

the only exact source. Everything else is subject to interpretation and disagreements.³⁰⁰ For every two Egyptologists there are two views of Egyptian history. Ditto for Assyria. Even the chronology of the Greek period devolves into chaos after the bible finishes using a little Persian history. If there is any hope of straightening it all out, then the bible is the key.

Trying to ascertain the sabbatical year from secular sources is truly a comedy of errors. Eventually reasoning proves to be circular, or sources truly ambiguous and even the source material cannot be entirely trusted. Unlike the bible, there are provable errors in these sources, which always leave the chronologist wondering if a key assumption is the part in error.

However, once the biblical sabbatical cycle is known using the bible, the comedy of errors can be straightened out. The mistakes of others can be understood, and some confirmatory value can be gained from the secular source, merely by being able to explain it. I have already demonstrated this in the preceding section with respect to the Hurban and Jewish opinions on the timing of the sabbatical year. I will now turn to some additional external sources.

The Siege of Bethzur

The siege of Bethzur happened in A.S. [150] according to 1st Maccabees (T3-3977; 1st Ma. 6:20, 49) or A.S. [149] (2nd Ma. 13:1) (T1-3978). Judas abandoned Bethzur in 163 B.C. due to a lack of supplies caused by the sabbatical year. The passage in 1st Mac. 6:49, "because there was a sabbatical year" and 1st Ma. 6:53, "because of the seventh year happening" indicates the post sabbatical year (see note 243.17).³⁰¹ The taking of Beth-Zur in the 150th year is best explained using the fall-313 A.S. epoch, now that we know the when the sabbatical year was. This favors Zeitlin's date for the siege.³⁰² Dagut's general criticisms of Zeitlin are valid,³⁰³ but he withdraws himself from the problem of the correct B.C. dating (see Dagut, pg. 157). However, the biblical placing of the Sabbatical year, one year earlier than Zeitlin (a.k.a. Zuckermann) has all the advantages of Zeitlin's theory and none of the demerits. It is not necessary to re-date the death of Antiochus. The discrepancies in Maccabees lie with the early use of non-

→ and has remedied the lack by providing the necessary figures from prophetic or official Judean and Israelite sources. Our effort to explain mistakes or correct problems in these other periods, therefore, is an autopsy on corruption, and must proceed by falling back on the accuracy of the bible. One this approach is taken, new life will be breathed into these unknown periods, but it must never be forgotten that it is the bible that resurrected forgotten history!

³⁰⁰ I know that many recite the mantra that the bible is difficult to interpret, but this lie is usually promoted by those who do not wish to understand it simply because they do not like what it plainly says.

³⁰¹ "The consequences of a sabbatical year (to which the passage refers) would be felt not during the year itself, but in the early part of the following year. For the sabbatical year itself, the grain of the previous harvest would suffice. Only in the next year would the grain that should have been grown and harvested in the sabbatical year be needed." See 251.32, Dagut, M.B, "II Maccabees and the Death of Antiochus IV Epiphanes", *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (Sept., 1953), pp. 149-157, pg. 156.

³⁰² *The First Book of Maccabees*, Sydney Tedesche. New York, 1950. See 254.124.

accession methods of the Seleucid era in Judea and the later introduction of the official Seleucid era's in the Roman period. Eventually, the era of contracts was standardized for Jews as Fall-312 B.C. This competed with the Spring-311 B.C. version for a good while. Probably by the time of Josephus, the fall-313 B.C. local versions were being phased out.

We may expect that Greek sources, such as the Seleucid dates of Antiochus reign and expeditions outside of Judea are drawn from the official era (either spring-311 B.C. or fall 312 B.C.) while local sources can fall back to fall-313 B.C. or spring 312 B.C. The most parsimonious theory of source reconstruction is beyond the scope of this book.

Herod's Conquest of Jerusalem

Josephus consular dating of Herod's conquest of Jerusalem is incorrect.³⁰³ The Roman Historian Dio Cassius³⁰⁴ correctly places the conquest in 38 B.C.³⁰⁵ The conquest (in 38 B.C.) was a sabbatical year according to Josephus, and according to biblical chronology. This summer marked the accession year of Herod, and Tishri 1, 38 B.C. began his 1st year. Accordingly, Herod's 7th year falls in B.C. [31]. The battle of Actium, between Mark Antony and Augustus Caesar was fought in that year according to Josephus. Roman sources give the calendar date: September 2, 31 B.C. Therefore, Herod's 7th year exactly matches the timing of the battle.

Josephus tells us that it was the 27th year since Pompey had conquered Jerusalem (I-4103). Pompey took Jerusalem in late 64 B.C. (I-4077). The counsels were Cicero and Antonius, but this was before the Julian calendar reform, so they were elected in late summer of 64 B.C. and entered office in the fall.³⁰⁶ Josephus also tells us that it was the 126th year of the Hasmonean government, which takes us back to the Tishri year 164 B.C. and the death of Antiochus.

We can theorize about Josephus' consular dates. There can be little doubt that Josephus actually knew when the sabbatical year was. His knowledge of Herod's reign and the sabbatical year came from Jewish sources, but his knowledge of the consular dates could have only been obtained in Rome

³⁰³ However, Josephus may be absolved if someone had edited the consular dates into his work.

³⁰⁴ See Dio 251.35, *Dio Cassius* 49.22-23. See also Book 48. Dio's history gives a list of consular dates at the beginning of each book, and it is clear that the Pocorus the Parthian was killed in B.C. 39, and that Sossius went to Herod's aid in B.C. 39 after the victory at Samosata. Dio then gives the consular dates for B.C. 38 for the fall of Jerusalem and the slaying of the last Hasmonean king Antigonus. See also Clinton 251.28, pg 222ff.

³⁰⁵ i.e. during *Claudius et Norbanus*. See Ussher 254.130. Bishop Ussher tries to conflate Josephus' and Dio's disagreement by placing the conquest in the winter of B.C. 38/37. This is wrong because Josephus says that the conquest happened in the third month, and assures us that the Romans did not fight during the winter. Ussher tried valiantly to push the conquest as far forward as possible, but not without mangling the internal evidence.

³⁰⁶ See Ussher 254.130, 4528. *Annals*. Typically, the date given is 63 B.C., but this is wrong because the Roman calendar was not uniform with the seasons before the Julian calendar reform. It is quite possible toward the end of 64 B.C. that the Roman calendar had missed 3 intercalations. This would cause January to fall in October. The Day of Atonement fast in B.C. 64 was on October 4. Pre-44 B.C. reconstructions of the Roman calendar commonly have Ianuarius falling in October, September, and even August.