period *subsequent* to the building of the Second Temple.

6. The gravity of this intellectual dilemma posed by such enormous discrepancies must not be underestimated. The unsuspecting students—including the pupils of our Yeshivoth and Beth Jacob High Schools—are faced with a puzzle that appears insoluble. How could it have been that our forebears had no knowledge of a period in history, otherwise widely known and amply documented, which lasted over a span of 165 years and which was less than 600 years removed in time from the days of the Sages who recorded our traditional chronology in Seder Olam? Is it really possible to assume that some form of historical amnesia had been allowed to take possession of the collective memory of an entire people? This should be quite like assuming that some group of recognized historians of today would publish a textbook on medieval history, ignoring all the records of, say, the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries of the Common Era. Would this not seem inconceivable even for those who, unfortunately, do not possess the necessary אמונת חכמים to accept the word of our Sages?

7. This enormous discrepancy between sacred tradition and secular data would appear at first glance to frustrate any and all hope that it might be possible to compile a comparative chronology acceptable to Orthodox Jewry and secular historians alike. To faithful believers in the veracity of our most sacred literature, both Biblical and Rabbinic, there seems to be left only the following two alternatives between which to choose:

*One:* Faithfully to put our trust in the superior wisdom of our inspired teachers of Torah who have arrived at the absolute truth and, consequently, to reject categorically and absolutely the right of any secular scientist, even the most objective in his field, to contradict our convictions. In this case, it would mean that we would have to declare that those 165 years which our Tradition has ignored are, in fact, *non-existent, and have been conjectured by secular historians out of the clear blue sky*. According to this method





of reasoning, it would follow that all the historical developments reported in connection with the timetable of ancient history referring to that period are not history but fiction and based on misinterpretation and misleading evidence.

*or Two:* We might accept the unanimous opinion of secular historians as coming as close to the objective truth as that is possible, but, make an ingenious attempt to interpret the Biblical data and to treat the traditional Rabbinic chronology as mere Aggadic homily which may lend itself to symbolic or allegorical evaluation.

This dilemma is most unfortunate. For it would appear that the only course to take would be either to "correct" secular ancient history by 165 years which we would then have to call "fictitious," or else to declare that our traditional calendar is based not on historical calculations but on Aggadic pronouncements. Even centuries ago, in his "Me'or Eynayim" (XXXV), Azariah de Rossi, a controversial figure in the annals of our people, criticized the puzzling texts of Seder Olam and of the Talmud, much to the righteous indignation of contemporary and later Rabbinic scholars (Cf. R. David Gans in *Tsemach David* (No. 3448) and R. Jacob Emden to *Seder Olam* XXX).

8. Let us now review briefly some excerpts from the works of more recent orthodox writers and find out for ourselves whether they have dealt satisfactorily with the aforementioned problems of Jewish chronology.

(a) Many of the editions of *Seder Hadoroth* by R. Yehiel Halperin of Minsk have a list of fifteen Persian-Median kings who are identical with those known from non-Jewish sources. At the same time, the author follows Seder Olam and Talmud by registering 34 years only for the entire list of rulers. [Due to the fact that the *Seder Hadoroth* has been edited and re-edited numerous times by unknown revisors, we find ourselves compelled to eliminate *Seder Hadoroth* entirely from our present deliberations until such time as the original text of the work has been clarified.]

(b) W. Javetz, in his *Toledoth Israel*, conveniently omits the discussion of the discrepancy; he skips over most of the Persian kings and considers Darius II Nothus (423-404 BCE) to be identical with "Daryovesh" of Media who is mentioned in the *Book of Daniel*

*Aggadic* or *Midrashic* pronouncement because the latter seems to contain the real meaning, or

(b) They may *accept* the *P'shat* as the proper explanation and interpret the *D'rash* homiletically by searching for a symbolic or "hidden" meaning, or

(c) They may *eliminate the discrepancy* by demonstrating that both *P'shat* and *D'rash* are acceptable simultaneously and are not necessarily mutually exclusive.[9]

Baal Ha-Maor merely *registers* in the passage quoted that there exists a discrepancy between *P'shat* and *D'rash* of this verse. He does not suggest any solution. But he most certainly does not "reject" any of the data of Seder Olam as a "mistake" adopted from ignorant Sassanians.

It seems that our post-Talmudic calendar makers have considered this *D'rash* of the quoted passage as *authentic basis for our chronology* which does not allow for any homiletical treatment.[10]

This brings us back to the confusing problem which is the subject matter of this discussion.

B.

1. There seems to be left, as yet unexplored, only *one* avenue of approach to the vexing problem confronting us. It should have been possible that our Sages—for some unknown reason—had "covered up" a certain historic period and *purposely eliminated and suppressed all records and other material pertaining thereto.* If so, what might have been their compelling reason for so unusual a procedure? Nothing short of a *Divine command* could have prompted our ח"ל, those saintly "men of truth" to leave out completely from our annals a period of 165 years and to correct all

[9] *For methods of Aggadic explanation:*
ע' הקדמה להרמב"ם סדר זרעים ד"ה ענין רביעי
ע' מאמר על האגדות לר' אברהם בן הרמב"ם
ע' מבוא התלמוד לר' שמואל הנגיד ד"ה והנה
ע' קצור כללי התלמוד
ע' שלית חלק תורה שבע"פ כלל ב"ה
ע' מאמר על האגדות לר' משה חיים לוצאטו (מובא בשער הספר עין יעקב)

[10] ע' חזון איש קובץ איגרות סי' ר"ו שכתב באה"ד: שנות בית שני... מדברי חז"ל... וזה אינו ענין לדברי הגדה שעיקרן סוד בחכמת האמת או לקורר את הנפש וכו' ע"ש.





data and historic tables in such a fashion that the subsequent chronological gap could escape being noticed by countless generations, known to a few initiates only who were duty-bound to keep the secret to themselves.

2. In the course of our inquiry, we do indeed find a *Divine command* conveyed by an angel to Daniel to *"seal the words and close the book"* at the end of a long prophesy which begins in Chapter 11:1 and ends at Chapter 12:4 in the *Book of Daniel.* This strange vision predicting historical events concludes with a stern warning: ואתה דניאל סתום הדברים וחתום הספר עד עת קץ וגו'. In writing his divinely inspired book Daniel obeyed the heavenly command which explains the dark and obscure language of ספר דניאל. It also gives us a perfect right to assume that certain historical events, revealed to Daniel *were omitted by him on purpose in faithful obedience to the divine command.* It is equally safe to assume that our Sages, who had obviously a thorough knowledge of the entire history of the Second Commonwealth, correspondingly *eliminated* in all chronological lists and pertinent discussions the same period which Daniel had to "close and seal up."

To prove our point we offer the following:

3. In Pesachim (62b) we hear of a *Book of Genealogies* (ספר היוחסין), which, according to Rashi, was a *Mishnaic* commentary on the *Book of Chronicles.* This book must have contained an enormous wealth of chronological and historical material up to the time of Ezra, who is the main author of דברי הימים (*B.B.* 15a), as well as some תורה טעמי, according to Rashi (*ibid.*). The Talmud informs us that this *important book was hidden!* No reasons are given. Rav is quoted to have observed that: מיום שנגנז ספר יוחסין, "since the day the *Book of Genealogies* was hidden, *'the strength of the wise had been weakened and the light of their eyes dimmed.'*"

Is it now too presumptuous to think that this secret book contained the records of all generations and incidents during the missing 165 years which had to be suppressed in deference to Daniel's strict instructions? It would then become quite obvious why the all-embracing knowledge and the broad vision of our Talmudic sages were somewhat restricted by such a prohibition which resulted in the lack of an important link in our chronological tradition.





3. We are now faced with two questions:

(a) Suppose such a holy conspiracy had existed all along, what would have been its reason? (b) Why should we today be allowed to rend apart the veil of obscurity which was drawn in ancient days, hiding the chronological truth from our people?

We propose the following explanation:

In *Sanhedrin* 97b we find a stern condemnation of all those who conjecture the messianic date from the last chapter of *Daniel.* These mysteries are to remain סתומים ותתומים עד עת קץ, i.e. "closed and sealed until the time of the End." [Surprisingly there were many of our great commentators who made such fruitless attempts.] Had it not been for the fact that important parts of those prophecies have been left out or were purposely obscured, the clues for the messianic date found in *Daniel* might have yielded the desired results. This was rendered impossible by hiding certain data and certain chronological material. Although we do not presume that anyone living today would be capable to caculate anything concerning בריאת ומשית—even after he had been furnished all the missing facts—we still would not assume the right to unveil a mystery which was so carefully hidden by our forbears, *unless the mystery had become unveiled all by itself.* Not by our doing, but by the archeological discoveries made during the last century and a half. The earth has indeed opened its mouth and yielded countless bits of material in the form of decoded and readable clay tablets, inscriptions on rocks and temple-ruins, etc., pertaining to the Persian era. This host of historic information has become common knowledge, unchallenged and universally accepted. There is nothing left for us to uncover מה שכיסה עתיק יומין—which was hidden by the "Ancient of Days." We might, however, attempt to investigate how to take advantage of the already available archaeological evidence which could serve as a guide for the perplexed, in order to avoid an intellectual dilemma.

Whether we have found the key to unlock the mystery remains to be seen. In every case the working-thesis suggested here deserves to be presented to the scrutinizing evaluation of serious scholars, unless it became disqualified by the clear verdict of an authentic Torah authority. Its positive acceptance would mean that our present year 5722 is literally למנין שאנו מונין—*our own way of*





*counting*, but not the real date. The "real" date would be actually 5722 plus 165 years, that is 5887 after the Creation. We would be much closer to the end of the 6th Millennium than we had surmised.

4. In the spirit of the aforesaid, a new light is shed on the strange fact that—soon after Ezra and Nehemia—a *new method* of counting the years was introduced by our Sages, a method which was retained for well over 1200 years by our people. We are referring to the so called Greek Era. In *Seder Olam* 30 we are told that "in the exile" we are to write into our documents the date according to מנין שטרות אלפא. The term *Minyan Sh'taroth* means the "Era of Contracts" and refers to the so-called Seleucid era. This era, also sometimes called מנין יוונים, began on Rosh Hashanah 312-11 BCE after the battle of Gaza and the conquest of the Holy Land by Seleucus Nikator, one of the generals of Alexander the Great. The Seleucid era was in use until the Middle Ages when the familiar term לבריאת עולם was introduced, or re-introduced, by the latter Gaonim, such as R. Sh'rira (cf. *Rambam, H. Gerushin* 1:27). There are numerous *Gittin* still extant which carry the date according to מנין שטרות. We can very well understand the bewilderment of a צדוקי wondering why a non-Jewish date was admitted into the sacred documents (*Yaddaim* 4:8). For indeed מנין שטרות was *not* a Jewish date. It was employed by a majority of nations in the Near East and of the Mediterranean area for countless generations and still is in use in some Eastern groups.

There were several calendar systems based on the Seleucid era:

(a) The Syrians started in the autumn of 312 BCE
(b) The Babylonians began in the spring of 311 BCE
(c) The Persians began in the autumn of 311 BCE, etc. (see a.o. Frank, p. 30). The Talmud (*Abodah Zarah* 10a) mentions the "pedantic scribes" who start 6 years earlier, that means 317 BCE

The Jewish people adopted the first system. This is meant by the strange term אלפא. It just means α, or method I.

Why did ח"ל adopt the generally accepted non-Jewish calendar for all our documents instead of a Jewish system? There seems to be only one satisfactory answer: Because it was part of the scheme to "close up the words and seal the book!" A certain period

of time had to be hidden. This was accomplished effectively indeed by this switch to the Greek date.

5. What happened to the Jewish people during those hidden years? The *Books of Ezra* and *Nehemiah* fill in some of the missing parts. Secular sources (להבריל) like Josephus and the so-called Elephantine Papirus provide a few meager clues. The rest is silence.

The main issue at this juncture is to clarify that once we have established that a historical gap does exist, the stumbling block is removed and a comparative chronology can be outlined.

6. In 3386 AM, this is 540-39 BCE, Cyrus conquered the former Babylonian Empire. He appointed the Governor of Guteum in Media, a certain Gobrias or Gubarru, to rule as acting King for less than one full year over the conquered realm of the Chaldeans. The Persian name of this acting King under which the Jewish people came to know him was "Daryovesh, son of Achashverosh, the Medean." During his brief period of reign, while Cyrus stormed on to conquer his ever-widening empire, Daniel inquired as to the exact meaning of the 70 years which had been predicted by Jeremiah for the Exile. Almost 49 years had passed since the destruction of the First Temple (*Daniel* 9:1). Daniel received the heavenly message that the Galuth is far from over. The "70 years" are not just ordinary years (Verse 24).

Though Cyrus does permit the building of the Temple he revokes his permission a year or two later. Eventually Darius the Great permitted the construction to be continued. [He is sometimes called Darius ben Esther by our people, most probably in the same sense that Joseph was called the "Father of Pharaoh" (*Bereshith* 45, 8). Darius' friendship for the Jews was the direct result of the inspirational influence of Queen Esther who survived Achashverosh= Cambyses, son of Cyrus.

The Temple building is completed in the 6th year of his reign—in 517 BCE which is exactly 70 years after the destruction of the First Temple which had taken place in 587 BCE.[11]

11 Albert T. Olmstead: The Story of the Persian Empire (University of Chicago Press, 1955): "By December 22, 522 Babylon was dating its tablets in the 'year of the beginning of the reign of Darius, King of Babylon, King of the lands' "; i.e. in Nissan 521 began his second year and Nissan 517 marked his 6th year. Dedication of new Temple in Adar, 516.





In his vision Daniel is transported from Babel to *Elam*. He witnesses the bitter attacks of Greece against Persia. The young goat *does not touch the earth*. [On earth Persia is still in power although beaten and defeated by Greece.] Greece grows into a powerful nation. Eventually Alexander the Great establishes his World Empire upon the ruins of the crushed Persian World Empire. Soon Alexander dies and his power is inherited by his four generals who divide the enormous estate amongst themselves. Most probably with reference to this vision חז"ל speak of the "six years of Elam." In the language of Daniel: *the Prince of Javan had already arrived*. On earth nobody knew as yet that the dominion of the world had been given to Greece. Culturally, in the world of science and the arts, Greece had now entered its heroic age. It had begun its triumphal march across the intellectual highways of the ancient world.]

6. It is technically not possible here to sketch within the framework of this essay the studies made by this writer of the *Books of Daniel, Ezra, Nehemia, Hagai* and *Zechariah*, to be published, please God, elsewhere.

However, in order to fill in as much of the gap as possible, only the following shall be briefly mentioned. According to *Baba Bathra* 13a, most of *Sefer Ezra* was really written by Nehemia. It may be safely assumed that Nehemia came *much earlier* than Ezra to Jerusalem. He arrived in 386-85 BCE in the 20th year of Artaxerxes II (404-359 BCE) who is called *"King of Babel"* in *Nehemia* 13-6. Nehemia who repaired the walls of Jerusalem stayed on for 12 years as the Pasha of the Jews. He is forced to return to the services of his royal master. After an absence of ca. 20 years, now serving under the new king Artaxerxes III, he is sent back to Jerusalem to assist Ezra whom he survives . His official title now is Tirshata, meaning: the Royal Representative. In the meantime the following had occurred: Arterxes III after ascending the throne of Persia in 358 BCE had given permission to enlarge and renovate the Temple. The renovation of the Second Temple lasted 6 years. On the festival of Pesach in the year 354 BCE in the sixth year of Artaxerxes III, who, for some reason, is called *"King of Ashur"* (*Ezra* 6:22), the completed restoration of the Temple was celebrated amidst great rejoicing. Permission was granted by the King for another Jewish immigration in the Holy Land (*Ezra* 6:9). One





But in the following year, in 516 BCE, the גלות had not ended. True, the Second Temple had been consecrated; yet, it was only a sanctuary with *limited dimensions* not in accordance with the prescribed measurements (cf. *Ezra* 6:3;only 60 cubics as against the Halacha which requires a height of 100 cubics). Also the walls were inferior (cf. *Rosh Hashono* 4a). Furthermore, there was no permission granted for an additional immigration into Eretz Israel. The year 515 BCE is the first of the "hidden years." During the first period Darius was building his empire. Fighting against the Greek city states he had become defeated at Marathon in 491 BCE. In 486 BCE Xerxes became king. He was utterly defeated by Greece at Salamis. Persia lost all control over Greece in Europe in 479-78 BCE. This year happened to be exactly the year 1000 after the Exodus from Egypt!

After Xerxes had become king the Greeks had organized and had gotten ready for war. They revolted and battled against the Persian supremacy and finaly managed to throw off the Persian yoke by a decisive victory. In the visionary language of the seer, the מלכות יון had now began. Not on earth, not until Alexander the Great would actually conquer Persia in 334 BCE, a century and a half later, but in heaven. Daniel had learned that the "Prince of Yavan" had come to replace the "Prince of Persia." Indeed, culturally, the world dominion of Greece had started.

In *Abodah Zarah* (*ibid.*) the six years of Greek war preparations against Persia, the years of revolt are called: "the six years when Greece ruled in *Elam* before it ruled over the whole world." This may well be explained like this:

In the mysterious world above, as revealed to Daniel (Chapter 8) the following had taken place: ". . . In my vision I was in Shushan, *in the province of Elam* . . . A young goat came from the West over the face of the earth, but it touched not the ground; the young goat had a conspicuous horn between its eyes . . . it bitterly attacked a ram and broke its two horns. The ram had no strength to stand before him, he threw him down to the ground and trampled upon him . . . and the young goat grew very big, when it had become strong then the big horn broke and instead of it there came up the appearance of four horns." This vision is explained in Verse 20:

"The ram . . . the Kings of Medea and Persia, the young goat the King of Greece. . . ."





year later (353 BCE) Ezra haSofer arrived, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes III (*Ezra* 7:1), and—together with Nehemia—in 351 BCE—consecrated the walls of the Holy City (*Nehemia* 12:27). Thus, *the reconstruction of the Beth Hamikdosh is finally fully accomplished.*

At this historic moment, the period of the Second Temple—lasting 420 years—does officially begin, and the *second Commonwealth has been formally ushered in.*

The counting לבריאת עולם which was suspended in 516 BCE can now be resumed in 351 BCE, 165 years later.

We shall now be able to sketch the outlines of a comparative chronological table, incorporating the sacred text of *T'nach*, the authoritative pronouncements of our Sages, at the same time not contradicting the accepted data of general history.

| *Year* AM | *Year* BCE | |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | 3927 | Creation |
| 1 | 3926-25 | Adam—one year old |
| 1656 | 2270-69 | Mabbul |
| 2448 | 1478-77 | Exodus |
| 2488 | 1438-37 | Invasion of Canaan |
| 2928 | 998-97 | First Temple begun |
| 3338 | 588-87 | First Temple destroyed, |
| 3339 | 587-86 | First year of Babylonian Exile |
| 3386 | 540-39 | Cyrus conquers Persia; Daryavesh of Media acting King |
| 3387 | 539-38 | Proclamation of Cyrus; Return under Zerubabel, etc. |
| 3389 | 537-36 | Foundation of new Temple constructed |
| 3390 | 536-35 | Cyrus assumes title of Artachshashta= Emperor; his son Cambys (=Achashverosh) co=regent; Temple construction stopped |
| 3391 | 535-34 | Banquet in Shushan |
| 3395 | 531-30 | Cyrus dies; Cambys sole ruler; Esther queen |
| 3400 | 526-25 | Haman's fall |
| 3401 | 525-24 | Purim; Cambys conquers Egypt |
| 3402 | 524-23 | Cambys killed, revolts in Persia |

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, "כוונתך 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 משכת מדות. It would also explain why the אנשי כנסת הגדולה speak in the *Mishnah* (i.e. *Zevachim*, *perek* 5:1) of לצפים מן הקלעים instead of using the word עזרה 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 אמונות ודעות, 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 the 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 תוהו, 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 פתוחי תשובה, אה"ז קנב"ז סק"י מה שמביא בשם ספר גט מפשוט).

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 חשבון by constructing a method which we follow today. Subsequently, the מולד תוהו 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 שכר על הדרישה כן אקבל שכר 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,

והי יאיר עיניכל המחכים לאולה קרובה במהרה בימינו אמן.