

THE TWILIGHT OF JUDAH: IN THE EGYPTIAN- BABYLONIAN MAELSTROM

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The late seventh century B.C., noted for its reshufflings in the international political sphere, saw the collapse of the Assyrian empire and the subsequent power-struggle between the up-and-coming Babylonia and Egypt over inheritance of the now-orphaned territories spreading from the Euphrates to Sinai. The geopolitical plight of this buffer region swept a most reluctant Kingdom of Judah—like many of her neighbours—into the alternating open conflict and “cold war” which ensued. Indeed, if outside factors were most influential throughout Judah’s history, they became overbearing in the two decades following the Battle of Megiddo, in 609 B.C.,—until, in 586 B.C., the little kingdom finally succumbed to international machinations.¹

A wide range of sources for this tense period provides a particularly detailed insight into much of the political development and internal activities in Judah: besides the Books of Kings and Chronicles, these decades are illuminated by the Book of Jeremiah, and their final years by the Book of Ezekiel. The contemporaneous epigraphical material in Hebrew is plentiful and varied, more so than in earlier periods, and the effects of the political-military events have been revealed in the archaeological excavations on numerous Judean sites. But a proper perspective for evaluating the historical factors underlying the final fate of Judah—factors which determined the policies of its rulers—is to be obtained only from sources beyond Palestine—primarily the Neo-Babylonian Chronicles and, to a lesser degree, Egyptian documentation. The twining of biblical data with external sources—especially the detailed framework of dates they contain—enables a sort of micro-analytic study of this period. Thus,

¹ For a complementary study of this period, as treated particularly in the first two sections of the present lecture, see A. MALAMAT, “The Last Kings of Judah and the Fall of Jerusalem”, *IEJ* XVIII 1968, pp. 137-156, and the bibliographical references there.

we can trace the historical process in time units much more minute than is generally feasible for the Israelite period—in terms of a specific year, month or even day.

The chronological method applied here has more than once influenced our reconstruction of the chain of events. Though there is a general consensus that the post-dating system, involving accession years, was employed in Judah at this time, another point is still particularly controversial—the month of the Judean regnal new year. Our reckoning is based on an autumnal calendar beginning on 1 Tishri, and not on the spring calendar accepted by many scholars and which was in general use in Babylonia. On previous occasions I have sought to demonstrate the preference of this Tishri reckoning in Judah, and its propensity for reconciling a majority of the variegated data, at least for our period.² To facilitate the tracing of the chain of events, a Chronological Table is appended. The months of the year, it must be remembered, were counted from Nisan, in keeping with the Judean civil calendar.

I.

The loss of Josiah at Megiddo in 609 B.C. put an effective end to the prosperity of the Judean kingdom and dispelled all hopes for restored grandeur. Indeed, this tragedy was so deeply felt that a day of remembrance was commemorated for generations (II Chron. xxxv 25; and cf. Josephus, *Ant.* X, 5, 1). The background of Josiah's (639-609 B.C.) clash with Necho II (610-595 B.C.) lies in the geo-

² See especially *ibid.*, pp. 146ff.; and cf. n. 19 there, for studies adopting a spring calendar, to which now add: K. T. ANDERSEN, *Stud. Theol.* XXIII 1969, pp. 109-114; D. J. A. CLINES, *Austral. Jour. Bibl. Arch.* (= *AJBA*) II 1972, pp. 9-34; idem, *JBL* XCIII 1974, pp. 22-40. In support of the autumnal calendar see the references in *IEJ* XVIII 1968, p. 146, n. 20; and now, with conclusions partly similar to ours: K. S. FREEDY and D. B. REDFORD, "The Dates in Ezekiel . . .", *JAOIS* XC 1970, pp. 462-485 (= *Freedy & Redford*); M. WEIPPERT, *Edom*, Tübingen 1971, pp. 351-372, 649-660. WEIPPERT (*ibid.*, pp. 356-357), like E. R. THIELE (*The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, Grand Rapids 1965, pp. 161-172) and S. H. HORN (*Andrews Univ. Seminary Stud.* V 1967, pp. 12-27) but contrary to our view, assumes that the regnal years of Nebuchadnezzar himself were reckoned in the Book of Kings according to the Tishri calendar, in contrast to official Babylonian practice. He thus seeks to reconcile the discrepancy—illusory in our opinion—between the date of Jehoiachin's exiling as given in II Kings xxiv 12b and as indicated in the Babylonian Chronicle; see below, in section II.

For the conversion of the ancient dates into "absolute" dates, cf. the tables in R. A. PARKER & W. H. DUBBERSTEIN, *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.—A.D. 75*, Providence (R.I.) 1956.

political developments which we noted in opening. In the rivalry between Judah and Egypt over the formerly Assyrian territories in Palestine, Psamtik I (664-610 B.C.), Necho's father, had held a clear advantage in time. It would seem that Psamtik gained sway over the cities of Philistia, in the south, and the province of *Magiddu*, which spread over the Jezreel Plain and Galilee, in the north, and thus came into possession of the city of Megiddo.³ At least as early as 616 B.C., Megiddo must have become a logistics base for the Egyptian forces on the march to the Euphrates in support of their newly-made allies, the Assyrians; it was undoubtedly such a base in 610 and, again, in 609 B.C.⁴ Josiah was able to launch his annexation policy only after initiating his reform (around 628 B.C.; cf. II Chron. xxxiv 6), and he seems to have gained control solely over the former Assyrian province of *Samerina* and to have established a corridor reaching the coast in the northern Shephelah, as possibly witnessed by the Hebrew epigraphic finds at Meşad Hashavyahu.

The woeful results of the battle of Megiddo (apparently in Sivan of 609 B.C.)⁵ led to rapid political fluctuations in Judah,—and from then till the Destruction of the First Temple,—a mere score years,—the rulers of Judah changed loyalties—to either Egypt or Babylonia—no less than six times. The international scene at this time demanded extreme skill in manoeuvring, and the kings of Judah were repeatedly forced to come to terms with kaleidoscopic situations and astonishingly frequent political dilemmas of a most fateful order. The first exigency was the selection of a successor to Josiah, who apparently had not seen a need to designate his heir. Some

³ For a detailed discussion of the historical circumstances which preceded the Battle of Megiddo, and an analysis of the battle itself, see A. MALAMAT, *The Gaster Festschrift* (JANES V 1973), pp. 267-279. For similar general conclusions concerning the rule of Psamtik I over considerable territories in Palestine and Syria, see B. OTZEN, *Studien über Deuterocacharja*, Copenhagen 1964, pp. 78ff.

⁴ For the Egyptian expedition to the north, noted in Nabopolassar's Chronicle, see C. J. GADD, *The Fall of Nineveh*, London 1923, pp. 31ff., B.M. 21901, lines 10, 61, 66; D. J. WISEMAN, *Chronicles of Chaldaean Kings 626-556 B.C.*, London 1956 (= *CCK*), pp. 55ff.

⁵ Cf. *IEJ* XVIII 1968, p. 139. But note now that the Egyptians required almost a month, rather than two weeks, to cover the distance to the river (which they crossed in Tammuz 609 B.C.), for the actual distance between Megiddo and Carchemish is about 650 km, and the advance of the rushing Egyptian army should be estimated at about 25-30 km *per diem*. See similarly CLINES, *AJBA* II 1972, pp. 30ff.; and also M. VOGELSTEIN, *Biblical Chronology*, Cincinnati 1944, pp. 27f., who, however, considered the march from Megiddo to Carchemish to have taken at least six weeks.

thirty years earlier, Josiah himself had been enthroned by the 'am ha-'areš, that body of landed aristocracy in Judah which is found to be involved wherever the natural succession of the Davidic line was brought in jeopardy. The assassination of Josiah's father, Amon, was undoubtedly of Egyptian instigation, and already then Egypt seems to have been intriguing to install a sympathetic regime in Judah. The 'am ha-'areš managed to suppress the revolt at court (II Kings xxi 19-26), enthrone the young Josiah and surely also set the deeply anti-Egyptian tone of his policy.

The successor to emerge was Josiah's son Jehoahaz (Shallum), in opposition to the principle of primogeniture—Jehoiakim (Eliakim) being the older of the brothers by two years. This irregular enthronement, a sort of *coup d'état*, was again effected by the 'am ha-'areš (II Kings xxiii 30; II Chron. xxxvi 1).⁶ The political significance of this step comes into focus when we consider the decidedly anti-Egyptian stand generally taken by the 'am ha-'areš in this period. The choice of Jehoahaz was apparently based on his maternal lineage, for his mother Hamutal "daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah" (II Kings xxiii 31; who is depicted allegorically as a "lioness . . . among lions" in Ezek. xix) was of the Judean rural nobility which comprised the 'am ha-'areš. Eleven years later, Nebuchadnezzar's selection of a ruler seems to have been governed by similar considerations, for Zedekiah was of the same mother and thus also represented the anti-Egyptian faction of the Davidic line. In contrast, Jehoiakim's maternal lineage seems to have been odious to the Judean nobility, for his mother was Zebidah "daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah" (II Kings xxiii 36), the latter a Galilean town in the valley of Beth Netopha, most probably in territory under Egyptian control since the days of Psamtik (as noted above). Thus, in spite of the defeat at Megiddo, the Judean leadership is seen to have continued its anti-Egyptian line, a policy rather premature under the circumstances.

After reigning for only three months, Jehoahaz's fate was put in the balance by Necho's intervention. Jeremiah, for one, was already confident that "he shall return no more to see his native land" (Jer. xxii 10-12; and cf. Ezek. xix 1-4). The king was indeed deposed and exiled to Egypt, probably at the urging of his brother,

⁶ For the irregularity surrounding the enthronement, see *IEJ* XVIII 1968, pp. 139f. and nn. 6-7 and the bibliography on the 'am ha-'areš there. For the latter see now also T. ISHIDA, *Annual of the Japanese Biblical Institute* I 1975, pp. 23-38.

Jehoiakim, who sought recognition of his rights of primogeniture.⁷ Jehoiakim's subsequent enthronement by Necho seems to have been based on mutual interests: Pharaoh assisted him in realizing his legitimate claim to the throne (note the specific wording in II Kings xxiii 34: "Necho made Eliakim . . . king in the place of *Josiah his father* . . ."—which entirely bypasses his brother's reign); in turn, Pharaoh gained a loyal vassal and ally. The punishment meted out to Judah by Necho, apparently hand-in-hand with Jehoiakim, fell poignantly upon the *'am ba-'ares*; with the tables turned, it was the anti-Egyptian faction which had to bear the burden, rather than the palace or Temple treasury in Jerusalem (II Kings xxiii 35).⁸ Jehoiakim apparently came to the throne only in Tishri 609 B.C. (though he may have imposed the reckoning of his reign as if he had succeeded his father directly).⁹ The summer and autumn of 609 B.C. were thus days of turmoil in Judah, typified by a rapidly changing political situation and the successive reigns of three kings, in rather unusual circumstances.

Necho now controlled the entire area "from the Brook of Egypt to the river Euphrates, all that belonged to the king of Egypt",

⁷ In I Esdras (i 36) there is a specific tradition that Jehoiakim was behind his brother's arrest, along with other Judean leaders; see J. M. MYERS, *I & II Esdras (Anchor Bible)*, Garden City 1974, pp. 30, 32. Jehoiakim's possible intervention in the overthrow of Jehoahaz has been alluded to in J. SCHARBERT, *Die Prophetie Israels um 600 v. Chr.*, Köln 1967, p. 128.

⁸ Professor B. MAZAR has brought to my attention the relatively low sum of the tribute imposed here by the Egyptians (II Kings xxiii 33), in comparison with that exacted from Menahem king of Israel (II Kings xv 19), or Hezekiah, who had to draw upon the royal and Temple treasuries in Jerusalem (II Kings xviii 14). This would seem to confirm that Necho's tribute was to be borne by a particular class rather than by the populace in general, as held in the Commentaries; see J. A. MONTGOMERY, *The Books of Kings (ICC)*, Edinburgh 1951, p. 551; J. GRAY, *I & II Kings* 2, London 1970, pp. 750ff. In any event, the royal palace was hardly affected and Jehoiakim was able to erect splendid royal buildings (cf. Jer. xxii 13ff.).

⁹ (a) If Jehoiakim came to the throne only subsequent to 1 Tishri 609 B.C. (as we uphold in *IEJ* XVIII 1968, p. 141, and in the Chronological Table below), a conclusion reasonable in itself, then the period up till Tishri 608 B.C. should be considered his accession year (Akkadian *reš šarrūti*); this would have been Jehoahaz's first regnal year, in purely chronological terms. (b) On the other hand, if the contemporaneous reckoning of Jehoiakim's years, during his reign, was from Josiah's death—a possibility suggested to me by R. GRAFMAN—1 Tishri 609 B.C. would have ushered in his first regnal year. This would reconcile the chronological difficulty in Jer. xlvi 2 (see n. 11, below), though it raises an outward conflict with II Kings xxiii 36, where the length of Jehoiakim's reign is given as eleven years.

to use the contemporaneous biblical phrase (II Kings xxiv 7).¹⁰ But this period of Egyptian glory was to be short lived. Already in the summer of 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar, still Crown Prince, dealt the Egyptians a stunning blow, in the Battle of Carchemish, and subsequently defeated the remnant Egyptian force in the land of Hamath.¹¹ This, then, truly sealed the fate of Syria and Palestine. But neither then—nor, fatally, even later—did the Judean leaders grasp the full significance of events in the international arena. The traumatic experience of the Battle of Megiddo, and the mutuality of interests between Necho and Jehoiakim may well have shackled the leadership in Jerusalem with the image of a mighty Egypt which would rush to the aid of its allies in time of need. Other states held Egypt in similar regard, as revealed in an Aramaic letter discovered at Saqqara:¹² The ruler of some city, apparently in Philistia, urgently

¹⁰ The Egyptian control of the Lebanon already in the days of Psamtik I is evidenced by an Egyptian stela of 612 B.C.; see *Freedly & Redford*, p. 477; and possibly also by a second inscription, cf. MALAMAT, *Gaster Festschrift*, p. 273, n. 20. Egyptian influence in the Phoenician coastal cities is witnessed by a statue of Psamtik I from the port-city of Arvad; a fragment, possibly also from his reign, discovered at Tyre; and a stela of Necho II at Sidon—for which now see J. J. KATZENSTEIN, *The History of Tyre*, Jerusalem 1973, pp. 299, n. 24; 313, n. 100. KATZENSTEIN also associates the passage in Nebuchadnezzar's Wadi Brisa inscription (col. IX, lines 23-24)—relating of an enemy who had subdued and plundered the Lebanon region—with Egypt. But he assumes that all the above evidence points only to commercial ties between Egypt and Syria, rather than actual Egyptian control; see *ibid.*, pp. 298-304. In contrast, see OTZEN, *Deuterostacharja*, pp. 90ff., who regards the above as proving Egyptian rule in Asia, finding additional support for this in the prophecy in Zech. ix 1-8.

¹¹ On the Babylonian source, see *CCK*, pp. 66ff. (BM 21946). Jer. xlvi 2 places the Battle of Carchemish in Jehoiakim's fourth regnal year, the only substantial instance of a date conflicting with our Tishri reckoning, which would put this battle in his third year (cf. the Chronological Table). See *IEJ* XVIII 1968, p. 147, n. 21, where we have also cited HORN's suggestion to reconcile the difficulty here by attributing this date to the time of the oracular utterance rather than to the battle itself. Although problematic, this might find support in Jer. xxxvi 1-2, where the date of the Prophet's first scroll, which recorded *inter alia* Oracles on the Nations, is fixed in Jehoiakim's fourth regnal year. The chronological notation at the head of the Oracles on the Nations in Jer. xlvi 2 thus may well have been harmonized with this. WEIPPERT (*Edom*, p. 653, n. 1238) assumes that the Battle of Carchemish and the subsequent Babylonian campaign, which latter took place in the winter of 605/604 B.C., after the enthronement of Nebuchadnezzar, were regarded in Judah as one continuous military episode, which thus would have fallen already in Jehoiakim's fourth regnal year; but Jeremiah's prophecy specifically deals with the defeat of "the army of Pharaoh Necho" which no longer took part in events half a year after the Battle of Carchemish. But for a possible corroboration of the date as given in Jer., see n. 9(b).

¹² Cf. DONNER-RÖLLIG, *KAI*, No. 266; and *IEJ* XVIII 1968, p. 143, n. 11, for additional bibliography. The treaty relations between the vassal king and Pharaoh are inferred in line 8 in the letter: *wf'btb* (i.e. a treaty) *'bdk nšr*.

appeals to Pharaoh for military assistance to repel the approaching Babylonians, reminding his suzerain of his treaty obligations.

Thus, we can appreciate all the more such level-headed persons as Jeremiah, possessing deep foresight and historical perspective. A mere few months after the Battle of Carchemish, Jeremiah already proclaimed his steadfast belief in Nebuchadnezzar's impending rule over Judah and Hither Asia in general (Jer. xxv 1-14; and see the Chronological Table).¹³ Like Isaiah in his day, or Ezekiel his younger contemporary, Jeremiah strove to smash the popular image of Egypt, which had led to a false sense of security among the Judean leadership and spread a spurious hope of military support (cf., e.g., Egypt as "a staff of reed to the house of Israel . . . and when they leaned upon thee thou didst break", in Ezek. xxix 7-8). In Jeremiah's mind, the only way to save the nation was to surrender voluntarily to Babylonia, to which cause he remained loyal to the bitter end (Jer. xxi 8-9; xxxviii 2, etc.). Thus, political orientation became an acute issue among the people of Judah, gradually intensifying the polarity between the pro-Egyptian and pro-Babylonian factions.

The Babylonian subjugation of Judah was not long in coming. The exact date is still a matter of controversy, and even Nebuchadnezzar's Chronicle is indefinite. Military campaigns to the West are recorded for each of the years between 605 and 601 B.C., but no specific names of subjected states are mentioned (except Ashkelon).¹⁴ Briefly, there are several possibilities:

a) Judah was conquered immediately after the Egyptian defeat at the Battle of Carchemish. This is supported by the opening of the Book of Daniel (i 1-4) relating the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in the third year of Jehoiakim (see Chronological Table), the looting of "vessels of the house of God", and the exiling of

¹³ The oracle took place "in the fourth year of Jehoiakim . . . the first (*ri'sonit*) year of Nebuchadnezzar" (Jer. xxv 1); if the unusual term for "first" year here refers to Nebuchadnezzar's accession year (*res šarrūti*), the prophecy would have been uttered between Tishri 605 and Nisan 604 B.C.; but if it refers to his first actual regnal year, the synchronism covers the period between Nisan and Tishri 604 B.C. (see the Chronological Table). C. F. WHITLEY (*ZAW* LXXX 1968, pp. 38-49) holds that Jer. xxv was the Prophet's earliest oracle and that Jeremiah began his activity only in 605 B.C. (rather than two decades earlier, as recorded in Jer.), but this seems untenable. In support of the traditional dating of Jeremiah's call, see most recently T. W. OVERHOLT, *CBQ* XXXIII 1971, pp. 165-184.

¹⁴ See *CCK*, pp. 66-71. The relevant passage is BM 21946, lines 1-23 and verso lines 1-7, from which the following citations are taken.

certain Judeans. Further the last datum is in accord with a tradition related by Josephus (*Ant.* X, 11, 1; *Contra Apionem* I, 19), that Judean captives, amongst others, were carried off to Babylon after the victory at Carchemish. In another passage (*Ant.* X, 6, 1), Josephus even specifies that at this same time Nebuchadnezzar conquered all the lands of the West as far as Pelusium on the border of Egypt—but he explicitly adds: “except the land of Judah”. It is difficult, however, to rely upon the chronological accuracy of these traditions (which apparently refer to events occurring several years later).¹⁵ Though Josephus’s data largely agree with those of the Babylonian Chronicle, the Chronicle itself does not bear out any widespread conquests in the West while Nebuchadnezzar was still Crown Prince. Immediately after the victory at Carchemish, as we now know, Nebuchadnezzar conquered only the “entire land of Ha[ma]th”,¹⁶ and not the “entire land of Hatti” (that is, Syria-Palestine), as formerly read.

b) Judah submitted a year later, when Nebuchadnezzar devastated Ashkelon, in Kislev of his first regnal year (December 604 B.C.). This date corresponds exactly with the ninth month of the fifth regnal year of Jehoiakim, when a general day of fasting was proclaimed in Jerusalem (Jer. xxxvi 9ff.; see the Chronological Table). Jeremiah’s foreboding words, brought before an emergency council of ministers on the fastday, warned of the impending national calamity—the full drama of which we can trace today by means of the Babylonian Chronicle.¹⁷ But Jehoiakim, belittling Jeremiah’s warning

¹⁵ See *IEJ* XVIII 1968, p. 142, n. 10, where we emend in Dan. i 1 “third” year of Jehoiakim to “sixth” year, a minor difference in the Hebrew, and a suitable date for the subjugation of Judah (see below). For the implausibility of the round date of “third year” here, see most recently CLINES, *AJBA* II 1972, pp. 20ff.; and M. DELCOR, *Le Livre de Daniel*, Paris 1971, pp. 59f. The latter assumes that this date was erroneously derived from II Kings xxiv 1, on Jehoiakim’s rebellion against Babylonia after three years. Josephus’s reference to Judean captives after the Battle of Carchemish may indicate that Judah, like other vassals, had supplied troops in support of the Egyptian army. A list of Egyptian prisoners (?) from Sippar in Babylonia, from the third year of Nebuchadnezzar, may also be noted in this context; see D. J. WISEMAN, *Iraq* XXVIII 1966, pp. 156ff. On the other hand, Josephus may have been telescoping two originally distinct events when he describes Nebuchadnezzar’s campaign as far as Pelusium, which would appear, actually, to refer to the Babylonian invasion to the border of Egypt in the winter of 601/600 B.C. (see below).

¹⁶ This restoration was proposed by A. K. GRAYSON, *Bibbia e Oriente* VI 1964, p. 205; B. ODED, *Tarbiz* XXXV 1965, p. 104 (Hebrew).

¹⁷ See A. MALAMAT, *IEJ* VI 1956, pp. 251f. But A. BAUMANN (*ZAW* LXXX 1968, pp. 350-373) now opposes any connexion between Jeremiah’s oracles read on the fastday and the Babylonian campaign.

“that the king of Babylon will certainly come and destroy this land” (Jer. xxxvi 29), burned the Prophet’s scroll of doom, which leads to the conclusion that Judah at this time was still not subdued.

c) The submission of Judah may have occurred only in the autumn or winter of 603 B.C., during Nebuchadnezzar’s campaign in his second regnal year. Unfortunately, the broken state of the Babylonian tablet here does not enable us to confirm this. In this campaign, which was certainly to the West, the Babylonian king set out in the month of Iyyar with a “mighty army” supported by siege machines, indicating that strong opposition was anticipated. Nebuchadnezzar was most probably seeking to subdue all Philistia and gain control of Judah—all as a prelude to his ultimate goal—the conquest of Egypt, his arch-rival. If this be the case, the lacuna here is to be restored with the conquest of a specific city in Philistia, such as Ashdod, Ekron or more probably Gaza¹⁸ (cf. Jer. xxv 20; xlvii 5; Zeph. ii 4); the subsequent missing section of the tablet might then relate to the submission of Jehoiakim (cf. II Chron. xxxvi 6-7; Dan. i 1-2—both apparently relating to this event).¹⁹

The latter proposal for dating the subjugation of Judah is in good accord with the circumstances which led to Jehoiakim’s rebellion against Babylonia. According to II Kings xxiv 1, Jehoiakim submitted to Babylonia for three years; in other words, he submitted to the annual tribute three times. If this tribute was yielded the first time in the autumn or winter of 603 B.C., the third payment would have been made in the autumn or winter of 601 B.C., during the Babylonian campaign in Nebuchadnezzar’s fourth regnal year. In Kislev (December) 601 B.C., the King of Babylonia took command of his armies, already mustered in the land of “Hatti” and poised to attack Egypt proper. The ensuing war, in the winter

¹⁸ A. F. RAINEY now proposes to restore the name “Gaza” in the lacuna in the Chronicle (BM 21946) at the start of line 22; see his chapter in the forthcoming report by Y. AHARONI on the excavations of the Tel Aviv University at Lachish. The restoration “Ashdod” there is equally possible. This city is signally denoted “the remnant of Ashdod” in Jer. xxv 20, among the Philistine cities condemned to fall before the Babylonians. This would suit its reduced status (represented by stratum VI on the site) on the eve of Nebuchadnezzar’s conquest, undoubtedly the result of the lengthy siege by Psamtik I; cf. MALAMAT, *Gaster Festschrift*, p. 272 and n. 19 there.

¹⁹ See *IEJ* XVIII 1968, p. 142 and n. 9 there. For a similar dating of the subjugation of Judah, cf. already E. VOGT, *Biblica* XLV 1964, pp. 354f.; and, even prior to the publication of the Babylonian Chronicle, J. T. NELLIS, *RB* LXI 1954, pp. 387-391; while W. F. ALBRIGHT, *JBL* LI 1932, pp. 89ff., brought the surrender of Judah down to 603/602 B.C.

of 601/600 B.C.—an international event of outstanding significance—was first revealed to us by the Babylonian Chronicle, which makes no effort to hide the shortcomings of the Babylonian army in its most ambitious campaign to date. Heavy casualties on both sides are reported, and the Babylonians were forced to withdraw. It was this failure, before their very eyes, which most probably encouraged the Judeans and several neighbouring kingdoms to shake off Babylonian hegemony (see the Chronological Table).²⁰

II.

This blow forestalled the Babylonian reaction to Jehoiakim's revolt. Nebuchadnezzar spend his fifth regnal year (600/599 B.C.) rebuilding his chariot force. The next year he raided among the Arabs (winter of 599/98 B.C.), taking much spoil, as finds reflection in Jeremiah's oracle on "Kedar and the kingdoms of Hazor which Nebuchadnezzar . . . smote" (Jer. xlix 28-33; and see the Chronological Table).²¹ In his seventh year (598/597 B.C.), however, Nebuchadnezzar's full wrath fell upon Judah, the force of which surely was not lost upon Egypt and her other camp-followers, as well. Indeed, the Chronicle entry for this year deals entirely with the conquest of Jerusalem, the deposing of Jehoiachin and the installing of Zedekiah. This entry fully substantiates the biblical version, and as *baksheesh* gives the precise day of the surrender of Jerusalem —2 Adar, 16 March, 597 B.C.—a dating unique in the extra-biblical sources touching upon Israelite history. This date, and the almost simultaneous replacement of the Judean ruler, provides a fixed point of reference for the chronology of this period, as well as a keystone in the matter of the regnal new year in Judah, a problem extensively treated by scholars.²² Moreover, it can guide us toward a fuller understanding of the actual course of the siege and of the resultant exile.

²⁰ See *IEJ* VI 1956, p. 251; XVIII 1968, p. 142; VOGT, *VTS* IV 1957, p. 90. On the Babylonian-Egyptian encounter in 601/600 B.C., and further possible evidence for it, see E. LIPIŃSKI, *AION* XXXII 1972, p. 235-241; and MALAMAT, *Gaster Festschrift*, pp. 276f.

²¹ See *CCK*, pp. 31f.; and cf. *IEJ* VI 1956, pp. 254f.; VOGT, *VTS* IV 1957, p. 92. On the various motives which may have been behind the Babylonian raids on the Arab tribes, see I. EPHAL, *The Nomads on the Border of Palestine . . .* (Doctoral Dissertation, Jerusalem 1971), pp. 125-129 (Hebrew); and W. J. DUMBRELL, *AJBA* II 1972, pp. 99-108.

²² The Babylonian source is BM 21946, verso lines 11-13; *CCK*, pp. 70f. For the complex chronological problems it raises, see *IEJ* XVIII 1968, pp. 144ff., and the bibliography there.

We now know that Nebuchadnezzar mustered his troops and set out for Jerusalem in Kislev (18 December 598-15 January 597 B.C.), and since the march required at least two months, he could have arrived with the bulk of his army only shortly before the city's surrender. But Jerusalem was already under full siege by his "servants" (II Kings xxiv 10-11), probably Babylonian occupation troops and possibly also auxiliary forces (cf. *vs.* 2) stationed in the West. The Chronicle might be supporting this in the entry for the previous year, noting only that the king returned to Babylonia, and thus apparently implying that heavy reinforcements were left in the West.²³

The biblical sources on the exile of Jehoiachin are in outward contradiction, in both the extent of the exile and its exact date. According to II Kings xxiv, the exile encompassed 10,000 (*vs.* 14) or 7,000 (*vs.* 16) persons, mostly military, to either of which we must add a thousand armourers and sappers.²⁴ This mass exile, headed by Jehoiachin and his entourage, occurred according to this source in the *eight* year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (*vs.* 12), the year beginning on 1 Nisan 597 B.C.—at least a month after the surrender of Jerusalem. Moreover, II Chronicles xxxvi 10 also implies that Jehoiachin was exiled around the time of the civil new year, and that Nebuchadnezzar had already returned to his capital, surely for the annual festivities. But according to the list of exiles in Jeremiah lii (based undoubtedly on some official source), a mere 3,023 "Jews" were exiled—in the *seventh* year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (*vs.* 28). These have generally been regarded as contradicting traditions on one and the same matter, or it has been thought that different chronological systems were employed in the Book of Kings and in Jeremiah lii, respectively²⁵—though even then the numbers for the

²³ The specific formulation of the Chronicle entry for the sixth year has already been pointed out by WISEMAN, *CCK*, p. 32. On the timing of Nebuchadnezzar's appearance before Jerusalem, see in particular M. NOTH, *ZDPV* LXXIV 1958, pp. 136ff.; and *IEJ* XVIII 1968, p. 144.

²⁴ The term *masgēr* (paired with *hārāš*), usually translated "smith", refers rather to some occupation involved with fortifications, as do several other usages of the same root, such as *misgarat* and the verb *sgr* (cf., e.g., II Sam. xxii 46 || Ps. xviii 46; I Kings xi 27; Micah vii 17). For an Akkadian cognate and a possibly related loanword in Egyptian, cf. W. HELCK, *Die Beziehungen Ägyptens zu Vorderasien im 3. und 2. Jahrtausend v. Chr.*², Wiesbaden 1971, p. 525, No. 297. In the exiling of the "armourers and sappers", Nebuchadnezzar achieved a double purpose, depriving Judah of elements essential for its defence and, on the other hand, gained a skilled labour force for his own military designs at home.

²⁵ See, e.g., W. F. ALBRIGHT, *BASOR* CXLIII 1956, pp. 28-33; D. N. FREEDMAN, *BA* XIX 1956, pp. 50-60; both of whom hold that the dates in Jer. lii

deportees disagree. The discrepancies between the two sources can be reconciled, however, by proposing that the exile evolved in two successive deportations:²⁶

a) The first phase (already intimated in Jer. xiii 18-19) was a limited deportation prior to or upon the surrender of Jerusalem—still in Nebuchadnezzar's seventh year (Jer. lii 28). The particular appellative here, "Jews"—implying the provincial element of Judah—is brought into perspective by the designation "from Jerusalem", applied to the exiles deported during the final siege, in Nebuchadnezzar's 18th year (*vs.* 29; and see the Chronological Table). Several years after the destruction of Jerusalem, in Nebuchadnezzar's 23rd year, the deportees are once again, and quite appropriately, called "Jews" (*vs.* 30).

b) The second, principal phase of the exile, described in the Book of Kings, comprised the cream of Jerusalem and thousands of her defenders, including the armourers and sappers specifically mentioned as exiled from the capital (Jer. xxiv 1; xxix 2). The organization of this mass exile surely necessitated several weeks from the time of the surrender of the city, on 2 Adar, and thus it would have fallen only in Nebuchadnezzar's eighth regnal year, by which time he had already left the country.

The assumption of two separate deportations can also serve to reconcile the discrepancies in the numbers of deportees, as given within II Kings xxiv—10,000 and 7,000 (besides the armourers and sappers, in both cases). There is no need to see here two parallel but conflicting sources, as often presumed. The number 7,000 may well be intended for the main deportation, at the later stage; while the number 10,000 would represent the total of the two deportations, including the 3,000 captives from the initial phase.²⁷

28-29 are the only biblical instance of official Babylonian figures, thus identifying the exiles of Nebuchadnezzar's seventh and eighteenth years with those of his eighth and nineteenth years, respectively. W. RUDOLPH, *Jeremia*³, Tübingen 1968, p. 324, following earlier commentators, emends the "seventh" year of Nebuchadnezzar to "seventeenth", taking the figure (as in the next verse) for the final siege—an emendation which seems unwarranted.

²⁶ For the following solution, see briefly *IEJ* VI 1956, pp. 253f.; XVIII 1968, p. 154, and n. 32 there. E. THIELE, *BASOR* CXLIII 1956, pp. 22-27, proposed a similar solution which, however, he subsequently abandoned. The 832 deportees of Nebuchadnezzar's eighteenth year (Jer. lii 29), like the 3,023 in his seventh year, represent a minor deportation preceding the major waves in his eighth (see below) and nineteenth years (for which the actual number is missing in the Bible); cf. *IEJ* XVIII 1968, p. 154.

²⁷ A similar calculation was already made by the early Jewish authors; see

III.

In the last decade of the kingdom of Judah, from the first Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem till its final fall, the Bible relates only one incident of international relevance—the anti-Babylonian “conference” summoned by Zedekiah. From Jeremiah xxvii we learn that this conspiratorial meeting in Jerusalem was attended by envoys from the trans-Jordanian states—Edom, Moab and Ammon (who in 599/98 B.C. were still harassing Judah, alongside the Babylonians; II Kings xxiv 2), and the Phoenician coastal cities—Tyre and Sidon (Jer. xxvii 3). But besides the states participating in this plot (which conspicuously omit the Philistine cities, already for some time Babylonian provinces), we know little of the particular circumstances leading to the convening of the conference, of the consequences thereof, or even its precise date. The chronological heading to Jeremiah xxvii is, of course, faulty. But the smooth continuity of the events described in Jeremiah xxvii-xxviii (which latter chapter opens with the notation: “In that same year”), would point to Zedekiah’s fourth regnal year, that is, between Tishri 594 and Tishri 593 B.C. (see the Chronological Table).²⁸ Moreover, the

Seder Olam Rabba, ch. 25; and cf. Rashi on II Kings xxiv 16 and David Kimchi on vs. 14 there. For a modern approach, close to ours though by a different reconstruction, see VOGELSTEIN, *Chronology*, p. 15; and cf. S. HERRMANN, *Geschichte Israels*, München 1973, p. 342. The usual assumption today, however, is of duplicate sources in II Kings xxiv; see e.g. J. A. MONTGOMERY, *Books of Kings*, pp. 554ff.; J. GRAY, *I & II Kings*, pp. 760ff.; and the early treatment of B. STADE, *ZAW* IV 1884, pp. 271ff., who arbitrarily ascribed all the numbers of deportees to 586 B.C. On the number of exiles, see also E. JANSSEN, *Judah in der Exilszeit*, Göttingen 1956, pp. 28ff.

²⁸ For the textual difficulties of the chronological superscriptions in Jer. xxvii and xxviii, see the Commentaries; for the LXX versions of xxviii 1 (which omit either the phrase “at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah” or the phrase “in the fourth year”), see now J. G. JANZEN, *Studies in the Text of Jeremiah*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1973, pp. 14f.

For the various chronological attempts to place the anti-Babylonian conference, see WEIPPERT, *Edom*, pp. 327ff. Dating it as late as Zedekiah’s seventh year, 591 B.C., is untenable; cf. H. SCHMIDT, *ZAW* XXXIX 1921, pp. 138-144. On the other hand, equally unsatisfactory is a date as early as the very beginning of Zedekiah’s reign, as proposed by H. G. MAY, *JNES* IV 1945, pp. 217f.; VOGELSTEIN, *Chronology*, p. 32f.; G. R. DRIVER, *Textus* IV 1964, p. 86; and now N. M. SARNA, in *Hagut Ivrit be Amerika*, Tel Aviv 1972, pp. 121-130 (Hebrew). In Jer. xxviii 1, SARNA (*ibid.*) regards the “fourth year” as referring to the Sab-batical cycle, and thus equates it with “the beginning of Zedekiah’s reign”. But H. SEEBASS (*ZAW* LXXXIII 1970, pp. 449-452) distinguishes between the two notations, relating the “beginning” (597 B.C., in his opinion) only to the prophecy in Jer. xxvii 16-22 (following the LXX version here), on the looting of the Temple vessels at the time of Jehoiachin’s exile, whereas the confrontation with Hananiah occurred in Zedekiah’s fourth year.

date can probably be pinpointed even more accurately—to only slightly prior to the clash between Jeremiah and the false prophet Hananiah, which occurred in the fifth month of that year, that is, in Ab 593 B.C.—and indeed Jeremiah appears at this confrontation just as he had before the envoys to the conference, with a wooden yoke still about his neck.

The time seemed opportune for the nations of the West to rebel against Babylonia, for the empire had been in straits, at both home and abroad, in the two years prior to the plot, as is apparent from the Babylonian Chronicle.²⁹ In 596/95 B.C., the King of El[am] marched upon Babylonia, but was repelled—an event which probably inspired Jeremiah's invective against "Elam, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah" (Jer. xlix 34ff.; and see the Chronological Table). In the winter of 595/94 B.C., revolt broke out even in Babylonia proper, but Nebuchadnezzar was able to suppress it, and immediately after even made a brief campaign to the West. Less than a year later, in Kislev of his eleventh regnal year (December 594 B.C.), Nebuchadnezzar set out once again to the West—the last event mentioned in the Chronicle prior to its breaking off. If our above assumption is correct—that the plot was hatched in Jerusalem several month later—then this Babylonian campaign, of which we have no detailed information, was indecisive and may well have even encouraged the ferment in the West. During his fourth regnal year, Zedekiah went to Babylon, or at least sent his "quartermaster" (Jer. li 59), but we do not know the precise date. It may have occurred prior to or in conjunction with Nebuchadnezzar's campaign to the West, or it may have been a corollary to the Babylonian reaction to the conspiracy, and therefore took place in the late summer of 593 B.C.³⁰

The anti-Babylonian conference in Jerusalem provoked the sharp encounter between Jeremiah and the faction of false prophets who preached open revolt against Nebuchadnezzar, not only in Judah (Jer. xxvii 9-15; xxviii) but also among the Judean exiles in Babylonia (Jer. xxix 8-9). In Jeremiah's epistle to the exiles he even mentions

²⁹ For the following citations from the Babylonian Chronicle, see *CCK*, pp. 72ff.

³⁰ *Freedly & Redford*, p. 475, assume that Zedekiah was obliged to accompany Nebuchadnezzar upon his return to Babylon, but that in Ab he had already come back to Jerusalem and found the time ripe to rebel. According to the LXX version, Zedekiah himself did not go to Babylon, but merely sent a deputation; see *RUDOLPH, Jeremia*, p. 317.

the names of two prophets executed by Nebuchadnezzar, and a third who had made libellous accusations against him (Jer. xxix 21-32). These increased prophetic activities, we maintain, were the context for Ezekiel's call: his inaugural vision occurred on the fifth day of the fourth month in the fifth year of Jehoiachin's exile, that is, on 31 July 593 B.C. (see the Chronological Table).³¹ If this is converted to the calendric system then used in Judah, according to Zedekiah's regnal years (from 1 Tishri 597 B.C.), it took place on the fifth day of the fourth month of Zedekiah's fourth year—a mere few weeks before Jeremiah's confrontation with Hananiah. Thus, it must have occurred at about the time of, or possibly even during, the anti-Babylonian meeting being held at Jerusalem. Could it have been this parley—portentous for the Babylonian exiles no less than for Judah—which aroused Ezekiel to his mission?

The ideological platform of the false prophetic faction was aptly conveyed by Hananiah, proclaimed in Yahwe's name, during his encounter with Jeremiah at the Temple in Jerusalem: "I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. In another (*bē'ōd*)³² two years I will bring back to this place all the vessels of the Lord's house, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place and carried to Babylon. I will also bring back to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and all the exiles from Judah who went to Babylon . . . , for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon" (Jer. xxviii 1-4). In his slighting response to this prophecy, Jeremiah entirely bypasses the specific notion of the return of King Jehoiachin (Jer. xxviii 6). This may well have been a deliberate cut, reflecting a bone of contention between the "true" and "false" prophetic circles in the political-ideological controversy over re-

³¹ For the date, combining data in Ezek. i 1-2, see the commentaries, and recently W. ZIMMERLI, *Ezekiel* I, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1969, pp. 40ff. Cf. also C. G. HOWIE, *The Date and Composition of Ezekiel*, Philadelphia 1960, pp. 27ff. Of all the commentators of Ezekiel, as far as is known to me, only G. HÖLSCHER (*Hesekiel*, *BZAW* XXXIX 1924, pp. 12ff.) noted the proximity in dates between Ezekiel's call and the superscription in Jer. xxviii 1, and the significance of this correspondance.

³² The word *bē'ōd* is generally translated "within (two years)"; however, in biblical usage it often connotes "after", and hence our translation "in another (two years)". Cf., e.g., Gen. xxx 13, 19; Josh. i 11. Whereas Hananiah set a specific time for the return of the sacred vessels, etc., the other false prophets used the more general phraseology "now shortly" (Jer. xxvii 16). This latter phrase is omitted here in the LXX, as in the second instance of "in yet two years", in Jer. xxviii 11. These two instances may have been inserted into the MT on the basis of Jer. xxviii 3.

lations with Babylonia—the legitimacy of the royal succession in Judah.³³ This controversy derived from the co-existence of two kings of the Davidic line in the last decade of the First Temple period—the exiled Jehoiachin and his uncle Zedekiah, appointed in his stead; both had supporters in Judah, further splitting the people. This duality, of course, tarnished the standing of the last of the kings of Judah, undermined his authority and restricted his manoeuvrability. On the other hand, it might throw light on Zedekiah's paradoxical behaviour in rebelling—contrary to his own interests—against the very power which installed him.³⁴ Jeremiah countenanced Zedekiah, despite his drawbacks, and thoroughly rejected the legitimacy of Jehoiachin (or for that matter any of Jehoiakim's seed; cf. Jer. xxxvi 30), as advocated by the false prophets, with Hananiah at their head.

In Hananiah's prophecy, he boldly sets the fulfillment date for the release of the exiles and the return of Jehoiachin, even repeating it after symbolically breaking the wooden yoke on Jeremiah's neck: "Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all the nations in yet (*be'ōd*) two years" (Jer. xxviii 11). Since this prophecy was uttered in the fifth month of the fourth regnal year of Zedekiah (see above), the fulfillment date fell in the fifth month of Zedekiah's sixth regnal year, that is, in Ab 591 B.C. In the chronological terms employed among the exiles, as manifest

³³ See A. MALAMAT, *PEQ* LXXXIII 1951, pp. 81-87; and cf. also K. BALTZER, in *Studien zur Theologie der alttest. Überlieferungen* (G. von Rad Festschrift, ed. R. RENDTORFF and K. KOCH), Neukirchen 1961, pp. 33-43.

³⁴ See *PEQ* LXXXIII 1951, pp. 86f., where we further assume that the change of Mattaniah's name to Zedekiah, upon his appointment by Nebuchadnezzar, occurred under the inspiration of Jeremiah's prophecy on the Messianic King (Jer. xxiii 5-6; xxxiii 14-16)—in direct reversal of the usual interpretation, regarding this prophecy as based on accomplished fact. Recognition of the legitimacy of Zedekiah's rule is intimated even after the destruction of Jerusalem in Lam. iv 20. The theory of ALBRIGHT (*JBL* LI 1932, pp. 72-106) and his followers (e.g. H. G. MAY, *AJS* LVI 1939, pp. 146-148), that even after his deportation Jehoiachin in effect remained king *de jure* of Judah, and that Zedekiah was only regent or *locum tenens*, is not sufficiently supported in the sources. The seal-impression "(Belonging) to Eliakim servant (*na'ar*) of Yaukin" lends no support, for the seals of the *na'ar* class are not indicative necessarily of royal officials; see now N. AVIGAD, "New Light on the *Na'ar* Seals", *G. E. Wright Volume* (in press). Palaeographically, too, it would seem that the above seal should be dated long before Jehoiachin's reign (F. M. CROSS, JR.—orally). Further, the designation of Jehoiachin as "King of the land of Judah" in the Weidner Tablets, like that of other deposed kings in exile, is not decisive in this matter; see the several documents in *ANET*, p. 308a and b.

in the Book of Ezekiel, this was in the fifth month of the seventh year of Jehoiachin's exile (reckoned from 1 Nisan 597 B.C.). How surprising, then, that so similar a date should appear in the superscription to Ezekiel xx: "In the seventh year, in the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month [that is, on 10 Ab, 14 August 591 B.C.], certain of the elders of Israel came to enquire of the Lord . . ." (Ezek. xx 1; and see the Chronological Table).

Is this correspondence in dates, hitherto unnoticed, merely coincidental, or—as in Ezekiel's other chronological notations—is there some underlying significance? Though the object of the enquiry of the elders of Israel is not specified here,—as in other cases where the leadership sought divine tidings, it certainly concerned some pertinent national issue. In contrast to the prevailing interpretations of Ezekiel xx, ZIMMERLI has recently suggested that the enquiry might have concerned the release of the exiles of Jehoiachin, but he made no connection with Hananiah's prophecy. FREEDY and REDFORD have connected it with the hopes for redemption raised among the exiles by the campaign of Psamtik II to Asia, which they date in 591 B.C.³⁵ But this latter dating is spurious, as we shall see below.

Would it not be much more reasonable to assume that the enquiry was related specifically to Hananiah's prophecy of redemption "in yet two years"? The acute question at that time—at exactly the term of the prophecy—would have been whether, indeed, redemption was to come. The absolute refusal of the Lord ("Is it to enquire of me that you come? As I live . . ., I will not be enquired of you"; Ezek. xx 3, 31), and the prophet's chastisement of the elders, instead of the expected words of salvation, both show that Ezekiel in exile, like Jeremiah in Judah, was totally opposed to the oracles of early redemption uttered by Hananiah and those like him.

The elders turned to Ezekiel, probably on this same matter, on another occasion as well, and were then, too, rejected by the Lord (Ezek. xiv 1-3: "Should I let myself be enquired of—at all

³⁵ For these views, see ZIMMERLI, *Ezekiel I*, p. 441; *Freedy & Redford*, pp. 469f., 480. Anticipating these was the medieval commentator David Kimchi, who regarded the elders in Ezek. xx 1 as seeking knowledge of the return to Judah. M. GREENBERG—in *Oz leDavid (D. Ben-Gurion Festschrift)*, Jerusalem 1964, pp. 433-442 (Hebrew)—in contrast, regards the rebuke in Ezek. xx as the prophet's reaction to the exiles' acceptance of their fate. In his opinion, the visit of the elders to Ezekiel occurred a year after (!) Hananiah's prophecy had proved false (*ibid.*, p. 439), but we cannot accept this dating.

by them?"). Moreover, on that occasion they were clearly warned that if a "prophet be deceived and speak a word, I, the Lord, have deceived that prophet . . . , and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel" (Ezek. xiv 9). Indeed, this was the very fate which soon befell Hananiah (cf. Jer. xxviii 16-17).³⁶

One last chronological notation remains in the Book of Ezekiel prior to the final siege of Jerusalem (Ezek. xxiv 1), for which no historical circumstance has been found—the heading of Ezekiel viii: the fifth day, in the sixth month (LXX: fifth month) of the sixth year of Jehoiachin (that is, 17 September 592 B.C.). This is also the third and only other notice of the leaders of the community in exile coming to Ezekiel (in contrast to the two other instances, here they are specifically denoted the elders of *Judah*, not Israel; in Ezek. xxxiii 30ff., no mention is made of leaders *per se*). Again we may assume that the elders came to the prophet on some particular occasion which was considered fateful for the nation. In his trance, Ezekiel was transported to Jerusalem and he luridly depicts the abomination of the Temple cult. In the syncretistic cult described, Egyptian elements are prominent, alongside other foreign features (e.g. Tammuz worship), as has been noted often.³⁷ These elements seem to include typical animal symbolism—"And there, portrayed upon the wall round about, were all kinds of creeping things, and loathsome beasts . . ." (Ezek. viii 10); the mysteries performed by "the elders of the house of Israel . . . in the dark, every man in his room of pictures" (*vs.* 12); and the worship of the sun (*vs.* 16), in which "they put the branch (*šemōrāh*) to my nose" (*vs.* 17; the last word of the phrase here in MT, *appam*, "their nose", is a *tiqqun soferim* for *appi*, "my nose", that is, presenting the branch to the

³⁶ The conceptual bond between the type of prophet mentioned in Ezek. xiv 9 and the prophetic faction which Hananiah represented has been alluded to by J. W. MILLER, *Das Verhältnis Jeremias und Hesekiels Sprachlich und Theologisch Untersucht*, Assen 1955, p. 164.

³⁷ See especially G. FOHRER, *Ezechiel*, Tübingen 1955, pp. 51f.; and for the numerous earlier commentators who emphasized the Egyptian cultic elements in this chapter, see G. FOHRER, *Die Hauptprobleme des Buches Ezechiel*, Berlin 1952, p. 175, n. 48. To them we might add H. SCHMIDT, *Die grossen Propheten (Die Schriften des Alten Testaments II, 2)*, Göttingen 1915, pp. 39ff.; idem, *ZAW* XXXIX 1921, pp. 140f., who distinguishes between the overtiness of the Babylonian worship here and the clandestine nature of the Egyptian; and, in part, W. EICHRODT, *Der Prophet Hesekiel*, Göttingen 1966, pp. 59f. And cf. also: W. F. ALBRIGHT, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*², Baltimore 1946, pp. 165ff.

deity, similar to the presentation of flowers or papyrus garlands to Egyptian gods; and see below).³⁸

In a previous study we have already noted that the dates in Ezekiel, besides being of intrinsic value, are "Judah-centric", that is, they are oriented upon events which took place at home, in Palestine. Thus, we sought to show that the chronological notations heading oracles of doom on Egypt correspond with the despatch and subsequent failure of the Egyptian expedition to Judah during the final Babylonian siege of Jerusalem, in the spring of 587 B.C. (see the Chronological Table).³⁹ Might not the above-mentioned date heading Ezekiel viii be ascribed to another stirring development which befell Palestine—the campaign of Psamtik II to Kharu (that is, Palestine and the Phoenician coast) in his fourth regnal year, and its political and religious implications? Psamtik II's fourth year essentially corresponds with 592 B.C., rather than 591 (or even 590) B.C., as generally still held (see the Chronological Table).⁴⁰ From the Egyptian source, it is apparent that this was more of a

³⁸ For the various explanations of the word *zēmōrāb*, and the foreign cult described in this context, see—besides the commentaries on Ezekiel—the studies devoted specifically to this matter, e.g.: R. GORDIS, *JThS* XXXVII 1936, pp. 284-288; H. W. F. SAGGS, *ibid.*, NS XI 1960, pp. 318-329; N. M. SARNA, *HTbR* LVII 1964, pp. 347-352, all of which appear to fall wide of the mark. More convincing than SAGGS' attempt—to explain the passage on the basis of a Mesopotamian rite—is FOHRER's view (*loc. cit.*), which regards the *zēmōrāb* (a vine-branch) as a local Palestinian manifestation of the Egyptian ritual of presenting plants to gods, especially the sun-god; such would explain the close connections of this verse with the preceding *vs.* 16, specifically mentioning sun worship.

³⁹ See *IEJ* XVIII 1968, p. 152.

⁴⁰ For the revised Egyptian chronology of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty, retarding the initial year of each reign by a year, see: R. A. PARKER, *MDAIK* XV 1957, pp. 208-212 (and cf. E. HORNUNG, *ZAS* XCII 1965, pp. 38f.). These dates have been accepted in such histories as A. GARDINER, *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, Oxford 1961, p. 451; W. HELCK, *Geschichte des alten Ägypten*, Leiden-Köln 1968, pp. 253ff.; and now also F. K. KIENITZ, *Fischer Weltgeschichte* IV, Frankfurt 1967, pp. 269f.—in contrast to his previous *Die politische Geschichte Ägyptens von 7. bis zum 4. Jahrhundert vor der Zeitwende*, Berlin 1953, pp. 25ff., 158.

Thus, Psamtik II ruled from 595 to 589 B.C.—rather than in 594-588 B.C., and Hophra began his reign already in February 589 B.C. Psamtik II's fourth year would have fallen between 18 January 592 and 17 January 591 B.C., as Prof. HORNUNG has kindly informed me. The obsolete figures for the dates of Psamtik II's reign have unfortunately been retained by, e.g., *Freedy & Redford*, p. 476. In any event, it is now clear that Psamtik II came to the throne more than two years prior to the anti-Babylonian conference in Jerusalem, and thus we can no longer accept a direct connection between these two events, as has been assumed by various scholars.

cultic "showing of the flag", than a military campaign, a sort of tour or pilgrimage to holy sites in the land of Kharu.⁴¹

Accompanying Pharaoh on this tour were priests bearing garlands (specific mention is made of a priest of Amun and of garlands of this deity), probably for the cult of the local or Egyptian gods in the temples of Kharu. Psamtik's destination has been regarded as the city of Byblos and the cult of Osiris there, but shrines in Palestine may well have been visited too. In the autumn of the same year, Ezekiel had his vision on the defiled Temple of Yahwe (see the Chronological Table). Could the touring Pharaoh, or at least his priests, have come to the Temple in Jerusalem? Could the abominous ritual blasted by Ezekiel—the proffering of the *ḫemōrāh* within the Temple—be a reflection of the rite involving such cultic garlands as those brought by the Egyptian priests?⁴²

Ezekiel's harsh oracle of doom on Jerusalem and its Temple (Ezek. viii-xi) should have served to preclude as vain any illusions among the Judean leadership—whether in Jerusalem or in exile—which may have been raised by Pharaoh's campaign. The appearance of Psamtik II in Kharu certainly had diplomatic overtones and undoubtedly fanned the anti-Babylonian sentiments already held by many local rulers, including the King of Judah. But it was only after the ambitious Hophra had acceded to the Egyptian throne (in early 589 B.C., and not 588 B.C.) that Judah openly rebelled, thus goading Babylon to war.

⁴¹ See now the inscription, published by F. L. GRIFFITH in 1909, in *ibid.*, pp. 479f. (and the bibliography there). In contrast to the oft-held assumption that Psamtik II carried out a basically military campaign to Kharu, *Freedy & Redford* justly stress the peaceful character of this Egyptian undertaking (cf. similarly the two works of F. K. KIENITZ, mentioned in n. 40, above; and WEIPPERT, *Edom*, p. 376), and further assume that political contacts were then made with Zedekiah. M. GREENBERG (*JBL* LXXVI 1957, pp. 304-309) even assumed that Zedekiah was stirred into open rebellion against Babylon already by Psamtik II's appearance in Kharu.

⁴² For the Egyptian ritual of presenting garlands of flowers or papyri to the gods (including by Pharaoh), see G. ROEDER, *ZAS* XLVIII 1910, pp. 115-123; A. DE BUCK, *OTS* IX 1951, pp. 18-29; H. BONNET, *Reallexikon der ägypt. Religionsgeschichte*, Berlin 1952, pp. 120f., s.v. *Blumen*; D. B. REDFORD, *Orientalia* XXXIX 1970, p. 36, n. 1. and, most recently, E. BRUNNER-TRAUT, *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* I, Wiesbaden, 1974, pp. 836-9, s.v. *Blume; Blumenstraus*.

From the many Egyptian depictions of the presentation of plants to the face of the god, we may call attention to an example from Palestine—on a stele from Beth Shean, showing a lotus being presented to the nose of a goddess; see *ANEP*, No. 475.

At this juncture Judah's plight was extreme: politically, her diplomatic efforts to achieve an anti-Babylonian front had collapsed, and the frailty of Egyptian support left her virtually isolated. Militarily, the Babylonian subjugation a decade earlier had deprived her of the cream of her fighting potential. Internally, the nation was divided over the dilemma of facing Babylon or giving in to fate. But the stand of the political leadership, which had inevitably drawn Nebuchadnezzar to the gates of Jerusalem once again, now spurred the remarkable resistance which enabled the city to withstand the two and a half years of siege prior to its fall (see the Chronological Table).⁴³

In final analysis, the policy advocated by the "true" Prophets—Jeremiah and Ezekiel—could have steered Judah clear of the maelstrom which, as we know, did engulf her.

⁴³ On the final siege of Jerusalem and its duration, basing on a Tishri calendar, see *IEJ* XVIII 1968, pp. 150ff.

POSTSCRIPTUM

I was unable to refer to the article of E. Kutsch, "Das Jahr der Katastrophe: 587 v. Chr.," *Biblica* LV 1974, pp. 520-543, which reached me while the present paper was in proofs. The article is a careful and comprehensive defense of the alternative dating of the fall of Jerusalem, but I have not found its arguments of sufficient weight to alter my stand as set forth in this paper.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF THE LAST DECADES OF THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH

Events mentioned in the Babylonian Chronicles	Julian year B.C. beginning in January	Regnal years in Babylonian Judah beginning in Nisan (1st mo.)	Regnal years in Judah beginning in Tishri (with mo.)	Events mentioned in the Bible
		Nabopolassar	Josiah	
Egyptian army crosses Euphrates	609	17-IV	31	→ Battle of Megiddo (2 Kings 23; 29; 2 Chron. 35; 20-23)
	608	18	(1)	
	607	19	1	
	606	20	2	
Battle of Carchemish	605	21	3	Oracle on Battle of Carchemish (Jer. 46; 1-2; date in vs. 2 problematic)**
Conquest of "entire land of Hama" etc.	604	1 Nebuchadrezzar	4 or 5	[Subjugation of Judah according to Dan; 1, 11ff.] Oracle on Nebuchadrezzar's rule over Hither Asia (Jer. 25; 1ff.)
Sack of Ashkelon	603	2 IX	5	→ Fast and emergency council (Jer. 36; 9)
Campaign to west (?) [text broken]	602	3	6	→ Subjugation of Judah?
	601	4	7	
Babylonian invasion of Egypt falls	600	5	8	Oracle "about the coming of Nebuchadrezzar... to smite the land of Egypt" (Jer. 46; 1, 3ff.) Revolt of Jehoiakim (? Kings 24; 1)?

598	IX	10	Oracles on Kedar and the kingdoms of Hazor which Nebuchadrezzar... smote" (Jer. 49, 28ff.)	chln's exile beginning in Nisan 597 B.C.
597	2/XII	11	Siege and surrender of Jerusalem (2 Kings 24:10ff.); deportation of 3032 Jews" (Jer. 52:28)	1
596		12	Exile of Jehoiachin and elite (2 Kings 24, 12, 14; 2 Chron. 36:10)	2
595		1	Oracle against Elam "in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah" (Jer. 49, 34ff.)	3
594	IX-X	2		4
593	IX	3	Anti-Babylonian conference in Jerusalem (Jer. 28, 1) 7:1	5 5/(IV) (31 July)
592		4	Ezekiel's vision of foreign abominations in Temple (Ezek. 8:1)	6 5/VI (27 Sept)
591		5	Elders come to Ezekiel to enquire of the Lord (Ezek. 20, 1)	7 10/V (14 Aug)
590		6		8
589		7		9
588		8	Start of final siege of Jerusalem (2 Kings 25, 1; Jer. 52, 4; Ezek. 24, 1-2)	10 10/X
587		9	Egyptian relief and defeat (Ezek. 29, 1; 30, 20)	11 12/X
586		10	Exile of 832 deserters (Jer. 52, 29)	12 11-7/1
585		11	Breach of walls of Jerusalem (Jer. 39, 2; 52:6-7)	
		12	Destruction of Temple (2 Kings 25:8-9; Jer. 52:12)	
			Refugee in Babylonia reports Destruction (Ezek. 33, 21)	

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* Accession year.

** For date, see notes 9 and 11.