

# **HALACHIC AND HASHKAFIC ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY**

## **118 - THE MISSING 168 YEARS - PART 2** **OU ISRAEL CENTER - WINTER 2019**

In Part 1 we saw that there is a fundamental mismatch between the dating system of the Second Temple period as set out in Seder Olam Rabba and that of the Conventional Chronology for the same period. To restate the issues:

### According to Seder Olam:

- 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

### According to the Conventional Chronology:

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

In Part 1 we saw two approaches to resolve the problem. Either (i) Chazal's calculations are historically correct and the Conventional Chronology is simply wrong; or (ii) the secular dating is correct and Chazal's dating is not historically correct (although midrashically important).

In this shiur we will look at a number of possibilities that Chazal knew with certainty that the Conventional Chronology was correct, but they PURPOSEFULLY changed the Torah perspective on the dating to achieve a higher purpose.

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

### A1] RABBI SHIMON SCHWAB - MESSIANIC MANIPULATIONS

1. וְאֵתָהּ דָּנִיֵּאל סָתַם הַדְּבָרִים וַחֲתָם הַסֵּפֶר עַד-עֵת קֵץ יִשְׁטְטוּ רַבִּים וְתִרְבֶּה הַדָּעוּת

דניאל יב:ד

*Daniel was told to hide his words and seal his book until the time of the end, when knowledge will increase.*

In a 1962 essay, Rabbi Shimon Schwab suggested that the 168 years were consciously removed from the Jewish calendar in order to obscure the date for the coming of Mashiach. However in 1991, Rav Schwab felt that he had to pull back from his previous position and retract his suggestion.

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.<sup>9</sup>

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.<sup>10</sup>

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 "men of truth" to leave out completely from our annals a period of 165 years and to correct all

<sup>9</sup> 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' סבבא החלמוד לר' שמואל הגדול ר"ה והנה
ע' קצור בלילי החלמוד
ע' שליח חלק תורה שבועות כלל ב"ה
ע' מאמר על האגדות לר' משה חיים לוצאנו (תרגום בשער הספר עין יצחק)
\*\* ע' חזון איש קובץ איגרות סי' ר"ד שבתה בא"י: שנות בית שני... מדרשי חז"ל...
זהו אינו ענין לנבני הגדה שיעקר סוד בחכמת האמת או לעורר את הנפש וכו' ע"פ 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: וְהָאֵל הַשָּׁמַיִם הוֹדוּ וְהַשָּׁמַיִם הִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ עַד עַתָּה וְגו' וְהָאֵל הַשָּׁמַיִם הוֹדוּ וְהַשָּׁמַיִם הִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ עַד עַתָּה וְגו'. 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 שנגנו 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 קצת חתומים עד עת קץ האגדות, 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 calculate anything concerning the future—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 יתכן יבא— 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 מאתנו שנתנו—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 אלכס. The term Minyan Sh'taroth means the "Era of Contracts" and refers to the so-called Seleucid era. This era, also sometimes called מנין יונתן, 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'rir'a (cf. Ramban, 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 Jew 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 חז"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 (לחברות) like Josephus and the so-called Elephantine Papyrus 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 Medeans." 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.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> 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 Nisan 521 began his second year and Nisan 517 marked his 6th year. Dedication of new Temple in Adar, 516.

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But in the following year, in 516 BCE, the Temple 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 finally managed to throw off the Persian yoke by a decisive victory. In the visionary language of the seer, the מלכות ה' had now begun. 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 his 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...."

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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 ב'מ speak of the "six years of *Elam*." In the language of Daniel: *the Prince of Yavan 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 Batra* 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: Artaxerxes 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 Astur*" (*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

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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 Beith Hamikdash 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 עלינו 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

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printed about thirty years ago in עטודת 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, סתקרו רמקד, 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 השני in Ezra

6:13 and those of מסכת מדרת. 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 ענדה 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 בנין 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 אמונתו ודעתו, 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 חמולות, 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 מאצני 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 מנחת השבת, אדר"ק "ז"ס"ק"י מה שמביא בשם ספר גמרא 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 חשבון 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 שם על הדיעה בן אקבל שם על הפישה - 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 אומני 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.

ודי יאיר עיני כלבתיכם לא אלהוקי ונתבוננתו חבימי אמן

## A2] EPSTEIN/DICKMAN/WILAMOVSKY - 2000 YEARS OF TORAH

In a 2006 article, the authors suggest that the Seder Olam chronology was consciously adjusted to ensure that the '2000 years of Torah' would come to an end at the formation of the Mishna.

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

סנהדרין צו:

*Chazal (at least according to one opinion) understand that the history of the world can be divided into three - 2000 years of confusion, 2000 years of Torah and 2000 years in which Mashiach can come.*

5. 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

*R' Yaakov Emden sees the end of the Tannaim as the end of the period of Torah as it had been taught since Moshe Rabbeinu. After that, the focus of the Torah shifted entirely to Bavel and exile.*

6. והנראה לפרש הדברים כפשטן כי באמת אחר שגלו ישראל גלות גמורה אין בהם תורה. כדכתיב מלכה ושריה צגנים אין תורה. מ"מ קע"צ שנים אחר בית שני מקרי עדיין מיהת שנת תורה כי אז היו דור התנאים ועדיין לא נתדלדלו הישיבות עד אחר שמת רבי וגבר הגלות ורצו הלכות וכלו ימי תורה. ומשם ואילך מתוך הגלות והלכות ככל אותו זמן ראוי לצא משיח וימי חבלי משיח מיקרי

ח'א מהרש"א שם ד'ה ב' אלפים תורה

*The Maharsha also dates the end of the 2000 years of Torah specifically to 172 years after the Second Temple, when R. Yehuda HaNasi dies and the focus of Torah learning shifted almost entirely to Bavel with the Amoraim.*

7. 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*

## A3] RABBI MENACHEM LEIBTAG - ADJUSTMENT TO CONNECT JEWISH YEARS WITH MINYAN SHAROT

Rabbi Leibtag 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).

8. רבי יוסי אומר מלכות פרס בפני הבית ל"ד שנה, מלכות יון מאה ושמונים, מלכות בית חשמונאי מאה ושלוש, מלכות הורודוס מאה ושלוש, מכאן ואילך צא וחשוב לחרבן הבית. ובגולה כותבין בשטרות למנין יונים אלפא

סדר עולם רבה (ליינר) פרק ל

*At the end of Seder Olam, R. Yose calculates the years of the Second Temple period. The quote is almost identical to the one we saw in Part 1 from the Bavli. But it adds at the end that in the galut the years are counted according to minyan shtarot - Greek Alpha<sup>1</sup>.*

1. Rabbi Schwab has a different explanation of the meaning of the phrase 'alpha' - see above in source 2 at the bottom of 'p191'.

9. 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><sup>2</sup>

#### A4] RABBI MENACHEM LEIBTAG - ADJUSTMENT TO HIDE THE FAILURE OF SHIVAT TZION

10. 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 HaBira. The Pasuk 'Ish Yehudi Hayah BeShushan HaBira 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).

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

11. **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 .....

משנה מסכת אבות פרק א

*A further hint can be found in Pirkei Avot when Antigonus of Socho passes on the Mesora. But the next link - Yosi ben Yoezer and Yose ben Yochanan are stated to have received the Mesorah from THEM<sup>3</sup>, not from him!*

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 and thus may not fully reflect his intentions.

3. Rav David Tzvi Hoffman saw this as a possible hint to the missing years.

**B] A FINAL THOUGHT ON HISTORICAL TRUTH**

12. ... שעלינו להבדיל בין האמת המוחלטת - ההיסטורית - ובין האמת של הטיכסט. האמת ההיסטורית היא אחת ורק אחת, אבל האמת של הטיכסט מיוחדת לטיכסט, כל טיכסט וטיכסט והאמת שלו – לפי המקור שממנו שאב. ואם יש שינוי בגירסת המשנה בין הבבלי והירושלמי, הרי האמת ההיסטורית היא רק אחת – או בבבלי או כירושלמי, אבל האמת של הטיכסט היא במשנת הבבלי כמסורת הבבלי ובמשנת הירושלמי כמסורת הירושלמי. ומי שמשנה את הגירסא במשנה לפי האמת ההיסטורית, הרי הוא מטשטש מסורת וחוטא כלפי התרבות

ר' ש. ליברמן - קרית ספר עמ' 324

*R. Saul Lieberman points out that whilst there is only one historical truth (which we are in fact never able to 100% identify, and which is therefore effectively hidden<sup>4</sup> from us), there are multiple potential 'textual truths' which ARE identifiable and independent. The textual truth is a legitimate access to 'emet' and should not be corrupted by trying to force it into an unclear historical matrix.*

**C] A FINAL THOUGHT ON ACADEMIC AGENDAS**

13. 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)

**D] 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<sup>5</sup>
- *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<sup>6</sup>

4. For more on this concept of 'hidden history' and 'living text' see Pachad Yitzchak, Igrot U'michtavim 30 (pp 49-52)

5. Available for download at - <http://www.hakirah.org/Vol%203%20Epstein.pdf>

6. Available at <http://www.simpletoremember.com/other/History166.htm>