

The chronology of The Kings of
Israel & Judah

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The chronology of the kings of Judah and Israel is one of the most complex issues in Biblical history. It has been discussed quite extensively in the scholarly literature, but no satisfactory solution has been offered to date, nor has the testimony of the Biblical and extra-Biblical sources received an exhaustive treatment. The determination of an absolute system of dates for the kings of Israel and Judah became possible only in the second half of the nineteenth century, following the deciphering of Assyrian royal inscriptions pertaining to the history of the two Israelite kingdoms. But the chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah was first discussed about two and a half millennia ago, in the sixth century BCE, with the writing of the Book of Kings (see below). Since then, countless efforts have been made to reconstruct the chronological framework of these monarchs, and to reconcile the many contradictions between the confusing data regarding the duration of the reigns of these thirty-nine kings. Some of these attempts have survived in the Septuagint and in the works of Josephus (see the discussion in Chapter Eight). A few proposals, mainly harmonious, appear in *Seder Olam Rabbah*, in the patristic literature, and in the works of the medieval commentators. Beginning in the midnineteenth century, researchers proposed a plethora of reconstructions of the chronological framework and of the principles underlying the chronology of Judaeen and Israelite history in this period. Researchers deny the accuracy of the majority of the Biblical chronological data, arguing that these data are artificial and schematic, and cannot serve as a basis for the determination of the chronology the Israelite kings.¹

The hypotheses of J. Wellhausen wield great influence.² Wellhausen, following in the footsteps of earlier Bible researchers, assumed that the chronology of the kings of Judah is based on a schematic framework spanning 430 years from the establishment of the Temple to the fall

¹ H. Ewald, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, Göttingen 1864, I (3rd ed.), 294-307; W. Robertson Smith, "The Chronology of the Books of Kings," *Journal of Philology* 10 (1882), 209-213; B. Stade, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, Berlin 1887, I, 558 ff.

² Wellhausen, 607-640.

of Jerusalem. He added to this count the 50 years from the destruction of the Temple to the Restoration, and supposed that the scribes reconstructed an artificial count of 480 years from the establishment of the Temple to the Restoration, closely resembling the count of 480 years from the Exodus from Egypt to the establishment of the Temple (I Kings 6:1).

This hypothesis, however, cannot be accepted. There is no mention in the Book of Kings or in any other Biblical or extra-Biblical source of the span of 50 years from the destruction of the Temple to the Restoration. Not only is this datum not accurate, it lies beyond the historical purview of the author of the Book of Kings. Furthermore, the arithmetic proximity of these numbers may be merely coincidental. This approach was prevalent mainly among German researchers at the end of the nineteenth century, and is currently regaining support among researchers.³

J. Begrich strenuously objected to Wellhausen's theory, and he proposed an alternative reconstruction of the time frame of Israelite history from the schism to the fall of Jerusalem.⁴ In his view the Biblical chronological data derive from a multiplicity of sources, which reflect different counting systems. Begrich did not attempt to reconcile the different sources, preferring instead a single system which served as the basis for the chronology he reconstructed. He postulated that many Biblical data are not reflective of reality. Thus, e.g., for the period from the

³ Mowinckel, 167 ff.; cf. Wifall, 333 ff., who surmised that the redactor of the Book of Kings arbitrarily attempted to reconstruct a framework of 480 years from the establishment of the monarchy to the fall of Jerusalem. Barnes has recently surmised that the data of the years of reign in the Book of Kings are based on a scheme of 480 years that elapsed from the coronation of David to the release of Jehoiachin from his prison (Barnes, 184 ff.). Barnes was compelled to deduct a year from the years of all the kings of the Davidic line, and to ignore the explicit coregency of David and Solomon, in order to maintain his theory. Wellhausen similarly amended the number of years of Baasha (22 instead of 24) to support another conjecture of his, also indicating the artificiality of the data in the Book of Kings: he found a strange ratio between the numbers of the years of the Israelite kings from Jeroboam to Joram: Jeroboam - 22 years; Nadab - 2; Baasha - 22; Elah - 2; Omri - 12; Ahab - 22; Ahaziah - 2; Joram - 12. These 8 kings ruled for a total of 96 years: the first four, for 48 years, and the last four, for 48 years. The average number is 12, and this is established for two kings; while the other kings are divided into three pairs: the father ruled for 22 (12 + 10) years, and the son ruled for 2 (12 - 10) years (J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*, Berlin 1899 [5th ed.], 276). If the number of years of Baasha (24) had fit this arithmetical scheme, it undoubtedly would have won many adherents. Wellhausen has recently been followed by Hughes (121 ff.)—see below.

⁴ Begrich 14-16, 108 ff.; 132 ff.

schism to Jehu's revolt he cannot reconcile about two thirds of the approximately thirty chronological data relating to this period and his system of dating for this time span relies upon nineteen data which have no basis in the sources (see the discussion below, Chapters Two and Three). Furthermore, following Kleber, he assumed that in the years 882/1-879/8 no king ruled over Israel.⁵ This unwarranted assumption compelled Begrich to decrease the reign of Omri from 12 to 8 years. In his opinion the new year in Israel began on 1 Tishri, while in Judah, the new year, which had initially started on this date, was changed in the reign of Ahaz to 1 Nisan. This assumption forced Begrich to propose a number of tenuous guesses, one of which asserts that Jeroboam counted his years of reign from the thirty-ninth year of Solomon.⁶

In 1944-45, two studies were published in the United States which greatly influenced the research of the chronology of the period of the divided monarchy: the works of E. R. Thiele and W. F. Albright.⁷ Their proposals were accepted by many researchers, and to the present, almost half a century after their publication, most scholars are of the opinion that the system of Thiele or that of Albright is the most plausible for reconstructing the chronological frame of the period under discussion.⁸ The two proposed systems differ from each other. Thiele assumed that the decisive majority of the synchronisms and the years of reign data in the Book of Kings are original and reliable. Thiele attempted to reconcile the contradictions inherent in these data and to prove their reliability in the following diverse ways:⁹ (1) coregencies existed both in Judah and in Israel; (2) at times, the years of reign

⁵ *Idem*, 155.

⁶ In 1964 Jepsen aired a proposal which he defined as an attempt to correct Begrich's reconstruction (see Jepsen, 21 ff.). Jepsen was successful in refining Begrich's theory, but he was not capable of purging it of improbable elements, including the assumption regarding an interregnum in Israel, a conjecture concerning the coronation of Jeroboam before Rehoboam, etc. In some instances Jepsen resolved one discrepancy but at the price of creating another, as, e.g., a possible interregnum between Hezekiah and Manasseh (see *op. cit.*, 39, 42).

⁷ E. R. Thiele, "The Chronology of the Kings of Judah and Israel," *JNES* 3 (1944), 137-186; Albright, 17 ff.

⁸ Thiele's view was accepted by many researchers, including K. A. Kitchen and T. C. Mitchell, "Chronology of the Old Testament," *The New Bible Dictionary*, London 1962, 212-223; Hallo, 34 ff.; H. S. Gehman, "Chronology," *The New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible*, Philadelphia 1970, 167-172; Rainey, 71; de Vries, 580 ff., and others. Albright's reconstruction was adopted by Bright, 230 ff.; Freedman, 208 ff.; R. J. Coggins, cited in Ackroyd, 345 ff., and others.

⁹ Thiele 1983, 43-65.

were counted from the coronation of a king during his father's lifetime, while at other times, they were counted only from the beginning of his reign as an independent sovereign; (3) there was a gap of half a year between the new year in Judah and that in Israel—in the Northern Kingdom the new year began on 1 Nisan, while in the Southern Kingdom it was celebrated on 1 Tishri; (4) there were instances in which in Judah the years of the kings of Israel were counted in accordance with the Judahite calendar, and there were cases in which the Northern Kingdom enumerated the years of the kings of Judah in accordance with the calendar of the kings of Israel; (5) the system of counting in the two kingdoms was not constant, but rather was changed a number of times during this period—the Israelite kingdom initially employed the antedating system (until the time of Joash), and afterwards the postdating one; while in Judah postdating was used until the reign of Jehoram; antedating, from Jehoram to Amaziah; and once again postdating from Amaziah to the end of the First Temple period.

Thiele's view contains positive elements, but it also poses numerous difficulties. He incorrectly understood the annals of Tiglath-pileser III, and his determination that Menahem died in 742 contradicts the testimonies of the contemporaneous Assyrian inscriptions.¹⁰ In his desire to resolve the discrepancies between the data in the Book of Kings, Thiele was forced to make improbable suppositions. He assumed that the system of counting the years of reign changed every few generations, or even after a few decades. This is improbable, and cannot be proved. Similarly, he presumes that the Northern and Southern Kingdoms numbered their years both by the local count and by that practiced by the other kingdom, also for short periods, while this practice ceased in other periods. Thiele even went so far as to assume that while this practice had fallen into disuse, there were scribes who continued to calculate the years in accordance with it. There is no basis for Thiele's statement that his conjectures are correct because he succeeded in reconciling most of the data in the Book of Kings, since his assumptions regarding Biblical chronological principles are derived from the chronological data themselves, whose reliability is unclear.

In contrast to Thiele, Albright assumed that many chronological

¹⁰ For an analysis of the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III, see: Thiele 1983, 139–162; cf. Tadmor, *JTP*, 274–276 for criticism of Thiele's proposals.

data in the Book of Kings are unreliable, and that only the date of the fall of Samaria can be determined with certainty.¹¹ Although he proposed a table of dates, he emphasized that it was not certain, assuming a possible error of a year or two in some of the dates he established and up to five years in others. He gives preference to the Judahite synchronisms over other data, including those of the years of reign, while assuming that the author of the Book of Kings did not possess reliable Israelite synchronisms, and therefore this author or a later redactor calculated the Israelite synchronisms appearing in the Book of Kings. Albright instituted far-reaching changes in the chronological data of the kings of the two kingdoms: he arbitrarily shortened the count of Rehoboam's reign from 17 to 8; Uzziah ruled for 42 years, and not 52; Manasseh, 45 years, instead of 55; Amaziah, 18, and not 29, etc. In contrast to the free manner in which Albright changed the data he found in the Book of Kings, he regarded the chronological data in the Book of Chronicles as reliable. Thus he preferred, e.g., the account in II Chronicles 16:1 relating that the war of Baasha with Asa began in the thirty-sixth year of Asa, thereby rejecting all the Biblical synchronisms pertaining to the beginning of the divided kingdom.¹² In 1970, following the publication of the Tell al-Rimah stele, Albright suggested a number of insignificant changes to his original proposal, but did not essentially modify his view.¹³

In 1962 H. Tadmor published his reconstruction of the chronology of the monarchic period, which is accepted by many researchers, mainly in Israel, and which is based on a number of new principles.¹⁴ Tadmor bases his reconstruction on the assumption that "the overwhelming majority of the chronological data in the Book of Kings are no longer original data accurately reflecting the official enumeration of years in effect during the lifetimes of the kings themselves."¹⁵ He assumed that antedating was the system of counting in Israel and in Judah. In Judah it apparently was changed to postdating in the time of Amon or Manasseh (alternately, Tadmor assumed that it was not changed in practice, but that "the author of the chronological frame of the Book of Kings" counted the years according to this

¹¹ Albright, 17.

¹² *Idem*, 20. In Albright's opinion there was coregency only in the end of Uzziah's reign.

¹³ Albright 1970, 33 ff.

¹⁴ Tadmor 1962, 263 ff.

¹⁵ Tadmor 1983, 42.

system). In Tadmor's opinion, the kings of Judah counted their years from 1 Nisan, and the kings of Israel from 1 Tishri or from 1 Nisan; and in both kingdoms there were periods of coregency. He assumed that the years of the coregents were counted at times from their coronation during their father's lifetimes, but in other instances their years were calculated only from the year of their father's death. Tadmor's major contribution lies in the study of the Assyrian synchronisms for this period, and his major innovation in the theoretical research of this period consists of his hypothesis that it is possible to resolve some of the discrepancies between the Biblical chronological data if we assume that the author of the Book of Kings (or the author of a portion of the sources integrated into the book) rounded off the counts of the years of the Judahite and Israelite kings.¹⁶ This last conjecture is the weak point of Tadmor's system, because it is not applied in a consistent fashion. When it is convenient, the years had already been rounded off by an earlier redactor, and on other occasions when suitable, they were rounded off by the "author of the chronological system"; the latter adjusted the years downward, while the "early redactor" rounded the numbers upward; the years of most of the kings of Israel were adjusted upwards, but some were not changed at all; in contrast, the years of only a few Judahite kings were rounded off. It is not clear why the years were rounded off in some instances, but not in others, nor is the determination in which cases such adjusting took place. The starting point for Tadmor's deliberations also poses a methodological problem: if indeed the "decisive majority" of the data in the Book of Kings are derivative, what is the basis for his reconstruction of the chronological frame for the period? If this is the starting point, perhaps we should be satisfied merely with the dates clearly indicated by the extra-Biblical data?

J. Hughes has recently offered a new reconstruction of the chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah.¹⁷ His proposal is based on Wellhausen's hypothesis that the chronological data in the Book of Kings are arranged in a schematic framework of 480 years from the establishment of the Temple to the Restoration. In his opinion, the author of this time frame was active after the composition of the Book of Kings, and he is responsible for the amending of a number of data regarding the duration of the reigns of a few Judahite kings. Most of

¹⁶ Tadmor 1962, 271-274.

¹⁷ Hughes, 121 ff.

the synchronisms are the product of later calculations and are not accurate; in contrast, most of the stated years of reign are firmly based in the reality. He rejects the prevalent assumption that there were periods of coregency in the two kingdoms, or that years were enumerated retroactively. He asserts that antedating was in force in both kingdoms, and that in both the year began on 1 Tishri. During the time of Josiah, the new year in Judah was changed to 1 Nisan.¹⁸

Hughes' proposals are neither likely nor systematic. He sought to provide support for Wellhausen's argument and to assume that a distinction must be made between the time of the writing of the Book of Kings and that of a redactor who changed some of the reigns of the Judahite kings in order to create a framework of 480 years from the establishment of the Temple to the Restoration.¹⁹ No proof, however, has been given for this hypothesis. Furthermore, he asserts that six of the years of the kings of Judah given in the Book of Kings are not original; the later redactor was forced to add a number of years (28 in all) to the count of the years of the Judahite kings so that it would correspond to the schematic framework of 480 years. It is therefore surprising to find in Hughes' work four instances in which the datum in the extant Book of Kings is higher than what he presents as the original figure and, conversely, two cases in which the datum in the Book of Kings is lower than what he argues is the original datum. Hughes arbitrarily changed a portion of the data pertaining to the reigns of the kings of both realms. He established a reign of 25 years, instead of 22, for Jeroboam, arguing that this datum is based on the Septuagint.²⁰ In fact, however, there is no mention of this datum in any of the various manuscripts of the Septuagint, rather it is a mere assumption based on another assumption (see below, Chapter Eight). Hughes counts for Ahab 24 years, a figure which is not based on any source; and he allocates to Jehu 27, and not 28 years, based on a datum mentioned by Josephus.²¹ Hughes' hypothesis that there were no coregencies in either of the two kingdoms, is unacceptable, for the Book of Kings provides unequivocal testimony of the coregency of David and Solomon; in essence, the duration of this coregency is unimportant, as is the possibility that David was on his deathbed when Solomon was installed.²²

¹⁸ Idem, 159 ff., 275-276.

¹⁹ Idem, 121 ff.

²⁰ Idem, 132-134.

²¹ Idem, 145, 275.

²² Hayes and Hooker also negate the existence of coregencies (Hayes and Hooker,

All that can be established with certainty in the study of the chronology of the period from the Schism to the Exile is that a number of Biblical data are clearly erroneous, and only a limited number of dates can be determined with any degree of confidence (see appendix D). Notwithstanding this, most of the Biblical chronological data for this period can be reconciled with the extra-Biblical chronological data, without resorting to the tortuous and complicated hypotheses proposed by researchers. The many difficulties raised by the data in the Book of Kings most likely indicates that they are not an artificial and harmonious creation composed by an author who invented these details.

The sources do not contain explicit testimony regarding the system employed for counting the years of Israelite kings in the Biblical period. We cannot determine with certainty the new year; whether it was the same in the two kingdoms; whether they were counted by the antedating, the postdating or by another system. An answer to these questions is dependent upon the answer to yet another issue: the reliability of the Biblical chronological data. In other words, the chronological research of the history of Israel and Judah from the schism to the destruction of Jerusalem finds itself caught in a maze, with no certain exit. On the one hand, it is not possible to determine if the Biblical chronological data are reliable, and, on the other hand, we possess no explicit testimony regarding the system of counting the years of reign in the two kingdoms employed in the Biblical period. The researchers who attempt to reconstruct the systems of counting do so on the basis of data of questionable accuracy, and many proposals for the reconstruction of the chronological system of this period find

12 ff.). Along with this, however, they assumed that there were years which were counted for two kings, for there were a number of instances in which kings relinquished their role before their death, but the scribes nevertheless continued to count the years of their reign until they died. They not only cite as an example Uzziah, but also claim that this interesting phenomenon occurred in the time of Baasha, Asa, Joash and Amaziah as well (22 ff.). There is no proof, however, for this assumption. The chronological frame they propose is improbable and contains many dubious conjectures. Thus, e.g., in order to maintain as many Biblical data as possible, they assume that many events took place specifically in the month of Tishri: the death of Solomon, the death of Abijah, the coronation of Elah, etc. They also propose that the "Jehu" mentioned in the inscription of Shalmaneser III is in actuality Jehoram son of Ahab, and that "Jehoram the son of Ahab" is Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat (33; see below, Chapter Three).

themselves in a vicious circle: they determine the counting systems based on the chronological data and then test the reliability of these data in accordance with the counting systems established on the basis of these selfsame data.

We possess many data for the chronological reconstruction of the period of the divided kingdom, but their accuracy cannot be tested; therefore, it has been proposed to apply the following methodology: to accept as an initial working hypothesis the reliability and accuracy of the Biblical data, and to attempt to construct a set of principles that corresponds to as many Biblical and external data as possible. We do not claim that such a set of principles testifies that the data are reliable, it rather reflects our *ab initio* agreement that at the present we do not possess a certain resolution of the chronology of the period of the divided kingdom; this therefore merely constitutes a system for fully developing the testimony of the Biblical and external sources relating to this period.

Accordingly, the research of this topic is governed by the laws of uncertainty, and the limits they impose cannot be exceeded on the basis of the information we possess. At the same time, however, it is possible, and even desirable, to propose a system which will not, on the one hand, be influenced by the unjustifiable, nihilistic approach, nor, on the other hand, seek forced solutions whose sole merit lies in their resolution of all the extant data. It is difficult to believe that no errors crept into these data over the course of centuries of transmission and copying.

The following system is successful in reconciling approximate 90% of the Biblical and external data, making use of a relatively simple set of principles. Hopefully, in the future we will possess additional information which shall enable us to test the proposed system.

The following are the presumed principles of the chronology of the period of the divided monarchy of Israel:

1. The new year in the kingdom of Judah fell on 1 Nisan, and in Israel, on 1 Tishri. It cannot be determined whether the two kingdoms maintained different calendars that began on different dates. The text in Jeremiah 36:22 attests that King Jehoiakim "was sitting in the winter-house in the ninth month; and the brazier was burning before him," thereby decisively demonstrating that in the last years of the Judahite kingdom the new year began on 1 Nisan. At the same time, however, it cannot be established with certainty that this was

the practice during the entire period of the monarchy, or if the intent of the Biblical text is to the beginning of the year of reign. It is quite likely that the answer to both questions is affirmative, but this is not certain.²³

2. Postdating was the system used in Judah, while in the Northern Kingdom antedating was the system until the end of the ninth century BCE, and postdating from the beginning of the eighth century onward.

3. Some of the kings of Israel and Judah crowned their sons in their lifetime (coregencies). Certain testimony for a coregency in Israel appears in I Kings 1-2.

4. The years of all the kings of the two kingdoms were counted from their coronation, whether they were invested during the lifetime of their predecessor, or only after his death.

5. The years of two kings, Pekah of Israel and Jehoash of Judah, apparently were counted retroactively. Jehoiada the priest, who was the *de facto* ruler of Judah in the beginning of Jehoash's reign, apparently did not recognize the validity of Athaliah's rule, and he counted Jehoash's years from the murder of his father Ahaziah (for the reign of Pekah, see below, Chapter Four).

6. The Judahite calendar did not necessarily correspond to the Assyrian or Babylonian calendars.

The years of the kings of Israel probably were not counted in Judah in accordance with the Judahite calendar, and the years of the kings of Judah probably were not enumerated in the Northern Kingdom according to the Israelite calendar. Nor may it be assumed that the data in the Bible regarding the years of reign were rounded off, or that there was an interregnum in either of the two kingdoms.

Most of the chronological information pertaining to this period is preserved in the Book of Kings, which was composed in the mid-sixth century BCE. It is most likely that the author of the Book of Kings compiled tens of chronological data from his two main sources: the

²³ All the testimonies discovered by researchers attesting that the new year began in Israel or in Judah in the spring or in the fall are unconvincing, and cannot provide a decisive answer to this question. For an excellent discussion of the new year in the two kingdoms, see: Clines 1974, 22-40; cf. Hughes, 159 ff.

"Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah" and the "Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel." From the first book he apparently cited the data regarding the reigns of the kings of Judah, testimonies about the ages of the Judahite kings at the time of their coronation, "Judahite" synchronisms, and additional information pertaining to the history of the Southern Kingdom; and from the latter work he took the data concerning the years of the kings of Israel, and perhaps some of the "Israelite" synchronisms as well. The author of the Book of Kings undoubtedly attributed great importance to these data. He included in his composition the data concerning the reigns of all the kings of Israel and Judah, without exception, including the kings who ruled only a few days or weeks. He also took pains to mention the synchronisms of all the kings of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms from the schism to the fall of Samaria, and even arranged his composition in chronological-synchronistic order. The Book of Kings includes a total of approximately 115 numerical chronological data (see appendix A). There are blatant inconsistencies between these data. They have been discussed extensively in the research, and they will be examined below. There are at least twenty such inconsistencies, and it is difficult to imagine that they were hidden from the author of the Book of Kings; it is clear, however, that at least a portion of them are not the consequence of intervention by a redactor who was active after the stage of the composition of the book. It therefore may reasonably be assumed that the author of the book cited from his sources data which he himself regarded as inconsistent, and he did not make a comprehensive effort to resolve these inconsistencies.²⁴ Once this is said, however, it is possible that he calculated a number of data, possibly because he did not find data in his sources, and it is likely that other data were calculated by a redactor (see the discussion in the following chapters).²⁵

²⁴ For the contradictions between the chronological data in the Book of Kings, see: Thiele 1983, 33 ff.; Hughes, 97 ff.; also see the discussion below.

²⁵ For the sources and process of composition of the Book of Kings, see the introductions to the commentaries on the Book of Kings; also see: Thiele 1983, 193-204; Halpern and Vanderhoof, 179 ff.; Hughes, 77 ff., 97 ff., and loc. cit. for additional literature.

CHAPTER SIX

THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE KINGS OF JUDAH FROM
HEZEKIAH TO JOSIAH

There are differences of opinion regarding the time of King Hezekiah of Judah. Extra-Biblical sources indicate that Hezekiah ruled in 701, the year in which Sennacherib of Assyria conducted his campaign to the West.¹ It also is clear, from both the Bible and the inscriptions of Sennacherib, that Hezekiah was not deposed in this year, and he continued to reign in Jerusalem after the departure of the Assyrians from the land. Two other extra-Biblical testimonies indicate (1) that Hezekiah was crowned after 734, the year in which his father Ahaz offered tribute to Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria (K 3751, rev., 11'); and (2) ca. 677/6 his son Manasseh already occupied the throne (Esarhaddon, Nineveh Prisms A and F, 55). Hezekiah is mentioned by name in the "Azekah inscription" (apparently in the form "Ha-zaq-ia-a-u");² I assumed that this inscription describes the conquests of Hezekiah in Philistia ca. 713 and the campaign of Sargon II against Judah and Ashdod in 712. If we were to possess only the extra-Biblical sources, we would assume that Hezekiah reigned for at least 13 years (713-701), that he was crowned after 734, and that he died before 677/6. This conclusion is not at variance with the Biblical testimony that counts 29 years for Hezekiah (II Kings 18:2). On the other hand, there are contradictory Biblical testimonies regarding the year of Hezekiah's investiture. The text in II Kings 18:13 (= Isaiah 36:1), which testifies that Sennacherib conducted his campaign in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, indicates that he was crowned in 715; while the synchronisms connecting Hezekiah and Hoshea, the last Israelite

king (II Kings 18:1, 9-10), indicate that Hezekiah was installed in the 720s. Some researchers prefer to accept the data in vv. 1, 9-10, and they surmise that Hezekiah was crowned between 728 and 725, and that he ruled until ca. 699/7.³ Other scholars, based on the information in v. 13, surmise that Hezekiah was crowned only in 715 and died in 697/6⁴ or in 687/6.⁵ A third group argues that there is no contradiction between all these data.⁶ They theorize that Hezekiah was in fact crowned in the 720s, in the lifetime of his father King Ahaz. In 715, after the death of Ahaz, a new count of his years began. The campaign of Sennacherib was conducted in year 14 of his reign as sole king (after the death of his father), and these researchers also count the 29 years of his reign from 715. In their opinion Hezekiah's reign extended in practice for 42 or 43 years. All the above-mentioned scholars assumed the reliability of at least a portion of the chronological data in II Kings 18:1-13. In contrast, Hughes has recently revived the assumption that these data are not accurate, and cannot be used in calculating the years of Hezekiah.⁷ This approach assumes that Hezekiah was crowned in 722, the year in which Shalmaneser V of Assyria and Ahaz of Judah died. This hypothesis relies upon the prophecy in Isaiah 14:28-32: "In the year that king Ahaz died was this burden. Rejoice not, O Philistia, all of you, because the rod that smote you is broken...." This last assumption, however, is improbable. The prophecy in Isaiah 14:28-32 is likely to support the assumption that Ahaz died and Hezekiah was crowned in 727 or in 726, close to the death of Tiglath-pileser III, for it was he who had attacked Philistia. This was not the case regarding Shalmaneser V; there is no proof of his presumed action against the Philistines.⁸

The supposition that Hezekiah ruled 42 or 43 years is improbable.

¹ This opinion is held by many scholars, including Lewy (15, 32), Begrich (155), Jepsen (36-38), Schedl 1962a (112-119), Pavlovsky and Vogt (342-343), Vogelstein (2-3), Tadmor 1962 (277-279), Aharoni (96-97, 100), and Jenkins (286). It also reflects the view of the researchers agreeing with Begrich and Jepsen, and that of the scholars who accept Tadmor's reconstruction (see above, Chapter One).

² Mowinkel (214-220, 271); Andersen (98, 112), and those accepting Andersen's 1969 reconstruction, including Herrmann, Lemche (9), Jagersma, and Jones; yet in 1989 (14 ff., 45) Andersen changed his mind (see below).

³ This is the opinion of Kleber (181-188), Thiele 1983 (174), Albright (22), and all the researchers accepting the theses of Thiele or of Albright.

⁴ For this assumption, see: Horn 1964, 47-50; Gray 1970, 74; Kitchen, 494; Na'aman 1986, 84-85, 90 and loc. cit. for additional literature.

⁵ Hughes, 212-218, 222 and loc. cit. for additional literature.

⁶ For this assumption see, e.g.: Tadmor 1962, 278; Pavlovsky and Vogt, 342-343.

¹ For recent discussions of the campaign of Sennacherib to the West, see: H. Tadmor, "Sennacherib's Campaign to Judah: Historical and Historiographical Considerations," *Zion* 50 (1985), 65-80 (Hebrew); E. Vogt, *Der Aufstieg Hiskias und die Belagerung Jerusalems 701 v. Chr.*, Rome 1986; Galil 1988, 1-12 and loc. cit. for additional literature; B. Halpern, "Jerusalem and the Lineages in the Seventh Century BCE: Kingship and the Rise of Individual Moral Liability," in: B. Halpern and D. W. Hobson (eds.), *Law and Ideology in Monarchic Israel* (JSOT supp. 124), Sheffield 1991, 11-107, esp. 20-49.

² Galil 1992a, 111 ff.

It cannot be assumed that a new count was initiated for the coregent after the death of his father. In fact, the Egyptian testimonies indicate (1) that the years of a king were counted from his coronation, whether he was crowned in the lifetime of his father, or whether his investiture followed his father's death; and (2) that a new count did not begin after the death of the father.⁹

The supposition that Hezekiah was crowned in 715 raises many difficulties and contradicts seven chronological data:

1. The text in II Kings 16:2 indicates that Ahaz ruled 16 years. If Hezekiah was installed in 715, it consequently must be assumed that Ahaz reigned ca. 20 years, for the summary inscription K 3751 indicates that Ahaz offered tribute to Tiglath-pileser III in 734 (see the detailed discussion of this inscription in Chapter Four, above).¹⁰ Those scholars who claim that Hezekiah was crowned in 715 allot 20 years to Ahaz.¹¹ Outstanding in this respect is Kleber, who argues that there was an interregnum between Ahaz and Hezekiah.¹²

2. If it nevertheless is assumed that Ahaz reigned for 16 years, as stated in II Kings 16:2, and that Hezekiah succeeded him in 715, it follows that the investiture of Ahaz took place in 731 or in 730, thereby contradicting the testimony of inscription K 3751.

3. If Hezekiah was crowned only in 715, and each of his forefathers, Ahaz and Jotham, ruled for 16 years, then Jotham was installed ca. 747. Jeroboam of Israel apparently died before 747, which contradicts the chronological data in I Chronicles 5:17 that a census was conducted east of the Jordan in the time of Jotham and Jeroboam. Therefore, in Thiele's opinion, on the one hand, and that of Andersen, on the other, Jeroboam died ca. three years before the investiture of Jotham.¹³

4. If Hezekiah was crowned in 715 and Josiah died in 609, then the count of Manasseh's years (or that of Hezekiah, or of Josiah) must be reduced by ca. 11 years, for the count of their years totals 117 years

(Hezekiah - 29; Manasseh - 55; Amon - 2; Josiah - 39), while only 106 calendar years elapsed between 715 and 609. Some researchers do indeed surmise that Manasseh reigned for only 45 years,¹⁴ while Mowinckel assumed that Hezekiah ruled 19, and not 29, years.¹⁵ There are scholars who resolve this difficulty by assuming that Manasseh ruled as coregent ca. 11¹⁶ or 10¹⁷ years. This assumption as well has no basis (see the discussion below).

5. If Hezekiah was crowned in 715, the synchronism linking Hezekiah with Hoshea cannot be maintained.¹⁸

6. If the year of Hoshea's investiture (732, or 731 at the latest) is year 12 of Ahaz (II Kings 17:1), and if Hezekiah began to reign only in 715, then it must be assumed that Ahaz ruled at least 28 years.

7. The hypothesis that Hezekiah was crowned only in 715 contradicts the tradition that Samaria was conquered during the reign of Hezekiah. The conquest of Samaria was one of the most important events in Israelite history in the Biblical period, and it may safely be assumed that the inhabitants of Judah and their descendants would clearly remember who reigned in Judah at the time of the fall of the Northern Kingdom.¹⁹

Advancing the investiture of Hezekiah to the 720s contradicts the text of II Kings 18:13 that Sennacherib conducted his campaign in year 14 of Hezekiah, as well as the datum that Hezekiah began to rule at the age of 25, for if this report is correct, then it must be assumed that Ahaz was only 11 or 12 years old when he fathered Hezekiah, which is highly unlikely. Alternatively, it has been proposed that Hezekiah was 15 and not 25 at his investiture, or that Ahaz was 25 years old and not 20 when he began to rule (as is asserted by the Septuagint for II Chronicles 25:1).²⁰ Thiele argued that advancing

¹⁴ Albright, 22.

¹⁵ Mowinckel, 271.

¹⁶ For this opinion, see, e.g.: Thiele 1983, 176; Na'aman 1986, 90.

¹⁷ Horn 1964, 51.

¹⁸ This opinion is held by all the scholars who advance Hezekiah's investiture to 715 (see, e.g., Thiele 1983, 176) and of additional researchers, including Tadmor 1962 (287-288); see also the discussion below.

¹⁹ Cf. Vogelstein, 2; Aharoni, 96; Jenkins, 286. For a different opinion, see: Wellhausen, 635 ff.

²⁰ H. Tadmor, "Hezekiah," *EB* 3 (1958), 95 (Hebrew); Tadmor 1962, 303-304; cf. Hughes, 224, n. 128.

⁹ For this issue, see the extensive discussion in Murnane; and recently Na'aman 1986, 85-88 and loc. cit. for additional literature. For an exception, see: Murnane, 57-87.

¹⁰ For this difficulty, see: Hughes, 212.

¹¹ See, e.g.: Thiele 1983, 133; Andersen, 111-112.

¹² Kleber, 181.

¹³ Thiele 1983, 116, 131; Andersen, 111-112. In 1939 (14 ff.) Andersen changed his mind, and claimed that Hezekiah was crowned in 726/25, and died in 697/96.

the coronation of Hezekiah also contradicts II Chronicles 29:3; 30:1, which reports that in his first year Hezekiah celebrated the Passover for all the tribes of Israel, from which he concluded that the Northern Kingdom had ceased to exist by this time.²¹ Cogan, however, has already shown that this date is tendentious, with the sole purpose of stressing "that Hezekiah cared for the Temple and its affairs from his first day as king."²²

A number of proposals have been raised for the explanation of the datum establishing the campaign of Sennacherib in year 14 of Hezekiah: (1) "the number 14 of Hezekiah is a corruption of 24, and establishes the beginning of the revolt against Sennacherib in 703;"²³ (2) the date refers to the campaign of Sargon against Judah and Philistia which was conducted in 713-712;²⁴ (3) Hezekiah undertook his reform in 715, and a new count of his years began in this year;²⁵ (4) the date is derivative and is based, on the one hand, on the count of Hezekiah's years (29) and, on the other hand, on the report that "in those days" Hezekiah was mortally ill and that in this year Isaiah delivered a prophecy to him that he would live an additional 15 years, thus leading to the conclusion that these events occurred in year 14 of Hezekiah.²⁶ In a similar vein, Tadmor surmised that in his fourteenth year (714/13) a delegation came to Hezekiah from Merodach-baladan: "the date 'year 14 of Hezekiah' which is written at the beginning of the narrative of the war of Sennacherib against Hezekiah is the creation of a redactor, who combined the story of the Assyrian campaign against Judah with another narrative, that of the miracle performed for Hezekiah during his illness, in that God granted him an additional 15 years of life."²⁷

The third campaign of Sennacherib most likely was not conducted in year 14 of Hezekiah. This date apparently is not original, rather it was based, as proposed above, on the calculation of the redactor of the Book of Kings who possessed data, from which he concluded that the Assyrian campaign took place in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah.

His calculation was based on the following data: (1) Hezekiah reigned 29 years; (2) Sennacherib conducted his campaign during the time of Hezekiah; (3) "In those days" (II Kings 20:1) - i.e., in the redactor's view, at the time of the campaign of Sennacherib, Hezekiah was sick unto death, and the prophet Isaiah informed him that he would live an additional 15 years. The redactor presumed that the prophecy was fulfilled, and concluded that the campaign was conducted in year 14 of Hezekiah.

The conjecture that Hezekiah was crowned in 728 raises an additional difficulty, for this assumes that 119 years elapsed from the investiture of Hezekiah to the death of Josiah (609), while the count of years of reign from the coronation of Hezekiah to the death of Josiah totals only approximately 117 years (Hezekiah - 29; Manasseh - 55; Amon - 2; Josiah 31).²⁸ Lewy sought to resolve this discrepancy by suggesting that Hezekiah reigned in effect for 31 years proposing that the first two years of his reign he served as coregent.²⁹ In Lewy's opinion, the scribes who calculated the synchronisms connecting Hezekiah and Hoshea counted the years of the former from his investiture in the time of his father. This hypothesis is difficult and convoluted and cannot be accepted.³⁰

Another proposed resolution of this difficulty was raised by Tadmor, who assumed that the count of the years of Hezekiah, Amon, and Manasseh consists of the whole years counted for these kings, "but in addition to their whole years, each of them ruled a few months (but less than a year) at the end of his reign, rather [the latter] were omitted from the calculation by the orderer of the chronological system, even though they had been included in the official count during the time of the kings themselves as a normative year."³¹ In his opinion, Hezekiah ruled 30 years, Manasseh 56 years, and Amon 3 years. Tadmor was also forced to surmise that the years of Manasseh were calculated by the antedating system, while those of Amon were counted in accordance with the postdating system, for the latter system came into use at this time. He argues that "the author of the chronological system was unaware of the fact that the postdating system was adopted when Amon ascended the throne, and consequently he deleted the

²¹ Thiele, 150 ff.; idem 1983, 169 ff., 175-176, 201 ff.

²² Cogan 1980, 169; contrast Halpern, chronology, 130 ff.

²³ Aharoni, 97; cf. H. H. Rowley, "Hezekiah's Reform and Rebellion," *BJRL* 44 (1961-2), 410-413.

²⁴ J. Lewy, "Sanherib und Hizkia," *OLZ* 31 (1928), 158-159; Jenkins, 284-298.

²⁵ Vogelstein, 2-4.

²⁶ Schedl 1962a, 114; Jepsen, 29-32; Pavlovsky and Vogt, 343.

²⁷ Tadmor 1962, 279; see also: Tadmor and Cogan, 198-199. For a critique of this assumption, see: Hughes, 212.

²⁸ Cf. Hughes, loc. cit.

²⁹ Lewy, 19-20, 32.

³⁰ For criticism of this assumption, see also: Tadmor 1962, 277.

³¹ *Ibid*

last year from the reigns of Manasseh and Amon, even though, for the purposes of the count, their fragmentary years are of equal weight with the whole years."³² Tadmor's hypothesis is problematic, and it cannot be assumed that the author of the Book of Kings (or "the author of the chronological system") rounded off the years of the kings of Judah. His hypothesis is arbitrary and inconsistent (see Chapter One). Moreover, the claim that the postdating system was adopted specifically for the investiture of Amon is not supported by any written testimony. Judah became an Assyrian vassal state ca. 90 years before Amon ascended the throne.

The key to resolving this chronological problem apparently lies in the data regarding the last siege of Samaria (see the comprehensive discussion in the preceding chapter). The siege probably began in year 4 of Hezekiah and was completed in his sixth year (= 720 BCE). Hezekiah was crowned in 726 and reigned 29 years, until 697/6. After his death, he was succeeded by his son Manasseh, who ruled 55 years from 697/6 to 642/1. The latter's son Amon ruled for two years (642/1-640/39), and Josiah reigned for 31 years (640/39-609). The final siege of Samaria began in year 4 of Hezekiah (722), and Samaria fell in his sixth year, in 720. In 713 (= year 13 of Hezekiah), Judah fought Philistia and conquered Ekron.³³ It is most likely that in year 14 of Hezekiah (= 712), the Babylonian expedition came to Judah (II Kings 20:12-19 = Isaiah 39).³⁴ In that same year the Assyrians conducted a punitive campaign against Ashdod and Judah, in the course of which Azekah was conquered. Sargon died in year 21 of Hezekiah (705), and Judah rebelled against Assyria. The campaign of Sennacherib to the West began in year 25 of Hezekiah, ca. 4 years before he died.

Table 25

<i>Assyria</i>	<i>Year BCE</i>	<i>Judah</i>	<i>Assyria</i>	<i>Year BCE</i>	<i>Judah</i>
<i>Sargon II</i>	718	<i>Hezekiah</i>	<i>Sargon II</i>	708	<i>Hezekiah</i>
4		8	14		18
5	717	9	15	707	19
6	716	10	16	706	20
7	715	11	17	705	21
8	714	12	<i>Sennacherib</i> Accession Year	704	22
9	713	13	1	703	23
10	712	14	2	702	24
11	711	15	3	701	25
12	710	16	4	700	26
13	709	17	5	699	27
14	708	18	6	698	28
			7		

³² Ibid.³³ Galil 1992a, 130-131.³⁴ Idem, *ibid.*, 125-127, 131 and *loc. cit.* for additional literature.

Table 26

<i>Assyria</i>	<i>Year BCE</i>	<i>Judah</i>
<i>Sennacherib</i>	698	<i>Hezekiah</i>
7		28
8	697	29 <i>Manasseh</i> Accession Year
9	696	1
10	695	2
11	694	3
12	693	4
13	692	5
14	691	6
15	690	7
16	689	8
17	688	9

<i>Assyria</i>	<i>Year BCE</i>	<i>Judah</i>
<i>Sennacherib</i>	688	<i>Manasseh</i>
17		9
18	687	10
19	686	11
20	685	12
21	684	13
22	683	14
23	682	15
24 <i>Esarhaddon</i> Accession Year	681	16
1	680	17
2	679	18
3	678	19

Table 27

<i>Assyria</i>	<i>Year BCE</i>	<i>Judah</i>
<i>Esarhaddon</i>	678	<i>Manasseh</i>
3		19
4	677	20
5	676	21
6	675	22
7	674	23
8	673	24
9	672	25
10	671	26
11	670	27
12 <i>Ashurbanipal</i> Accession Year	669	28
1	668	29

<i>Assyria</i>	<i>Year BCE</i>	<i>Judah</i>
<i>Ashurbanipal</i>	668	<i>Manasseh</i>
1		29
2	667	30
3	666	31
4	665	32
5	664	33
6	663	34
7	662	35
8	661	36
9	660	37
10	659	38
11	658	39