

HALACHIC AND HASHKAFIC ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

117 - THE MISSING 168 YEARS - PART 1 OU ISRAEL CENTER - WINTER 2019

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

A1] EXILE AND REBUILDING

1. כִּי־כֹה־אָמַר ה' כִּי לִלְךָ מִלְּאֵת לְבַבְּךָ שִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה אֶפְקֹד אֶתְכֶם וְהִקְמַתִי עֲלֵיכֶם אֶת־דְּבַר־יְהוָה הַטּוֹב לְהָשִׁיב אֶתְכֶם אֶל־הַמְּקוֹם הַזֶּה

ירמיהו כ"ז

Yirmiyahu prophecies that the exile in Bavel will last 70 years before the people are brought back to Eretz Yisrael.

2. בְּשָׁנַת אַחַת לְדַרְיֹוֹשׁ בֶּן־אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ מִזְרַע מְדֵי אֲשֶׁר הִמְלִיךְ עַל מַלְכוּת כַּשְׂדִּים: בְּשָׁנַת אַחַת לְמַלְכוּתוֹ אֵינִי דֹנִיָּאל בִּיְתוּמִי בְּסַפְרֵי מִסְפָּר הַשָּׁנִים אֲשֶׁר הָיָה דְבַר־ה' אֵלַי־רְמִיָּה הַנְּבִיא לְמַלְאוֹת לְחַרְבוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם שִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה

דניאל ט"ב

Daniel, immersed in the exile in Bavel in the first year of the reign of Darius, son of Achashverosh, also understands from his reading of Nach that the exile should only last 70 years.

3. וַיַּעַן מִלְאָךְ־ה' וַיֹּאמֶר ה' צְבָאוֹת עַד־מָתִי אֶתְּהָ לֹא־תִרְחַם אֶת־יְרוּשָׁלַם וְאֶת עַרְיִי יְהוּדָה אֲשֶׁר זָעַמְתָּה זֶה שִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה

זכריה א"ב

Zecharia is living at the end of the exile and receives a prophecy of the melachim begging God to have mercy on Israel now that the 70 years of exile should be over.

4. (ו) הוּא עֲזָרָא עָלָה מִבְּבֶל וְהוּא־סֹפֵר מִהִיר בְּתוֹרַת מִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר־נָתַן ה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּתְּרוּ־לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּנְדֻחַ' אֲלֵהִיו עֲלָיו כָּל בְּקָשָׁתוֹ: פ (ז) וַיַּעַל מִבְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִן־הַכַּהֲנָיִם וְהַלְוִיִם וְהַמְּשֻׁרְרִים וְהַשְּׂעָרִים וְהַנְּתִינִים אֶל־יְרוּשָׁלַם בְּשָׁנַת־שֶׁבַע לְאַרְתַּחְשַׁשְׁטָרְתָא הַמֶּלֶךְ: (ח) וַיָּבֵא יְרוּשָׁלַם בְּחֹדֶשׁ הַחֲמִישִׁי הִיא שְׁנַת הַשְּׁבִיעִית לְמַלְכוּתוֹ:

עזרא ז"ו

Ezra came up to Eretz Yisrael with the returnees from exile in the 7th year of the King Artachshastra.

5. בְּאִדְוִן בְּטַלְתָּ עֲבִידְתָּ בֵּית־אֱלֹהֵי דֵי בִירוּשָׁלַם וְהוֹתָ בְּטַלָּא עַד שְׁנַת תְּרִיַּס לְמַלְכוּת דְּרִינֹשׁ מֶלֶךְ־פָּרְס

עזרא ד'כ

Chapter 4 of Ezra tells of the opposition to the rebuilding of the Second Beit Mikdash. After pressure from groups within Israel, King Artachshastra stopped the work and the rebuilding project only started again in the 2nd year of Darius.

A2] THE PROPHECY OF THE 5 KINGS

6. (ב) וַעֲתָה אָמַת אֲגִיד לְךָ הַנְּהִי־עוֹד שְׁלֹשָׁה מְלָכִים עֹמְדִים לְפָרֶס וְהָרְבִיעִי יַעֲשִׂיר עֲשָׂר־גְּדוֹל מִכָּל וְכַחֲזָקָתוֹ בְּעָשְׂרוֹ יַעֲרִי הַכָּל אֶת מַלְכוּת נֹון: (ג) וְעֹמֵד מֶלֶךְ גָּבוּר וּמְשַׁל מִמְּשַׁל רַב וְעֹשֶׂה כְּרָצוֹנוֹ

דניאל י"ב

Daniel predicts 3 more kings of Persia and then a 4th who will be richer than the rest and campaign against the kingdom of Greece. Then a final king will arise who has total power and discretion.

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

רש"י שם

Rashi quotes Seder Olam Rabba¹ which names the three Persian kings as Koresh (Cyrus), Achashverosh (Xerxes) and Daryavesh (Darius II). The 'fourth' king is actually also Darius, but counting from the kings of Medea (which include Darius the Mede). The fifth and final king is Alexander the Great.

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

Seder Olam Rabba recounts that the proclamation of Cyrus to rebuild the Mikdash came 52 years after the destruction. There were then 3 years of Koresh, 14 of Achashverosh and 2 of Daryavesh. Then in the 3rd year of Daryavesh the rebuilding was complete, making 70 years². Then 4 years later Ezra came up to Eretz Yisrael and introduced his reforms. But who then was the King Artachshastra mentioned in sefer Ezra?

9. ונקרא דריוש הגדול 'כורש' על שם שקיים דברי כורש מלך ראשון של פרס... ודריוש היה שמו 'ארתחשסתא' על שם המלכות. וארתחשסתא הראשון שביטל את מלאכת בית ה' והוא 'אחשורוש' שכתוב בו בתחלת מלכותו כתבו שטנה על יהודה וירושלים (עזרא ד:ו). ואין בדבר שום ספק כי שלשה מלכים בלבד עמדו לפרס

פסיקתא זוטרתיא (לקח טוב) אסתר הקדמה

Part of the confusion with names arises due to the fact that, according to Chazal, some of the kings of Persia had multiple names. For instance, Darius was also called (perhaps nicknamed) 'Koresh' since he fulfilled the mission of Koresh to have the Mikdash rebuilt. He was also called Artachshastra, since that was the general name for the Persian kings (like Paro for Egypt or Avimelech for the Plishtim). For that reason, Achashverosh was also called 'Artachshastra'. In any event, Chazal insist that there were only 3 Persian kings.

10. 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

The Tosefta lists the length of time that the different Mikdashim were active: Mishkan - 39 years. Gilgal - 14 years. Shilo - 369 years. Nov/Givon - 57 years. First Temple - 410 years. Second Temple - 420 years.

11. והתני רבי יוסי ברבי: מלכות פרס בפני הבית שלשים וארבע שנה, מלכות יון בפני הבית מאה ושמונים שנה, מלכות חשמונאי בפני הבית מאה ושלוש, מלכות בית הורדוס מאה ושלוש. מכאן ואילך צא וחשוב כמה שנים אחר חורבן הבית

עבודה זרה ח:

The 420 years of the Second Temple period were made up of: 34 years under the Persians, 180 years under the Greeks, 103 years under the Chashmonaim, and 103 under the Herodian dynasty (34+180+103+103 = 420). In addition to the 34 years under Persian control after the Temple was built, there were 18 more before the rebuilding, making 52 in total.

- From the defeat of Bavel by Persia to the Greek period = 52 years
- These 52 years span 1 Medean + 3 Persian kings: Darius the Mede, Cyrus, Achashverosh, Darius
- 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 5779

1. Dating from the 2nd Century and attributed to the Tanna R. Yosi ben Chalafta.

2. Some of the years of reigns overlapped.

B] ACADEMIC CONVENTIONAL CHRONOLOGY (C.C.)

- From the defeat of Bavel by Persia to the Greek period = 207 years
- These 207 years span 11 Persian kings: Cyrus³, Cambyses, Darius I (the Great), Xerxes, Artaxerxes I, Xerxes II, Darius II, Artaxerxes II, Artaxerxes III, [Artaxerxes IV (Arses)]⁴, Darius III.
- 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 the year 5947?

<p style="text-align: center;">RABBI SIMON SCHWAB</p> <p>First Temple begun " 2928 First Temple destroyed " 3338 Second Temple dedicated " 3408</p> <p>In the course of our further deliberations we should be able to follow this last method without encountering any difficulty.</p> <p>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 <i>churban</i> 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 <i>Aera Mundi</i> (AM) corresponds to the year 70 CE and, consequently, our present Jewish year 5722 AM to the secular year 1962 CE.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>In this manner we should now be able to equate the Jewish and non-Jewish data and arrive at the following conclusion (למולד בהר"ד):</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 30%;">Year of Creation</td> <td style="width: 20%;">1 AM</td> <td style="width: 50%;">3760 BCE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Flood</td> <td>1658 AM</td> <td>2103 BCE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Birth of Isaac</td> <td>2050 AM</td> <td>1711 BCE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Exodus from Egypt</td> <td>2450 AM</td> <td>1311 BCE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>First Temple begun</td> <td>2930 AM</td> <td>831 BCE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>First Temple destroyed</td> <td>3340 AM</td> <td>421 BCE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Second Temple consecrated</td> <td>3410 AM</td> <td>351 BCE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Second Temple destroyed</td> <td>3830 AM</td> <td>70 CE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Present Year</td> <td>5722 AM</td> <td>1962 CE</td> </tr> </table> <p>4. The Torah-true historian is now confronted with a truly</p> <p>² The 420 years of the Second Temple are calculated by our Sages in <i>Abodah Zarah</i>, 9a, 10b, based on <i>Seder Olam</i>, 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</p>	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	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Comparative Jewish Chronology</i></p> <p>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:</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 80%;">Nebuchadnezzar destroys Jerusalem and First Temple</td> <td style="width: 10%;">587</td> <td style="width: 10%;">BCE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cyrus conquers Babylonia</td> <td>539</td> <td>BCE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Reign of Cyrus</td> <td>539-530</td> <td>BCE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cambyses</td> <td>530-523</td> <td>BCE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Darius I</td> <td>522-486</td> <td>BCE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Xerxes I</td> <td>486-465</td> <td>BCE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Artaxerxes I</td> <td>465-425</td> <td>BCE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Xerxes II</td> <td>425</td> <td>BCE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Darius II</td> <td>424-404</td> <td>BCE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Artaxerxes II</td> <td>404-359</td> <td>BCE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Artaxerxes III</td> <td>358-338</td> <td>BCE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Darius III</td> <td>336-331</td> <td>BCE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Alexander the Great conquers Persia</td> <td>334</td> <td>BCE</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Alexander the Great dies</td> <td>323</td> <td>BCE</td> </tr> </table> <p>Since, according to <i>Ezra</i> 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 <i>not</i> 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 <i>בית שני</i> must have existed for <i>no less than 586 years</i> instead of the 420 years given by tradition. This amounts to a <i>discrepancy of over 165 years</i> compared with our Jewish way of reckoning!</p> <p>5. Furthermore, there are <i>at least nine</i> 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</p>	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
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[180]
[181]



The Cyrus Cylinder

Declaring the end of the Babylonian Empire and allowing subject nations to return to their lands and worship

3. Darius the Mede appears in the Tanach and Chazal but not in academic sources. Rav Schwab suggests that Darius is in fact another name for Koresh the Great.
 4. Sometimes missing from the list.

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

[182]

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*

[183]

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 - is it reliable? is it important? were the classic secular sources fully aware of all the data?
- Could the CC have been purposely adjusted!?

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

חזון איש, קובץ אגרות א-ר

The Chazon Ish rejects the legitimacy of looking at any outside literature on this issue beyond that of Chazal.

14. עוד בספר ימות עולם, התחיל לצאת מן הכלל ולחלוק על כל קבלתינו, על דברים המקובלים לכל חכמי ישראל בגמרא בבבלי וירושלמית ושאר כל המדרשים עד שהדבר הזה כאילו היה דבר מוחש כי בנין בית הראשון ת"י שנה, ובנין בית שני ת"ך שנה. והוא לקח עצמו לצד אחר מחמת סופרי אומות עולם, וקצת ראיות והוכחות מן הכתובים לפי שבוש דעתו, שהיה בית ראשון יותר מן ת"י שנה. וכן בנין בית שני יותר מן ת"ך שנה. ואחר כך הוסיף לומר, כי אפשר כי שני מספר היצירה מה שאנו מונין, והוא מפורסם אצל כל ישראל אשר הם על פני האדמה, ואמר זה החשבון אינו ודאי, כי אפשר להוסיף. אין זה רק שמגרה יצר הרע בעצמו. וידוע כי מספר שני הבית, אי אפשר לדעת רק מפי הקבלה העיקר הוא קבלה, שכך מקובל לנו שכך וכך עמידת הבית, והיה מפורסם דבר זה. ולפיכך כל דבריו הם שוא ותפל, ואינם כדאי להשיב עליהם, כי כל דברי חכמים הם על הקבלה האמיתית מצורפת ומזוקקת. כי זה האיש הוציא מפיו דברים נגד קדושים עליונים, ולא הבין פשט דבריהם, כמו שעשה בכמה מפרקיו. לכן ספר זה הוא בכלל ספרים החיצונים, אשר אסור לקרות בהם. וכל איש בעל דת תורת משה, ומאמין בתורה שבכתב ובתורה בעל פה, יהא הספר הזה בבל יראה ובל ימצא, ולא יביט אליו ולא יסתכל בו, לא ראייה שכלית, ולא ראייה חושית.

ספר באר הגולה באר השישי פרק יח

The Maharal took a similar view in response to the highly controversial writings of Azariah de Rossi⁵. He regards de Rossi's work as almost heretical and insists that the only proper approach to such matters of the calendar is to rely entirely on our Mesora and Kabbala.

C1] RAV SAADIA GAON - CHRISTIAN MANIPULATION

15. (כד) שְׁבַעִים שָׁבָעִים נִחְתָּדָּ עַל-עַמֶּךָ וְעַל-עִיר קְדֻשְׁךָ לְכַלֵּא הַפֶּשַׁע וְלְהַתֵּם חֲטָאת וּלְכַפֵּר עֹן וּלְהַבִּיא צְדָק עַל־מִים וּלְהַתֵּם חַזוֹן וְנִבְיָא וְלִמְשַׁח קֹדֶשׁ קְדָשִׁים: (כה) וְתִדַּע וְתִשְׁכַּל מִן-מִצְרָא דְבַר לְהַשִּׁיב וּלְבַנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם עַד-מְשִׁיחַ נְגִיד שְׁבַעִים שָׁבָעָה וְשָׁבָעִים שָׁשִׁים וּשְׁנַיִם תְּשׁוּב וְנִבְנְתָה רְחוֹב וְחַרוֹץ וּבְצִלֹק הַעֵתִים: (כו) וְאַחֲרֵי הַשְׁבַּעִים שָׁשִׁים וּשְׁנַיִם יִכָּרֵת מְשִׁיחַ וְאִין לוֹ וְהָעִיר וְהַקְדָּשׁ יִשְׁחָתוּ עִם נְגִיד הַבָּא וְקָצוּ בַשֶּׁטֶף וְעַד קֵץ מְלַחְמָה נִחְרָצָת שְׁמִמּוֹת: (כז) וְהַגְבִּיר בְּרִית לְרַבִּים שְׁבוּעַ אֶחָד וְחָצִי הַשְּׁבוּעַ יִשְׁבִּית זָבַח וּמִנְחָה וְעַל כָּנָף שְׁקוּצִים מְשֻׁמִּם וְעַד-כָּלָה וְנִחְרָצָה תִתְּדָּ עַל-שְׁמִים: פ

דניאל ט כד-כו

24 Seventy⁶ weeks [of years] have been decreed upon your people and upon the city of your Sanctuary to terminate the transgression and to end sin, and to expiate iniquity, and to bring eternal righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophet, and to anoint the Holy of Holies. 25 And you shall know and understand that from the emergence of the word to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem until the anointed king [shall be] seven weeks, and [for] sixty-two weeks it will return and be built street and moat, but in troubled times. 26 And after the sixty-two weeks, the anointed one will be cut off, and he will be no more, and the people of the coming monarch will destroy the city and the Sanctuary, and his end will come about by inundation, and until the end of the war, it will be cut off into desolation. 27 And he will strengthen a covenant for the princes for one week, and half the week he will abolish sacrifice and meal-offering, and on high, among abominations, will be the dumb one, and until destruction and extermination befall the dumb one.

The book of Daniel includes a prophecy of '70 weeks of years' (ie 490) until an apocalyptic end!

16. רבי יוסי אומר שבעים שבעים (דניאל ט:כה) - משחרב בית ראשון ועד שחרב בית אחרון. שבעים לחרבנו וארבע מאות ועשרים לבנינו. ומה תלמוד לומר שבעים שבעים, אלא שהיתה גזירה גזורה קודם לשבעים שנה

סדר עולם רבה (ליינר) פרק כח

Seder Olam understands this to be the 490 years from the destruction of the First Temple to the destruction of the Second Temple. Many interpretations⁷ have been given as to how the predictions of this prophecy fit into the events and personalities of the Second Temple period.

17. 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.

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

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.

5. De Rossi deals extensively with the issue of the missing years in Me'or Einayim, Imrei Bina Chap 29-42. His analysis of the entire 'missing years' issues is the most extensive of all the classic commentators. He has over a hundred pages of discussion of the dating systems in Tanach and Chazal, looking in detail at the length of the exile in Egypt and the First and Second Temples. Some key points in his analysis are:

- he will not argue with dating in Tanach, which was written through nevuah/ruach hakodesh. He does not however ascribe the same authority to the dating systems in Chazal, who did not have nevuah and who, he claims, may themselves have relied on non-Jewish sources.
- he is happy to rely on non-Jewish sources (such as Greek and Roman histories) or non-traditional Jewish sources (such as Philo and Josephus), although he places more weight on Chazal. However, some of the non-Jewish sources he uses have subsequently been found to be unreliable.
- he quotes at length from many classic mefarshim who do NOT accept the dating system in Seder Olam on many different issues.

6. Translation from chabad.org

7. Including christological in-readings to show how the passage relates different episodes at the beginning of Christianity.

C2] RABBI ALEXANDER HOOL - GREEK MANIPULATION

Rabbi Hool, in an extremely detailed book⁸ 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 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'D1] CLASSIC COMMENTARIES WHICH DO NOT ACCEPT THE DATING IN SEDER OLAM

18. (ב) הנה עוד שלשה מלכים וגו' - רז"ל אמרו בסדר עולם זה כורש ואחשורוש ודריוש שזנה הצית ומה ת"ל רביעי? רביעי למדי. אצל בספר יוסף בן גוריון כתוב שיהיה לו בן לכורש שמלך תחתיו לפני מלך אחשורוש ושמו במבישה

רש"י דניאל יא:ב-ג

Rashi quotes from Seder Olam Rabba, as we saw above. But he also adds a comment from Sefer Yosipon⁹ that Koresh had a son, Bambisha (Cambyses), who reigned before Achashverosh. Thus Rashi clearly accepts the legitimacy of texts outside the Seder Olam Rabba on this issue.

There are also some Midrashim which mentioned Darius the Great, which could be talking about Darius I¹⁰ who came between Cyrus and Xerxes.

19. ואמר בעל סדר עולם כי כורש הוא ארתחששתא הוא דריוש כל איש דעת יבין שג' מלכים היו

אבן עזרא, שפה ברורה עמ' ח.

Ibn Ezra learns that Chazal's view - that the same Persian king had multiple names - cannot be taken as historical fact.

20. זה הוא העולה בידינו לפי מדרש רבותינו ולפי דקדוקיהם. אבל הפי' הנכון לפי הפשט זה שכתוב ומטעם כורש ודריוש וארתחששתא מלך פרס שלשה מלכים היו

המאור הקטן מסכת ראש השנה דף א עמוד א

The Ba'al HaMeor reads Seder Olam as Midrash, but reads the 'pshat'¹¹ from the verses as indicating that there were more Persian kings.

21. ובסדר עולם אמרו הנה עוד ג' מלכים זה כורש ואחשורוש ודריוש שבנה הבית, והד' יעשיר עושר גדול רביעי למלכי מדי. וגם הדעת הזה בלתי מתישב אצלי. כי הנה המלאך אמר בשנת ג' לכורש הנה עוד ג' מלכים עומדים לפרס, ואיך נוכל א"כ למנות כורש מכללם! ע"כ אמרתי שחז"ל לא שללו שלא היו יותר מג' מלכים בפרס ולא מנו אותם, אבל אמרו בלבד אותם שקבלו ישראל מהם אם טוב ואם רע שהם כורש ואחשורוש ודריוש. כי שאר מלכים לא עשו בעניני ישראל מטוב עד רע. או שכמבישה בן כורש לא נתחזק מלכותו אחרי אביו כי קם אחשורוש וגבר על המלכות

ספר מעייני הישועה מעיין יא תמר ג

The Abarbanel interprets Seder Olam in a non-literal way and insists that there must have been more than the three Persian kings that Chazal mentioned. Rather, Chazal only refer to those kings who were of relevance to Shivat Tzion and the Jewish people.

8. The Challenge of Jewish History, Alexander Hool, 2015

9. Sefer Yosipon is a chronicle of Jewish history from Adam to Titus. It was compiled in the 10th Century by an Italian commentator and attributed to the writings of Josephus Flavius. It is not considered to be an accurate account of Josephus' actual writings, and should not be confused with the actual writings of Josephus. Sefer Yosipon was however well read and respected by mediaeval Jewish sources, as we see here from Rashi.

10. As opposed to Darius the Mede (before Cyrus) or Darius II (after Xerxes).

11. Although 'pshat' does not necessarily equate to historical truth (if there is such a thing), it presumably does so more than 'drash'.

D2] SEDER OLAM AS MIDRASH

Seder Olam does not present as a calendar in the modern sense. It does not give a running count of years from creation. It DOES present events as they occurred relative to each other and seeks to interpret and explain them in relation to each other. In this sense it is a midrashic source providing a commentary on Tanach and beyond.

22. תלמוד לומר זה ספר תולדות אדם (בראשית ה:א). ללמד שהראהו הקדוש ברוך הוא לאדם הראשון: דור דור ומנהיגיו, דור דור ונביאיו, דור דור ודורשיו, דור דור וחכמיו, [דור דור] ופרנסיו, דור דור ושופטיו, חכמי דור דור. נביאי דור דור, צדיקי דור דור, מספר שמוותיהן, מנין ימותיהן, חשבון שעותיהן, סכום פסיעותיהן

סדר עולם רבה (ליינר) פרק ל

The ending of Seder Olam makes it clear that the book is to read far more deeply than as a simple history!

As such, a more midrashic reading of Seder Olam could help to reconcile the two chronologies.

Note also:

- The scientific data for C.C. is very strong and verifiable - Greek and Roman historian, Persian cuneiform, astronomic data.
- Seder Olam is not the only midrashic account of Jewish history. There are other opinions in Chazal which do not always follow Seder Olam and there is no uniform agreement on dating issues.¹²
- There are many of mainstream mefarshim - Rishonim and Acharonim - and contemporary orthodox thinkers¹³ who have not followed Seder Olam on dating issues.
- On the other hand, Seder Olam IS halachically relevant to the calculation of the molad in the Jewish calendar! As such, great care must be taken in allegorizing its contents¹⁴. It may be possible to 'ring-fence' the halachically accepted aspects of Seder Olam and nevertheless look at other aspects more midrashically.

In Part 2 we will show that the binary solutions looked at in this shiur - one of the chronologies must be correct and the other incorrect - is not the only approach. In fact, there may be a number of ways to preserve the Conventional Chronology and, at the same time, preserve the integrity and accuracy of Seder Olam! To be continued

12. For example the midrashic idea of the history of world being 7,000 years.

13. Mitchel First's book (see Further Reading at the end of Part 2) 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.

14. Rabbi Schwab makes a suggestion as to how to reconcile a non-literal reading of Seder Olam with the halachic foundations of the molad. R. Azaria de Rossi also deals with this in detail - see Part 2 for both of these.