



9

Chronology of the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah

Unless one is a specialist with a passion for numbers, people would rather watch paint dry than discuss chronology. Chronology is, however, the most valuable tool for bringing real-world relevance to Scripture. Chronology is the vehicle that establishes Scripture's historical validity. Chronology allows us to "see" that Abraham lived until Jacob and Esau were 15 years of age or that Isaac died in the year that Joseph became vizier in Egypt. Chronology permits us to locate a specific prophecy in time (such as Isa 7:8) and trace its precise historical fulfillment.

Israel, in particular, provides the thread weaving together Assyrian and Egyptian dynasties. Both Egypt and Assyria campaigned extensively in Canaan, so Scripture's accounts often shed more light on the circumstances that necessitated invasion while chronology enables us to see when these events transpired.¹ In chap. 1, we learned that one definition of truth is factuality and historicity: the accounts in Scripture must be historically valid for the word of YHWH to be considered "truth." Consistently, chronology is one tool (or "control") that allows us to determine whether the stories that Scripture records meet the criteria that the archaeological data and written records of other nations provide. It is a study that, unlike paint, brings the Bible to life!

I. BACK TO THE BASICS

A. Time

Today, when we say that Jake was born in 1975, we mean that Jake was born one thousand nine hundred seventy-five years after the Christian or Common Era began. This system was implemented by the monk Dionysius Exiguus in AD 532.² Time for the Christian or

Common Era (CE) began with the birth of Christ in year 1 (there is no 0) and was called *Anno Domini* (AD). Jake was born 1,975 years after *Anno Domini*, or AD 1975. Time before *Anno Domini* is counted backwards and termed “before Christ” (BC) or “before the Common Era” (BCE).³ When we say that King Cyrus issued his decree for the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem in 538 BCE,⁴ we mean five hundred thirty-eight years before Christ, or before the Common Era. Scholars determine Israel’s chronology according to this system.

Chronologists usually pick an event in Scripture that is held in common with another nation, such as Babylon or Assyria, to reconstruct Israel’s chronology. These events are usually referred to as “anchor dates” since the event anchors the relationship of one nation to the other. The best anchor date appears in two different Scripture accounts of Nebuchadnezzar’s siege of Jerusalem in his 7th year and in Nebuchadnezzar’s own inscription.⁵ According to Nebuchadnezzar’s 7th year annal, he sieged Jerusalem, captured Jehoiachin, and deported prisoners to Babylon.⁶ Jeremiah confirms that Jerusalem’s siege occurred during Nebuchadnezzar’s 7th year (Jer 52:28), while 2 Kgs 24:12 informs us that it was Nebuchadnezzar’s 8th year. The difference of one year in 2 Kings arises from the new year’s dating. Nebuchadnezzar began to siege Jerusalem in Chislev (Nov/Dec), and the city fell in Adar (March), the last month of the year.⁷ Jehoniah’s deportation occurred during the following month, after the new year.⁸ The scribe then reckoned the deportation in Nebuchadnezzar’s 8th year. What these texts solidly affirm is that, between Nebuchadnezzar’s 7th and 8th years, he deported Jehoniah and a large portion of Judah’s citizenry. This event then serves as an anchor linking the chronologies of Babylon and Israel.

Since Nebuchadnezzar replaced Jehoniah with Zedekiah, who reigned for 11 years, we know that by Nebuchadnezzar’s 19th year he had destroyed the Temple (Jer 52:12). The date that most scholars accept for Nebuchadnezzar’s 7th year is 598 BCE, with the destruction of the Temple 11 years later, in 587 BCE.⁹ As we examine Israel’s chronology, we will see that there are a couple more anchor dates linking Israel’s chronology with other nations.

Another device that scholars use to establish chronology is to determine the “benchmarks” internal to Israel’s history.¹⁰ Some mention contact with other kings or mark significant events. One significant benchmark in Israel’s history is a scribe’s notation in 1 Kgs 6:1 that Solomon’s 4th year was 480 years after the exodus. This link to Solomon’s 4th year provides a benchmark for reconstructing the nation’s history both forward and backward.¹¹ What is needed to place Israel’s chronology in “reality” is a point of contact with a king from another nation. The reign of Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, provides just that. *The Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah* and *The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah* (1 Kgs 14:25; 2 Chr 12:2) tell us that Egypt’s Shoshenq (biblical Shishak) invaded Judah during Rehoboam’s 5th year. Shoshenq is known to have reigned over Egypt from c. 945 to 924 BCE, which is usually based, not on Egyptian chronologies, but on reconstructions of Israel’s chronology.¹² This allows for about a 20-year window for this invasion to have occurred. Based on Scripture’s internal synchronism with later Judahite and Samaritan monarchs (which we will investigate below), Shoshenq’s invasion occurred in 940 BCE, during the pharaoh’s 6th or 7th year on the throne.

To discover the date of King Solomon's 4th year, we add Solomon's subsequent 35¹³ years and Rehoboam's 5 years ($35+5=40+940$ BCE), landing at 980 BCE for King Solomon's 4th year (see Table 9.1). As we will see, this year had great significance since the construction of the original Temple coincided with the national sabbatical Release Year celebrations.

In past decades, chronologists have leaned heavily on ancient astronomical dates provided by Ptolemy's Canon (see below). The ancient world used astronomical events, such as eclipses, to date major events. These astronomical phenomena often conflict with monumental dating, however.¹⁴ Thus, the direction of recent chronology methods has been to shy away from astronomical dating, allowing epigraphic and archaeological data to take precedence.¹⁵

B. Modern Dating Ideas

Scholars support a wide variety of dates for Solomon's 4th year. Egyptologist Donald Redford dates Solomon's 4th regnal year to 1016 BCE.¹⁶ Silberman and Finkelstein cite 1005–930 BCE as the era in which both David and Solomon reigned,¹⁷ thus placing Solomon's 4th year around 960 BCE, a date in line with John Bimson's.¹⁸ Kenneth Kitchen places Solomon's 4th year at 967, a date that Andrew Steinmann, Rodger Young, and most biblical scholars also embrace.¹⁹ Abraham Malamat places Solomon's independent rule at 967–66, which means that the king's 4th year was approximately 963/962.²⁰ Thus, the time frame that scholars generally accept for Solomon's 4th regnal year has a range from 1016 to 966, a span of about 50 years. The date 980 BCE used in this study is based on Israel's synchronistic chronology, a method most scholars only haphazardly employ. This date is 13 years higher than the Kitchen-Steinmann date but about midway between the ranges of generally accepted dating.

Many biblical scholars adamantly date Shoshenq's invasion (Rehoboam's 5th year) to 926/25 BCE.²¹ While this date is certainly possible, nothing in Egyptian chronology rules out an earlier date. Shoshenq's inscriptions memorializing his victory over both Rehoboam and Jeroboam date to his 21st year.²² Egyptian chronology simply does not allow for a precise date, thus allowing earlier possibilities.²³ As Egyptologist Karl Jansen-Winkel has recently pointed out, it would be stretching the evidence to conclude that both the construction work on the temple at Thebes and the inscription occurred in the same year.²⁴ At most, the dating to Shoshenq's 21st year simply provides a lower limit for reconstructing Shoshenq's campaign against Israel's Divided Kingdom during this era.

If we apply 980 BCE to King Solomon's 4th year, then Jeroboam I probably fled to Shoshenq for refuge (1 Kgs 11:40) in Egypt during the year that the Libyan Shoshenq rose to power (946/945 BCE). Continuing Israel's chronology backward in time, David would have ascended Judah's throne 44 years earlier, in 1023 BCE. The scribe's notation in 1 Kgs 6:1 would mean that the Judges Era began in 1460 BCE (980 BCE + 480 yrs. = 1460 BCE). Thus the absolute latest (or lowest) possible date for the controversial exodus would be 1460 BCE.

C. Absolute Chronology

The trend in most studies dealing with biblical chronologies is toward reconstructing an "absolute" chronology, with little room for deviation.²⁵ The annoying fact when one tries to

Table 9.1. King Solomon's 4th year to Rehoboam's 5th year

| <i>BCE</i> | <i>Text</i> | <i>Judah</i> | <i>Samaria</i> | <i>Egypt</i> |
|------------|-------------------------|--------------|----------------|------------------------|
| Solomon | | | | |
| 980 | 1 Kgs 6:1, 37 | 4 | | |
| 979 | | 5 | | |
| 978 | | 6 | | |
| 977 | | 7 | | |
| 976 | | 8 | | |
| 975 | | 9 | | |
| 974 | | 10 | | |
| 973 | 1 Kgs 6:38 | 11 | | |
| 972 | | 12 | | |
| 971 | | 13 | | |
| 970 | | 14 | | |
| 969 | | 15 | | |
| 968 | | 16 | | |
| 967 | | 17 | | |
| 966 | | 18 | | |
| 965 | | 19 | | |
| 964 | | 20 | | |
| 963 | | 21 | | |
| 962 | | 22 | | |
| 961 | | 23 | | |
| 960 | | 24 | | |
| 959 | | 25 | | |
| 958 | | 26 | | |
| 957 | | 27 | | |
| 956 | | 28 | | |
| 955 | | 29 | | |
| 954 | | 30 | | |
| 953 | | 31 | | |
| 952 | | 32 | | |
| 951 | | 33 | | |
| 950 | | 34 | | |
| 949 | | 35 | | |
| 948 | | 36 | | |
| 947 | | 37 | | Shoshenq I |
| 946 | 1 Kgs 11:40—Jeroboam | 38 | Rehoboam | (945–924) |
| 945 | flees to Shoshenq | 39 | | Jeroboam I 1 |
| 944 | | 40 | 1 | 2 |
| 943 | | | 2 | 3 |
| 942 | | | 3 | 4 |
| 941 | | | 4 | 5 |
| 940 | 1 Kgs 14:25; 2 Chr 12:2 | 5 | | Shoshenq invades Judah |

synchronize the histories between Israel, Judah, Egypt, Crete, Assyria, Babylon, and Persia is that, while an absolute chronology may work well for one nation, it faces incredible contradiction when juxtaposed with another nation's internal chronology (or kings list). Rarely do national records afford the precise synchronism that we find in the case of Nebuchadnezzar's first siege of Jerusalem (his 7th year) during Jechoniah's reign. Thus, Assyrian chronology faces obstacles when synchronized with Egyptian chronologies. These differences have led to two different systems: one favoring an early (or high) date and another favoring a late (or low) date (about 60 years later).²⁶ Over the last decade, most scholarship has shifted toward a late (low) "absolute" chronology dating system.²⁷

The frustration with chronologies arises because the ancient world had no continuing system by which to reckon "world chronology," as we do today. Instead, as Egyptologist Erik Hornung observes, "There was never an era with a constant continuous numbering of years: with each new Pharaoh, the count began anew."²⁸ This was true for all ancient nations. Although nations have left some wonderful chronologies embedded in kings lists, canons, and eponym lists, it is often difficult to match that chronology with a contemporary monarchy. While history for one nation can be reconstructed based on all the available chronological data that we have for, say Assyria, when it is then compared with all the available data that we have for, say Egypt, there may be a variation of 12 to 100 years. Since the Hebrew Scriptures teem with chronologies and synchronisms, some scholars (Kitchen, Wood, Hoffmeier, and Albright) see Israel as the link sowing these various nations together.²⁹

Modern scholars have been able to distinguish between the formulas that Egypt and Assyria used to form a "continuing" chronology from one king to the next (see below). What is often missing in the various records of these ancient nations (including Israel) is the recognition of co-regency, when a father and son reigned at the same time, or a period of instability, when a usurper (even a rightful heir to the throne) reigned from another city in the empire.³⁰ Thankfully, Scripture provides many coinciding means by which to access the internal chronology before it is compared with other nations' contemporary histories.

II. OBSTACLE TO A TRADITIONAL EARLY/HIGH EXODUS DATE

Many biblical scholars date the exodus to 1446 BCE.³¹ This would mean that Israel entered Canaan in 1406,³² at the height of Egyptian power and control over Canaan. Both Thutmose and his son Amenhotep II campaigned extensively in Canaan from about 1458 to as late as 1401.³³ Their inscriptions list thousands of captives and deportees, many who are described as *habiru*, a term which some scholars identify as the Hebrews.³⁴ Thutmose installed a bureaucratic system with tight control over its Canaanite vassals,³⁵ leaving armed garrisons to enforce Egypt's policies. During the Amarna Period (1390–1332) Akhenaten also claimed to have captured and deported *habiru* from Canaan.³⁶ This situation opposes Scripture. The books of Joshua and Judges indicate that Israel faced no Egyptian threat at the *initial* Conquest, and the Israelites were safely out of Pharaoh's hand (Judg 2:1). In fact, the entire point of the exodus was to deliver Israel out of Pharaoh's hand and from the house of

bondage (Exod 13:14; Josh 24:17) so that the people could enjoy the freedom and autonomy to establish YHWH's constitutional Law in the Promised Land. It is quite *unlikely*, then, that YHWH would deliver Israel back into Egyptian bondage at the very time he had promised to establish the Promised-Land Covenant with Israel (Exod 6:4, 8; 12:25; 13:5, 11; 32:13; 33:1; Lev 20:24; Josh 11:23). The 1446 high/early date does not allow for a peaceful era during which foreign nations did not oppress Israel in Canaan.

In fact, Scripture not only indicates that Canaan was free of any Egyptian threat during this time but also that the region enjoyed tremendous military success. This situation would simply be impossible with Thutmose's mighty forces standing by to protect his vassal states and secure its tribute between 1420 and 1390. Throughout the exodus account, Scripture states that Israel had come "out of Egypt" (Judg 2:1) and YHWH had fulfilled the promise of his covenant for Israel to inherit Canaan (Gen 15:18–20). This again indicates that Israel had initially faced no Egyptian obstacles in Canaan. This interpretation is bolstered by the fact that YHWH purposely led Israel out of Egypt by a route that avoided war with Egypt (Exod 13:7), implying that the people would *not* face war with Egypt inside Canaan at the initial Conquest. This evidence undermines the currently popular "biblical" exodus date.

Another obstacle to the traditional high/early date comes from the Book of Judges, which states that Israel's first oppression came from Aram-Naharim ("Mesopotamia" in Judg 3:8),³⁷ not Egypt. No Egyptian sources record any threat from Mesopotamia/Arameans during this period, and it is quite unlikely that Thutmose or Amenhotep would have allowed another king to infringe on its borderlands. We know from the Amarna Tablets that Egypt enjoyed diplomatic relations with the east, even exchanging gifts. None of these demonstrates tension with Mesopotamia or invasion.

The trend in recent biblical scholarship to counter the obstacles (both evidence of Thutmose's tight control over Canaan and the fact that the 1446 reconstruction does not allow for an initial Conquest) is simply to deny that a large-scale Conquest ever occurred.³⁸ In other words, to justify the lack of evidence for a Conquest, scholars recognize the Israelites as destroying only a very limited number of cities when they first entered the land. Biblical chronologist Andrew Steinmann limits these cities to Jericho, Ai, and Hazor.³⁹ The obstacle to this interpretation is that Scripture lists many of other cities, which should show at least some signs of destruction. Battles were waged against Libnah (Josh 10:29), Lachish (10:31), Eglon (10:34), Hebron (10:36), Debir (10:38), the hill country and southern Negev (10:40), Kadesh-barnea, Gaza, and Goshen (10:41). God would have to have provided divine protection to these *Canaanite* cities for them to escape signs of destruction from the aggressive war that Israel waged! The Scriptural view of the Canaanite Conquest extends far beyond the three cities cited by Steinmann. This evidence has led a second group of scholars to place the exodus in the thirteenth century, based on archaeological evidence of destruction throughout Canaan.⁴⁰ Lowering the Conquest to a later date, however, does not resolve all the conflicts with chronology or archaeology.

Joshua and Moses had destroyed cities on the east bank of the Jordan River, which should reveal decisive destruction archaeologically. The Book of Joshua attests that Hebron, Debir, Anab, and many other cities in the hill country had also been destroyed.

At that time came Joshua, and cut off the Anakims from the mountains, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel: *Joshua destroyed them utterly with their cities.* (Josh 11:21)

Further evidence of a large-scale conquest arises from Moses' account that he had destroyed Heshbon with fire (Num 21:28), a city that the Reubenites later rebuilt (Num 32:37). The obstacle that this evidence presents for both the high 1406 Conquest date and the low 1270 Conquest date is that no occupation is archaeologically attested in the thirteenth century, and certainly no sign of destruction,⁴¹ thus bringing into question both of the traditional high/early and low/late exodus dates.

The initial Conquest had been quite substantial. Although Israel did not hold onto all the territory she conquered after she rebelled against the covenant (Judg 2:1), this fact does not negate the impact that the initial Conquest had. What the evidence suggests is that neither the High Conquest model dated to 1406, nor the Low date of 1270 is accurate, and the truth lies in another era. Can a detailed study of Israel's chronology help us reconstruct and reclaim this era?

III. THE EXODUS TO KING SOLOMON'S 4TH YEAR

A. *History of Ideas*

Through the years, the chronology of Israel and Judah has been one of the most debated topics in both academic and religious studies. Egyptian chronology unfortunately does not provide any firm anchor dates on which to base Israel's chronology.⁴² Manfred Bietak, director of the excavations at Avaris (Tell el-Daba), Egypt, is, however, taking an interdisciplinary approach to this question that will likely narrow the possibilities in the near future.⁴³ Gaps in Assyria's and Babylon's annals allow deviations of a couple dozen years.⁴⁴ Israel's chronology is the nexus that unites and clarifies the chronologies of Egypt and Mesopotamia.⁴⁵

In order for Israel's chronology to be relevant, it must be tied to a few compelling anchor dates of other nations. Biblical chronologists Andrew Steimann and Rodger Young provide a cogent study on Israel's chronology by reconstructing King Solomon's reign, taking into account 1 Kgs 6:1 (see discussion in the next section) and anchoring key events to accepted dates for Egyptian kings (Shishak's invasion in Rehoboam's 5th year) and tying them to other chronologies, such as the Tyrian King List, Josephus's reference to Hiram's reign (Tyre), and the Scriptural Jubilees.⁴⁶

Overall, Steinmann's and Young's studies produce very appealing results for biblical chronologists with the Jubilees perfectly coinciding with both a talmudic source and the generally accepted high exodus date in 1446 BCE and 1 Kgs 6:1.⁴⁷ Their conclusions, however, are not without the inevitable (internal) Josephus chronology contradiction.

Josephus states that King Solomon completed the First Temple during the Tyrian King Hiram's 12th year on the throne (*Against Apion* 108, 126). This would have been Solomon's 11th regnal year. The problem with this synchronism is that Scripture places Hiram on the Tyrian throne long before Solomon's accession. David had conquered Jerusalem during the 7th year of his reign (2 Sam 5:5). When Hiram heard of David's success, he sent building materials for David's palace (2 Sam 5:7–12). Realistically, this would have been sometime between David's 8th and 14th years, before he brought the Ark of the Covenant up to Jerusalem (1 Chr 15:1–2) and long before David's affair with Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:3). Hiram's 12th year would have occurred around David's 27th year at the very latest since David is recorded to have built palaces in the city of David (2 Sam 5:9–12; 1 Chr 14:1–2) before he brought the ark into Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6–7; 1 Chronicles 15–16; see Table 9.50 in Appendix A). Solomon's 11th year, when the Temple was completed, would probably have coincided with Hiram's 38th regnal year.

To resolve this contradiction, it is purposed that Solomon served as David's co-regent, based on Solomon's being anointed before David's death (1 Kgs 1:32–35, 46–47; 5:1; 1 Chr 23:1).⁴⁸ While Scripture does support Solomon's installation as a co-regent shortly before David's death (1 Kgs 1:1), 1 Kgs 2:12 strongly suggests that Solomon's reign was not reckoned as a co-regency. YHWH's injunction on building the Temple during David's reign further disallows a co-regency *reckoning* and contradicts Josephus's record of Hiram. According to 2 Sam 7:12–13, construction on the Temple could not begin until after David's death. This is in line with the chronology of 1 Kings 1–5, which presents Solomon's gathering of materials to build the Temple after David's death, then beginning construction during his 4th year. Once again, this would place Solomon's 4th year in approximately Hiram's 43rd regnal year. Scripture also disallows two separate Hiram's (i.e., a son ruling in his father's name) since the Hiram who donated the Temple's building supplies is remembered as “ever being a lover of David” (1 Kgs 5:1), which references the prior friendly relations that Hiram had personally enjoyed with David. Josephus's record contradicts Scripture's chronology and undermines Steinmann's and Young's overall reconstruction of Solomonic chronology.

The second peg in the Steinmann-Young reconstruction is Israel's national Jubilee. Isa 37:30 is often considered to refer to Israel's national Jubilee in Hezekiah's 14th and 15th years.⁴⁹ The Steinmann-Young reconstruction dismisses the Hezekiah synchronization in favor of a talmudic source. The Talmud, similar to Josephus, contains many internal contradictions. In chap. 19, we will see that anyone dealing with the Talmud to reconstruct ancient Israel's history or theology should do so with the utmost caution.⁵⁰ When we discuss Israel's Jubilees (see chap. 9.V., pp. 366–75 below), we will see that the Release Year during Hezekiah's 14th regnal year should be preferred over the Talmud's chronology. The former method is central to our investigation, since our trial seeks to discover whether the Hebrew Scriptures constitute a credible source. We will see that both Israel's sabbatical Release Years (every 7 years) and the nation's Jubilee (50th year) are supported by Hezekiah's 15th-year Jubilee and that the reconstruction of these Jubilees both backward and forward in time helps to explain some of the Judges and early Monarchy chronology issues.

Perhaps Steimann's and Young's greatest contribution to the discussion of chronology has been advocating a system that distinguishes dual calendric systems. Young suggested that "n" be used for calendars that began in the spring and were based on the Hebrew month Nisan, and "t" be used for calendars that transitioned to the new year in the fall during the month of Tishri (7th month).⁵¹ This method is quite useful in distinguishing between the calendric systems that the Divided Kingdoms of Judah and Israel employed, thus resolving many of the questions regarding internal synchronization. I will use this method throughout our chronology discussion.

Most chronologists consider the reference to Solomon's 4th year as being 480 years after the "exodus" as providing a central benchmark or peg for reconstructing chronologies. In the past, Kitchen, Dever, and other scholars have dismissed 1 Kgs 6:1 in favor of archaeological evidence that demonstrates destruction in Canaan during the 13th century. As we have seen, not even the 13th century can explain away the many contradictions that archaeology raises for this era, indicating that the truth of Israel's exodus must lie in a previous era. The question at this point is how the 480 years before Solomon's 4th year are pegged or linked to the exodus.

B. The Judges Era—1 Kings 6:1: Five Witnesses

1. Nineteen Generations

Chronology can be compared with engineering a building. Before one can construct the top floors, the foundation, structure, and lower levels need to be developed. For this discussion, the exodus and patriarchs are our upper floors, while the date of the destruction of Solomon's Temple in 587 BCE is our foundation. Solomon's 4th year in 980 BCE (discussed further below) provides our structure. In order to construct higher levels of Israel's history, we must build from 980 upward. The difficulty with this era is that controversies arise over the chronological methods that Israel used for recording history during this period. We will discuss the evidence for each period below.

Most scholars accept the patriarchal age as being pretty straightforward.⁵² Patriarchal chronologies are linear, since they simply descend from father through son. This system changes in the intermediate period, following the exodus when there is no single patriarch with which to pin a linear genealogy. In order to reconstruct the time that elapsed during the exodus through early Conquest, the Judges Era, and the early Monarchy, we must establish several different controls in order to determine how this era can be reconstructed. These controls will be accessed by means of Scripture's internal chronological references that are directly stated or implied by the life-span of the early Conquest pioneers.

The Pentateuch presents 40 years as the time span of the nation's wilderness exile; however, this does not contribute to a continuing chronology. At this point, there is a definite break in the chronological record. Apparently, a scribe had access to material that was noted in a colophon. The notation asserts that Solomon's 4th regnal year was *480 years* after the nation's exodus.⁵³

And it came to pass in the *four hundred and eightieth year after the Children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt*, in the *fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel*, in the month Ziv, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of YHWH. (1 Kgs 6:1)

This entry picks up where the patriarchal, exodus, and wilderness exile chronologies ended. The scribe's colophon (above) serves as the *first proof* for dating Israel's entry into Canaan at least 480 years prior to Solomon's 4th year. J. A. Thompson points out that this dating accords with the chronicler's genealogies.⁵⁴ Referring to Aaron's genealogies in 1 Chr 6:10–15 and 5:36–41, Thompson observes,

With this reference we have twelve generations between Aaron and the building of the Temple. This would give twelve times forty, or four hundred and eighty years to agree with 1 Kgs 6:1. This is feasible reconstruction.⁵⁵

According to some scholars, these twelve generations from Aaron to Solomon total approximately 480 years.⁵⁶ Although this reconstruction may be feasible, it fails to account for the generations listed in 1 Chr 6:33–37, which assigns 18 generations to the period from the exodus to King David.⁵⁷ Actually, the 18-generation genealogy covers Moses to Heman, a Temple musician in the time of David. If we add one more generation, we arrive at Solomon's 4th regnal year, thus totaling 19 generations from the exodus.⁵⁸ If we use the 30 years for a generation established in Genesis (Gen 15:16; Exod 12:40–41; see pp. 88–89), these genealogies allow roughly 570 years from Moses to Solomon. Alternatively, if we use the more accepted 25 years per generation, we arrive at 475 years, which is right in line with 1 Kgs 6:1.⁵⁹ Thus far, we have approached chronology from the exodus to Solomon by two different ways, examining both Aaron's 12 generations and the 19 generations mentioned in 1 Chr 6:33–37. These genealogies serve as a *second proof* supporting the scribe's colophon in 1 Kings 6:1, demonstrating that in no way could this era be collapsed into a shorter time frame.⁶⁰

2. Jephthah's 300 Years

The scribe's chronology in 1 Kgs 6:1 also supports a statement made by Jephthah in the Book of Judges. Jephthah defends Israel's claim to the Amorites' former territories, claiming that, by the time of his (Jephthah's) days, Israel had already been in Canaan for 300 years.

And the king of the children of Ammon answered to the messengers of Jephthah, Because Israel took away my land, *when they came up out of Egypt* (See Num 21:13–35), from Arnon even to Jabbok, and to Jordan: now therefore restore those lands again peaceably. And Jephthah sent messengers again to the king of the children of Ammon. . . *While Israel dwelled in Heshbon* and her towns, and in Aroer and her towns, and in all the cities that be along by the coasts of Arnon, *three hundred years*, why therefore did you not recover them within that time? (Judg 11:13–14, 26)

Israel had conquered the Amorite territory in Heshbon and Aroer shortly before entering the Promised Land (Numbers 21:13–35). This was the territory that the Patriarch Jacob had originally bequeathed to the Joseph tribes as the double portion or double blessing of his inheritance (Gen 48:20–22). During Jephthah's days, the Ammonites tried to reclaim this territory. Jephthah admonished Ammon's emissaries, reminding them that the Amorites' territory had long ago been inherited by Israel (Judg 11:24). To bolster his claim, Jephthah emphatically reminds the ambassadors that Israel had held this territory for well over 300 years. Since Jephthah lived about 140 years prior to Solomon's reign, his statement would be congruent with 1 Kgs 6:1. Jephthah's statement serves as the *third proof* in support of the scribe's colophon.

Jephthah's statement should not necessarily be taken as an exact figure but as an estimate that limits our range for reconstructing this era.⁶¹ In modern times, we say that the U.S. has been a nation for 200 years when the exact figure is closer to 225 years. Jephthah's statement was used to prove the point that Ammon had no claim to the Amorites' lands, which Israel had held for *at least* 300 years. His statement was *not* a scribe's formal record of the nation's chronicle. Therefore, Jephthah's statement allows for Israel to have been in the Promised Land for *at least 300* but *less than 400* years. As we will see, Scripture indicates that the actual time that had passed since Israel had conquered the Amorites' territories was about 380 years at the time of Jephthah's remark.⁶²

3. Judges' Linear Chronology

The Book of Judges forms a bridge between the way that the patriarchal chronologies are reckoned in Genesis–Exodus and the method by which they are reckoned under the later Monarchy. The scribe lists the reign of every judge in linear succession but intersperses the narrative with the time when Israel was oppressed;⁶³ thus, Israel was oppressed by x number of years, then saved by a leader who judged Israel for y number of years.⁶⁴ According to the chronology presented in the Book of Judges, the tumultuous Judges Era lasted about 340 years before Jephthah's statement (above).⁶⁵ Following Jephthah's statement, the Judges Era lasted another 91 years according to the Book of Judge's linear chronology.⁶⁶ This brings the *total of the Judges Era to 410 years*.⁶⁷

Note that this 410 years *begins in Judg 3:8*, with Israel's full rebellion against YHWH's covenant. Like the scribe's colophon in 1 Kgs 6:1, this chronology *dismisses* the years for both Joshua and his immediate successor's administration(s), as well as the 40 years when Israel wandered in the wilderness (see below).⁶⁸ This evidence indicates that the scribe culled his information from the judges' records in the same manner that I have reconstructed it here.

Thus far, we have seen that there are three witnesses that fairly well agree on the amount of time that Israel lived in the Promised Land before instituting the Monarchy. What is not recorded is the length of time that Samuel judged Israel or the time amount of time Saul reigned over Israel. We know that David reigned over Israel for 40 years (2 Sam 5:5; 1 Kgs 2:11) and that the entry in 1 Kgs 6:1 referred to Solomon's 4th year. This leaves only about 26 years for Samuel–Saul.⁶⁹ If we add the 410 years of the Judges Era to David's 40-year reign and add Solomon's 4 years cited in the 1 Kings colophon, we arrive at 454 years, leaving

only 26 years for both Samuel and Saul to have ruled over Israel. This places Saul's coronation at the very least 410 years after the Israelites first faced oppression, when the Book of Judges first began its formal chronology.⁷⁰ As we will see, Israel's sabbatical years aid in the reconstructions of this era as well.

At first, it appears that the omission of the length of Saul's reign is a scribal emendation made during David's administration. However, the entry in 1 Sam 13:1 follows the linear sort of chronological reckoning that we find in Judges.⁷¹ Thus, Samuel or a student(s) under his administration archived both the information in Judges and the history in at least 1 Samuel 13–19 (see pp. 322–23). The Monarchy did not oversee the official historian's office until Samuel and David organized the kingdom (1 Chr 9:22; 16:4), probably while David was on the lam, a few years before Saul's death. Consequently, the only accounts that we have of Saul's reign are told from the priest's (Samuel's) perspective.⁷² Meaningful to our discussion is that both the Judges' linear chronology and 1 Kgs 6:1 begin with Israel's oppression by Mesopotamia 8 years before Othniel judged the tribal federation. The time that 1 Kgs 6:1 accounts for that is not recorded in the Judges record is the 70 years that Israel's first three monarchs reigned over Israel (see below). All of these histories were registered by Levites in the scribe's office during David's and Solomon's reigns (1 Chr 9:22; 2 Sam 8:16–17; 1 Kgs 4:3; see chap. 8.V). Thus, we see that the Levites had already established a linear (accession-year) chronology system well before the monarchy existed (see Table 9.2; see also Table 11.5, pp. 569–71).

4. Deborah and Hazor

A *fourth proof* of an early exodus date and for the long Judges Era comes from the account of Deborah. When Israel first entered the land, Joshua had thoroughly decimated Hazor. He killed Jabin, king of the Hazor kingdoms (Jer 49:28), burning the capital city to the ground (Josh 11:1–15), thoroughly routing Jabin's armies and annihilating Hazor's citizens (Josh 11:12). Deborah's account, however, attests that over 200 years later, the Jabin monarchy had re-established itself at Hazor (Judg 4:2–3) to oppress Judah.⁷³ According to the tribal distribution mentioned in Joshua, Judah had settled this area (Josh 15:21–25) but failed to drive out many of Canaan's natives (Josh 15:63; Judg 1:19).

Deborah could not have been contemporary with Joshua in any way for at least two reasons. First, Israel's armies faced obstacles in prevailing against Hazor's iron chariots at the initial Conquest but succeeded in utterly destroying them under Deborah (Josh 17:16–18; Judg 1:19). Deliberately, YHWH instructed Joshua to utterly destroy Hazor's chariots at the initial Conquest (Josh 11:6). The only way the Kingdom of Hazor (Jer 49:28) could replenish a 900-strong chariotry in Deborah's day (Judg 4:3) was for a significant time to pass during which the Jabins were able to reestablish and rebuilt their kingdom's chariot force.

Second, according to Deborah's account, Heber, a Kenite and a descendant of Reuel (Jethro), Moses' father-in-law,⁷⁴ had severed himself from Israel to ally with Hazor (Judg 4:11–12). He then betrayed Barak's (4:12) military plans to King Jabin. This act of treason is unlikely to have occurred under Joshua's or the elders' administrations, when Jethro had so firmly allied his family with his son-in-law Moses and Israel (Exodus 18). Obviously, Jael,

Table 9.2. Judges' Priestly Linear Chronology

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Text</i> | <i>Event</i> | <i>Years</i> | <i>Chronology</i> |
|-------------|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| 1460 | Judg 3:8 | Captivity: Mesopotamian King Chushan-rishathaim | 8 | 8 |
| 1452 | 3:11 | Saved: Othniel (Caleb's much younger brother leads Israel to a long era of peace) | 40 | 48 |
| 1412 | 3:14 | Captivity: Moab's King Eglon | 18 | 66 |
| 1394 | 3:30 | Saved: Ehud | 80 | 146 |
| 1314 | 3:31; 5:6 | Saved: Shamgar/Philistines | 20 | 166 |
| 1294 | 4:3 | Captivity: Hazor's King Jabin | 20 | 186 |
| 1274 | 5:31 | Saved: Deborah | 40 | 226 |
| 1234 | 6:1 | Captivity: Midian and Amalekites | 7 | 233 |
| 1227 | 8:28 | Saved: Gideon | 40 | 273 |
| 1187 | 9:22 | Coup: Abimelech | 3 | 276 |
| 1184 | 10:2 | Saved: Tola (of Issachar) | 23 | 299 |
| 1161 | 10:3 | Saved: Jair (Gileadite) | 22 | 321 |
| 1139 | 10:7–8 | Captivity: Philistines and Ammonites | 18 | 339 |
| 1121 | 12:7 | Saved: Jephthah | 6 | 345 |
| 1115 | 12:8–9 | Saved: Ibzan of Bethlehem | 7 | 352 |
| 1108 | 12:11 | Saved: Elon (Zebulunite) | 10 | 362 |
| 1098 | 12:13–14 | Saved: Abdon (Pirathonite) | 8 | 370 |
| 1090 | 13:1 | Captivity: Philistines (Samuel) | 40 | 410 |
| 1051t | 1 Sam 8:1 | Israel asks for a king when Samuel is (80 yrs.?) old | (7) | 436 |
| | 1 Sam 10:20–24 | Saul | (19) | |
| 1023t | 1 Kgs 2:1 | David enthroned over Judah | 7 | 443 |
| 1016t | 2 Sam 5:5 | David enthroned over United Israel Kingdom | 33 | 476 |
| 980 | 1 Kgs 6:1 | Solomon's 4 th year | 4 | 480 |

Heber's wife, did not support her husband's alliance or his treachery against Israel's kindness to his tribe when she securely nailed her allegiance to Israel in the temple of Jabin's calculating general (Judg 4:17–21).

The strongest objection to 1 Kings' colophon and Judges' linear chronology (which places Deborah over 200 years after Joshua) arises in regard to claim that a King Jabin reigned from Hazor. Since both Deborah and Joshua cite a King Jabin, a number of scholars assume that these were the same king.⁷⁵ This assumption is unjustified.⁷⁶ History is laded with accounts of monarchs who ruled under a family name or in the name of a notable predecessor. Genesis lists Melchi-zedek (Gen 14:18) as king of Jerusalem. Another monarch is later listed as Adoni-zedek (Josh 10:1), Jerusalem's king during the Conquest. The same patronym custom is found with Syria's Ben-Hadad I and Ben-Hadad II and even with

Samaria's Jeroboam I or Jeroboam II. Egypt was no stranger to this custom either, because there exist in Egypt's royal kings' lists no less than ten *different* kings named Ramesses, four named Thutmoses, four different Amenhoteps, and two named Seti. Assyria also attests to monarchs who succeeded in the name of a notorious predecessor; hence, at least five *different* kings are named Shamshi-Adad and Shalmaneser, three are named Adad-nirari, three Shalmaneser, three Tiglath-pileser, and two Sargon. This custom spanned hundreds of years. In the case of Tiglath-pileser III (762 BCE), the royal name had been in use for about a 1,000 years. Thus, this objection to Scripture's chronology is naive and unfounded. This evidence has led some scholars to suggest that Jabin was a dynastic name rather than the name of an actual king.⁷⁷

5. Israel's Ancient History Unbelievable?

One currently popular method of accounting for the Judges' chronology (Kitchen, Freedman, Albright, Wright) condenses the Judges Era by overlapping administrations.⁷⁸ Kenneth Kitchen, for instance, eclipses about 16 years of Israel's captivity under Moab's King Eglon into Ehud's 80-year administration. Thus, Ehud's 80 years is reduced to 64 years, and Judges' overall chronology shortened. Kitchen's assessment, however, ignores the fact that 1 Kgs 6:1 is itself based on the Book of Judges' linear chronology. Kitchen's theory does not account for Jephthah's statement⁷⁹ or for Hebron's renewed strength in Judges 4–5. Further, Kitchen refers to the early Conquest and Judges Era as an undetermined intermediate period,⁸⁰ when the rule of one judge overlapped that of another judge for an unspecified number of years. Although Kitchen is correct in stating that the early Conquest Era was an intermediate period the duration of which is not provided, we are not left without clues that allow us to reconstruct this period (see "Deutero-Joshua" below). Kitchen and scholars who thus telescope the entire Judges Era into 293 years are unjustified in discounting chronologies actually listed in Scripture.⁸¹

Egyptologist Donald Redford readily observes that the politically correct thirteenth century date for the exodus deconstructs and dismisses the validity of the text.

The strength, however, of a confessional commitment to bolster a pre-judgment will not allow most conservative Jewish or Christian exegetes to discard the whole chronological arrangement. . . . The basic pattern of Patriarchal Age, Descent and Sojourn, Exodus and Conquest, and Judges *must* be essentially correct—Is it not inherently reasonable? Do you have a better one?—and consequently numerous ingenious solutions are devised. The most common trick has been to reduce time spans to generations: thus the 480 figure must really represent twelve generations: but 40 years per generation is too long, 20 being much closer to the average. Hence we can cut the figure in half and put the Exodus around 1255 BCE instead of 1486, and lo! it falls squarely in the reign of Ramesses II, and thus allusion to "Ra'amses" in Exodus 1:11 can be nicely accommodated! Similarly the 430 years of the Sojourn must simply be a curious equivalent of roughly four generations—does not Genesis 15:16 virtually prove it?—and so the Descent will come to rest about the

middle of the fourteenth century BCE, or at the close of the Amarna age. Although the Gargantuan ages of the patriarchs are not extraneous to the Genesis material as we now have it, but actually inform it, nevertheless these too are swept away or transmogrified into normal generation estimates; and thus the "Patriarchal Age" can occupy the fifteenth and early fourteenth centuries. . . . Such manhandling of the evidence smacks of prestidigitation and numerology; yet it has produced the shaky foundations on which a lamentable number of "histories" of Israel have been written.⁸²

Redford is indeed justified in his criticism of this politically correct methodology of dismissing Scripture and trying to squeeze Israel's history in Egypt into a preconceived idea of what historical and archaeological evidence "should" demonstrate.

Not only does Kitchen's method undermine the validity of many details in Scripture, this telescoping method totally discounts the scribe's formal statement in Judges about "when" and how the Judges' chronology was reckoned.

(Introductory Preamble) Nevertheless YHWH (a) raised up judges, which (b) delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. And yet they would not listen to their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves to them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of YHWH; but they did not so.

And (1) when YHWH raised them up judges, then YHWH was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented YHWH because of (3) their groanings by reason of them that (3) oppressed them and vexed them. And it came to pass, (2) when the judge was dead, that (3) they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down to them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way. (Judg 2:16–19, parenthesis added)

This text establishes the formula for the Judges' chronology. The introductory preamble introduces us to the Judges' subject matter as well as its basic theme: (b) Israel rebels so there is no protection from YHWH's covenant; subsequently the nation is delivered into oppression; YHWH (a) raises up judges to save the Israelites. The scribe then sets the formula for Judges' chronology. (1) YHWH raises up a judge and is with that judge (2) until his or her death. Thus, the life of the judge during his or her *judgeship* serves as x number of years for chronological purposes. Then Israel corrupts herself more (3) and is given over to oppression again. This is terminus y.⁸³ This interpretation of this text is supported further by the Judges' account listing a time for a judge to have ruled or for Israel to have been oppressed, followed by a scribal statement recognizing that, "after him," another judge ruled.⁸⁴ Naturally, this indicates a linear, descending chronology of judges, interrupted by a period of domination or vassal status, then returning to the leadership of another, perhaps elected judge.

Scribal commentary indicates that the Judges' material should indeed be dealt with in a linear fashion in lieu of the currently popular method of juxtaposing the rulership of one judge with another. The scribe's statement in Judg 2:16–19 serves as a *fifth proof* to 1 Kgs 6:1, demonstrating that according to all Scriptural accounts, the Judges Era lasted for at least 410 years,⁸⁵ not 293 years as scholars such as Kitchen posit.⁸⁶

6. 430-Year Judgment Precedent

When we look at Israel's infiltration into the Promised Land, we see that Israel adhered to YHWH's covenant only during Joshua and his successors' lifetimes (Josh 24:31; Judg 2:7). After these pioneers passed away (30–45? years), the people began a downward-spiraling cycle.⁸⁷ Following Joshua's death, Israel's years in the land of Canaan were marked by continual disregard for the constitutional Law. In the Promised-Land Covenant that YHWH made with Abraham, the Creator established a 430-year precedent for a nation's sins to "come to the full" (Gen 15:13–16; Exod 12:41) before national judgment would be rendered.⁸⁸ Israel's request for a monarchy and Saul's accession to Israel's throne took place about 408 years after Israel had rebelled against the covenant at Bochim (Judg 2:1–5). By 1036, when the 430-year judgment was exhausted, YHWH had rejected Saul as king. The nation was on the brink of civil war as Saul chased David all over the countryside and the Philistines waged all-out war on Israel. The Tabernacle had been deserted, and the Ark of the Covenant resided in a layman's house. Unquestionably, chaos hallmarked Israel's state of affairs 430 years after Bochim.

David ascended Israel's throne 443 years after Bochim. David and his royal line ruled for exactly 430 years,⁸⁹ when the nation's sins again "came to the full," and YHWH rendered his Babylonian judgment on the nation. This 430-year judgment precedent is the *sixth (albeit tentative) proof* of the scribe's colophon. As we will see in upcoming chapters of this book, YHWH consistently withholds national judgment for 430 years and allows a nation to reach degradation (see Table 9.3).

From all accounts, the scribe based his notation in 1 Kgs 6:1 on Judges' *linear priestly chronology*. What neither chronology appears to account for is the 40 years that Israel roamed the wilderness before invading Canaan and the duration of Joshua (Judges 2:8) and his righteous successor's administration(s) after the nation first entered the land, which may have been another 30–60 years.⁹⁰

Table 9.3. David's 430-Year Monarchy

| <i>David's House Rules over Judah</i> | <i>Date</i> | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|-------|
| David ascends Judah's throne | 1023 | BCE |
| Zedekiah is killed | –587 | BCE |
| Total | 436 | years |
| Athaliah's 6-year reign (857–851 BCE) | –6 | |
| Total | 430 | years |