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JEHORAM OF JUDAH (Chronologies and Kings X)

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I pointed out in *Biblical Chronology* 3:9 (September, 1991) that the years of Judah's kings are given in chronological fashion. "When we read of a Judahite king's reign as lasting 4 years, it means that 4 years of the chronology have been given to him, and there is no chronological overlap with another Judahite king. When we read of an Israelite king's reign as lasting 4 years, it means that he reigned during four years of the chronology, but his first and last years are also included in the reigns of his predecessor and successor." I also pointed out, however, that "later on, there are complications that we shall have to examine in detail when we get to them."

We arrive at the first of these complications in this essay. It is the problem of co-regencies. There is no reason to doubt or be surprised at the existence of co-regencies in the histories of Israel and Judah. For any number of reasons, most often the desire for orderly succession, a king will put his son on the throne next to him before he dies. What this means for the Biblical text, as we shall see, is that when the years of these two kings are given, they do indeed overlap, so that we cannot simply add them together to get an accurate chronology. At the same time, however, all the information necessary to construct an accurate chronology is provided, so there is no real problem.

Let us return to the chronology where we left it in December, 1991 (*Biblical Chronology* 3:12), before our necessary excursus into the Assyrian Eponym Canon. We saw that at the end of his reign, Ahab of Israel launched the Third Syrian War, and got Jehoahaphat of Judah to go in with him (1 Kings 22). Both kings set sons on the throne to rule while they were fighting the war. According to 1 Kings 22:51, Ahaziah of Israel reigned in the 17th and 18th years of Jehoahaphat of Judah, which were also the last two years of Ahab's reign. Thus, it seems that Ahab left Ahaziah on the throne and went off to battle, just before the end of the year, and died right at the beginning of the next year. Ahab's 21st and 22nd years are the same as Ahaziah's 1st and 2nd years.

As we saw, immediately after the defeat of Israel in the Third Syrian War, the Moabites rebelled against Israel and Ahaziah had an accident and died (2 Kings 1). Thus, during this same year, his younger brother Jehoram of Israel came to the throne (2 Kings 1:17; 3:1).

Looking back at the Third Syrian War, it seems that Jehoahaphat of Judah put his son Jehoram of Judah on the throne when he left to fight next to Ahab against the Syrians. This emerges from 2 Kings 1:17, which says that Jehoram of Israel began to reign in the second year of

Jehoahaphat had left Jehoram of Judah on the throne of Judah while he went to fight the Syrians. He had not yet returned to resume the throne when Jehoram of Israel became king. Thus, Jehoram of Israel became king in the second year of Jehoram of Judah, which was also the 18th year of Jehoahaphat, as 2 Kings 3:1 tells us.

Now, when Jehoahaphat got back to Jerusalem, he removed Jehoram from the throne. This is clear from 2 Kings 8:16-17, which says that Jehoram of Judah came to the throne (again) in the 5th year of Jehoram of Israel, while Jehoahaphat was still reigning (in his 22nd year).

Why would Jehoahaphat depose Jehoram temporarily, and why reinstate him later on? We can only guess. 2 Kings 8:18 says that when Jehoram of Judah became sole king later on, he actively pursued the idolatrous ways of Ahab. 2 Chronicles 21 expands on this to show that Jehoram of Judah's brief reign was one of the most murderous in all the history of Judah. We may assume, then, that while Jehoahaphat was away fighting the Syrians, Jehoram was acting corruptly in Jerusalem. When Jehoahaphat returned, being a righteous king, he took his son off the throne. Perhaps Jehoram put on a show of repentance and conformity to righteousness, so that Jehoahaphat was willing to reinstate him as co-regent a few years later.

As I mentioned above, 2 Kings 8:16-17 says that Jehoram of Judah became king in the 5th year of Jehoram of Israel, which was while Jehoahaphat was still supreme king in Judah. These verses also say that Jehoram of Judah reigned 8 years. Now, how do we count those eight years? There are three possibilities:

1. We can stack them on top of Jehoahaphat's 25 years so that Jehoram's 8 years don't begin until after Jehoahaphat's death. We cannot do this, though, because it would take us well into the reign of Jehu of Israel, who killed Jehoram's successor Ahaziah at the beginning of his (Jehu's) reign. Thus, Jehoram's 8 years must overlap some of Jehoahaphat's.
2. Second, we can start Jehoram's 8 years in the 5th year of Jehoram of Israel, which is Jehoahaphat's 22nd year. This is what Anstey does. There are three problems with this approach. First, 2 Kings 8:25-26 says that Ahaziah the son of Jehoram became king in the 12th year of Jehoram of Israel and reigned one year. In terms of the Judahite mode of reckoning, this year should not also be the 8th of Jehoram of Judah, which on Anstey's reckoning it is (and which he says is the sole exception to the rule; Anstey, p. 181). Second, 2 Kings 8:16-17 says that Jehoram of Judah reigned in the 5th year of Jeho-

two years to Jehoram, c. 849 B.C. The Third Syrian War, and it seems simplest to take these as the first two years of his total eight. Thus, third, I suggest that we take the two years of the Third Syrian War as the first two years of Jehoram of Judah, after which there is a hiatus while he is not on the throne. This enables us to take the numbers absolutely, and is the simplest scheme. Accordingly, the 5th year of Jehoram of Israel is the accession year of Jehoram of Judah. Jehoram of Judah dies in the 11th year of Jehoram of Israel, and is succeeded by his son Ahaziah of Judah (2 Kings 9:29). The next year is the official one year of Ahaziah of Judah (2 Kings 8:28), who is then killed by Jehu.

justice to the text. The author has already counted two years of Jehoram of Judah's reign, so we should subtract them from the total eight. Also, this interpretation means that there are no exceptions to the chronological way of recording the years of Judah's kings. Finally, this interpretation eliminates the suggested co-regency of Ahaziah and Jehoram of Judah, which Anstey must suppose in order to resolve the numbers on his interpretation.

It should be noted, however, that both Anstey's and my interpretation bring us down to the same year, the year 3119 A.M.

YEAR	JUDAH (Anstey)	JUDAH (Jordan)	ISRAEL	HISTORICAL DATA, TESTIMONY, EVIDENCE, OR PROOF
3106	Jehoshaphat 16	Jehoshaphat 16	Ahab 20	
3107	(Jehoram 1) 17	Jehoram 1 17	Ahaziah 1 21	3rd Syrian war, 1 Ki.22:51
3108	(Jehoram 2) 18	Jehoram 2 18	Ahab 22 Ahaziah 2 Jshorsm 1	Death of Ahab, 1 Ki. 22 Death of Ahaziah, 2 Ki. 1 Ascension of Elijah, 2 Ki. 2 Accession of Jehoram, 2 Ki. 1:17; 3:1 Moabite War, 2 Ki. 3
3109				
3110				
3111				
3112	Jehoram 1 22	Jehoram acces. 22		2 Ki. 8:16-17
3113	Jehoram 2 23	Jehoram 3 23		
3114	Jehoram 3 24	Jehoram 4 24		
3115	Jehoram 4 25	Jehoram 5 25		Death of Jehoshaphat, 1 Ki. 22:50
3116	Jehoram 5	Jehoram 6		Jehoram of Judah sole king
3117	Jehoram 6	Jehoram 7		
3118	Jehoram 7 Ahaziah corex	Jehoram (dies) 8 Ahaziah accession		2 Ki. 9:29. Anstey: Ahaziah becomes co-regent Jordan: Jehoram dies; Ahaziah accession
3119	Jehoram (dies) 8 Ahaziah 1	Ahaziah 1		2 Ki. 8:25-26 Ahaziah of Judah and Jehoram of Israel slain by Jehu