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CHRONOLOGIES AND KINGS (II)

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Before we move into a detailed survey of the history and chronology of the kings of Israel and ~~Judah~~, let us review the chronological information that leads from creation to the kingdom. This will be helpful **both** to new readers of these essays, and a reminder for those who have been on board all along. Back issues of these essays are available either from ICE or from Biblical Horizons, Box 1096, Niceville, FL 32588.

Biblical chronology is clear from creation forwards, and becomes a bit more difficult as we approach the New **Testament**. Thus, students of biblical chronology date forward from the creation, in terms of Anno Mundi dates. Thus, the creation was in the year O A. M., and the Flood came in the year 1656 A.M.

(Actually, since "anno mundi" is Latin, it is technically more correct to write A.M. 1656, just as it is more correct to write A. D. 1991 than to write 1991 **A.D.** Nobody really worries about this anymore, though. "B.C." means "Before Christ," and since it is English rather than Latin, it comes after ~~the number always; for example, 660 B.C.~~)

It is harder to sort out the chronological data for the period of the kings (between 1000 and 500 B.C.), and even more difficult to be certain about the period between the exile and the New **Testament** (500 B.C. – O A.D.). That is why **Biblical Chronology** is presently concentrating on these periods. If we could become certain of the chronology between Solomon and Jesus, we could then date backwards, using B.C. dates, to the time of the creation of the world. Provisionally, based on the studies published in **Biblical Chronology** over the past two years, **I** have come to the year 3932 B.C. as the year of creation, but **let** me stress that this is open to **revision**.

Review

the chronological data in Genesis 8-11 puts the birth of Abraham in A.M. 2008. Our study of the **Sojourn in Egypt** and the **Exodus** put "the **departure** from Egypt in the year A.M. 2513 (about 1419 B.C.). According to 1 Kings 6:1, the **Temple** began to be built 480 years after the departure from Egypt, or in the year A.M. 2993. According to 1 Kings **6:38**, the Temple was finished seven years later, in A.M. 3000.

The most careful study of the chronology of the Kings is found in Martin Anstey's **Chronology of the Old Testament**, originally published as *The Romance of Bible Chronology* in 1913, and reprinted by **Kregel Publications** in 1973. It is our purpose in this essay and those that follow to examine Anstey's chronology in detail. For now, we can provisionally accept Anstey's calculations and put the **fall** of Jerusalem in A.M. 3426 and the decree of Cyrus, returning the Jews to the land, in A.M. 3476. If we take Daniel's 70 weeks of years literally, and as beginning with Cyrus, we come to A.M. 3962 as the date of the crucifixion, and A.M. 4002 as the date ~~for the destruction of the Temple (A.D. 70)~~. This is the end-point for Biblical chronology.

The Judges

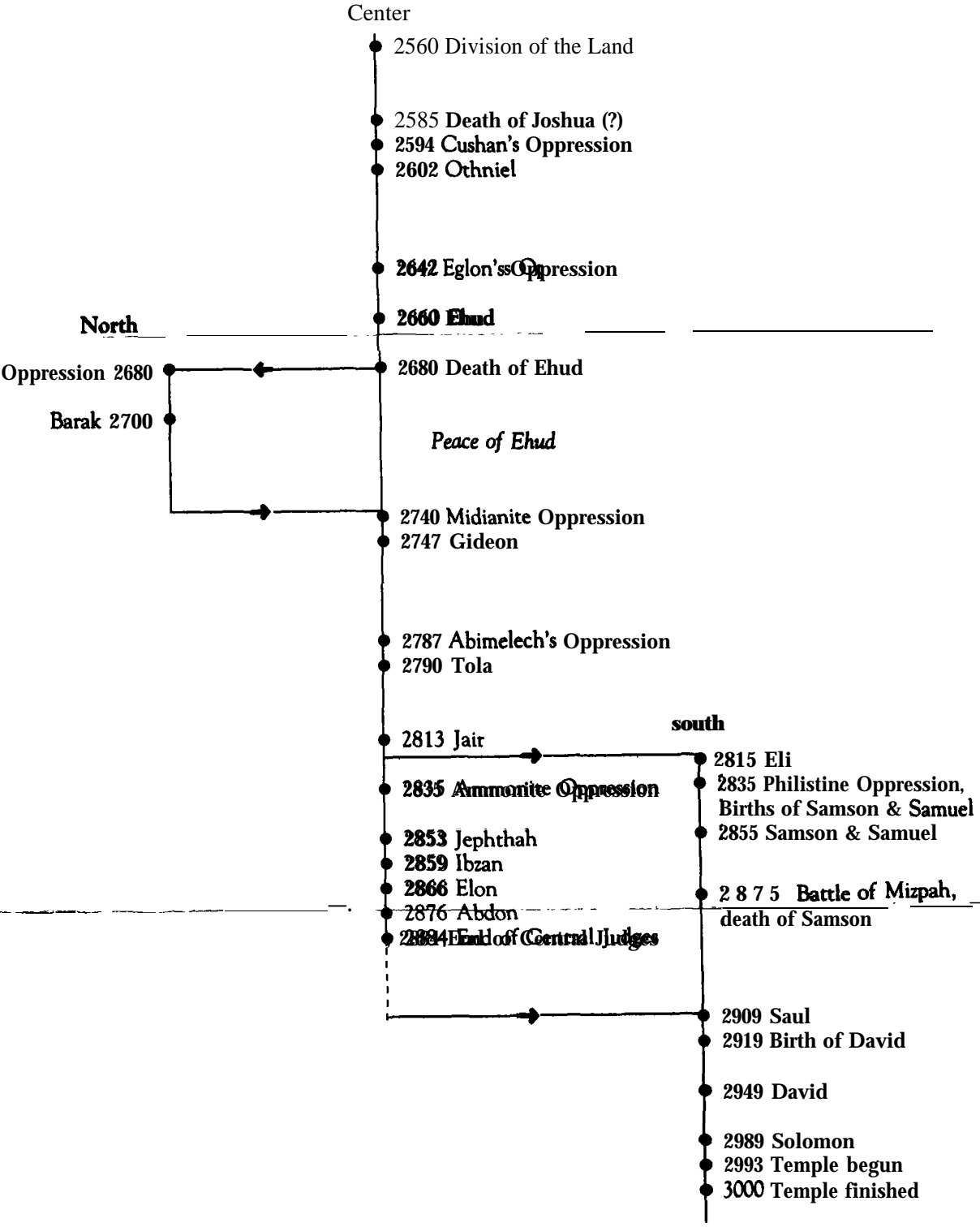
The Exodus took place in 2513. The next year, the spies searched out Canaan and brought back a bad report (**Num.** 10:11-12; **13:17-20**). At this time, Caleb was 40 years old (**Josh.** **14:7**). According to Joshua 14:1 & 10, Caleb was 85 when the conquest of the land came to an end. This would be, then, the year A.M. 2559. This means that the War of Conquest lasted 6 years, and the land was (**sabbatically**) divided in the 7th year, A.M. 2560.

There is no direct chronological link between the Conquest and the time of the Judges. We are told that Israel was faithful all the days of Joshua, who died at the age of 110 but in what year we do not

Time Line

- 2513 – Exodus from Egypt.
- 2553 – Beginning of Conquest of the land.
- 2560 – End of Conquest, Division of the land.
Caleb (and Joshua?) 85 years old.
- 2585 – Death of Joshua (?).
- 2594 – End of the period of peace during and
after Joshua, beginning of 8-year **oppression of Cushan (Jud. 3:8)**.
- 2602 – Defeat of **Cushan**, beginning of **Othniel's** 40-year judgeship (Jud. 3:11).
- 2642 – Death of **Othniel**, beginning of Eglon's
18-year oppression (Jud. 3:1 1-12)
- 2660 – Death of **Eglon**, beginning of **Ehud's** 20-
year judgeship and his 80-year peace.
- 2680 – Death of Ehud, beginning of Jabin's 20-
year oppression in the North (Jud. 4:3).
- 2700 – Death of Jabin, beginning of **Barak's** 40-
year judgeship and peace in the North
(Jud. 5:31).
- 2740 – End of **Barak's** Northern peace and
Ehud's Central peace, beginning of **Midianite** oppression (Jud. 6:1). We can be
certain of this date as a result of counting
backwards from Judges 11:16 and 1 Kings
6:1. The Midianite oppression returns us
to the Center of the land. From here
on, Center and North experience one
set of problems, while South struggles
with Philistine (Jud. 3:31).
- 2747 – End of Midianite oppression, beginning
of Gideon's 40-year judgeship (Jud.
8:28).
- 2787 – Death of Gideon, beginning of **Abimelech's** 3-year oppressive reign (Jud.
9:22).
- 2790 – End of **Abimelech's** reign, beginning of
Tola's 23-year judgeship (Jud. 10:1).
- 2813 – Death of **Tola**, beginning of **Jair's** 22-
year judgeship (Jud. 10:3).
- 2815 – Beginning of Eli's 40-year judgeship in
the South (1 Sam. 4:18).
- 2835 – Death of **Jair**, beginning of **Philistine**
oppression in the South and Ammonite
oppression in the Center and North
(Jud. 10:5-7). Births of Samson and
Samuel.
- 2853 – End of Ammonite oppression, 300 years
after initial conquests, beginning of **Jephthah's** 6-year judgeship in Center and
North (Jud. 11:16; 12:7).
- 2855 – Death of Eli, beginning of Samuel's judge-
ship at Tabernacle and Samson's judge-
ship in the South.
- 2859 – Death of Jephthah, beginning of **Ibzan's**
7-year judgeship in the Center and
North (Jud. 11:9).
- 2866 – Death of **Ibzan**, beginning of **Elon's** 10-
year judgeship in Center and North
(Jud. 11:11).
- 2875 – Death of Samson, battle of **Mizpah**, deliv-
erance from Philistine oppression.
- 2876 – Death of **Elon**, beginning of Abdon's 8-
year judgeship in Center and North
(Jud. 11:14).
- 2884 – End of the line of judges in the Center
and North.
- 2909 – Accession of Saul.
- 2919 – Birth of David.
- 2949 – Accession of David.
- 2989 – Accession of Solomon.
- 2993 – Foundation of Temple laid, 480 years af-
ter Exodus.
- 3000 – Completion of Temple.

Suggested Chronology of the Judges



The next thing we find is that Israel sinned and came under the yoke of Cushan-Rishathaim for 8 years (Jud. 3:8).

The "secret" to interpreting the chronological data in Judges is to recognize that while one sequence of events took place in the North, another took place in central Israel, and another in the South. Sometimes we are told that an oppression followed directly after the death of a particular judge, but sometimes we are not told this. The core history and chronology of Judges tracks the events in the Center, around the tribe of Ephraim. The book of Samuel shifts attention to events in the South, around the tribe of Judah.

Last month we saw that the 300 years of Judges 11:16 came to an end in the 18th year of Ammonite oppression when Jephthah delivered Israel, in A.M. 2853. The oppression began when Jair died after 22 years of judging, so he began to judge in A.M. 2813 (Jud. 10:3). Before him came Tola, for 23 years, beginning in A.M. 2790 (Jud. 10:1). Tola became judge right after Abimelech's oppressive 3-year reign (Jud. 9:22; 10:10), so Abimelech began to reign in 2787. His reign began when his father Gideon died after judging 40 years (Jud. 8:28), beginning in A.M. 2747, and this was after 7 years of Midianite oppression (Jud. 6:1), beginning in A.M. 2740, or 180 years after the division of the land in 2560.

This is as much as we can be absolutely certain of. If we read carefully, however, and take geographical matters into consideration, we can puzzle out the rest of the chronology of Judges with a fair degree of certainty.

We are also told that Jabin's oppression (in the north) came after the death of Ehud, and that during this time Shamgar fought Philistine in the south (Jud. 3:31; 4:1). Thus, the sequence of Eglon's 18-year oppression, Ehud's 80-year peace, Jabin's 20-year oppression, and Barak's 40-year peace seems to flow together (Jud. 3:14, 30; 4:1; 5:31).

But there is a problem with this sequence. Judges 3:30 says that after Ehud defeated Eglon, the land had peace for 80 years. It does not say that Ehud lived this whole period of time. Judges 4:1 says that after Ehud died, Israel sinned and a new oppression began under Jabin. Now, the Jabin oppression was in the North, while Ehud the Benjamite was a man of central Israel. Possibly, then, the central part of the land continued to enjoy peace while the North was being oppressed by Jabin. The end of Ehud's

80-year peace, for the Center, would have to come when the Center was invaded by Midian (Jud. 6:1). Thus, the end of Barak's peace in the North and the end of Ehud's peace in the Center almost certainly came at the same time, in the year 2740, a date we have established firmly above on the basis of Biblical chronology. Since the 60 years of Jabin and Barak began with the death of Ehud, this puts the death of Ehud 60 years before the Midianite oppression in 2740, which was A.M. 2680. This means Ehud judged for 20 years, beginning in 2660.

Now, before Ehud came Othniel, a man of Ephraim and also a man of central Israel. He judged for 40 years after Cushan had oppressed for 8 years. Moreover, it is implied that the oppression of Eglon began after Othniel died (3:11-12). This indicates that Cushan-Othniel-Eglon-Ehud is one chronological sequence.

Thus, my own conclusion is that the oppression of Jabin in the North began while the central part of the land was enjoying the last part of the 80-year peace, and while Philistine were fighting Shamgar in the South.

We have good reason, then, to assume that Ehud lived for 20 years after defeating Eglon. When Ehud died, Jabin arose to oppress the north. Now if we add to this (at the beginning) the 8 years of Cushan, the 40 years of Othniel, and the 18 years of Eglon's oppression, we come to A.M. 2594, which would be 34 years after the division of the land in 2560. Since the invasion of the land came in A.M. 2553, we have a significant 40-year period of righteousness before the fall into sin and judgment in 2594.

(I cannot resist suggesting a possible New Testament parallel. Israel was faithful under Joshua and under the elders that were his age. They faithfully conquered and occupied the land. Notice in the New Testament that Paul expresses fears that after he and the first generation of apostles are dead, the Church will fall into waywardness and sin. Did this indeed come to pass? Is this why we find in the early Church such a rapid departure from Biblical presuppositions, and such a rapid fall into Greek philosophical ways of thinking about food, sex, eschatology, etc.?)

If Joshua and Caleb were the same age, then Joshua as well as Caleb was 85 years old in A.M. 2560. If so, Joshua died at the age of 110 in 2585, and after 9 more years the elders who ruled with him also died, and the people fell into sin.