

# A STUDY OF THE MAJOR DISCREPANCY BETWEEN RABBINIC AND CONVENTIONAL CHRONOLOGY

נתיבת חיד לקהופות									
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**JEWISH  
HISTORY  
in CONFLICT**  

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A STUDY OF THE  
MAJOR DISCREPANCY  
BETWEEN RABBINIC  
AND CONVENTIONAL  
CHRONOLOGY

MITCHELL FIRST



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To my wife,  
Sharon

and

To our children,  
Shaya, Daniel, and Rachel

and

To my parents



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The views expressed in this study are solely my own, and any errors are my responsibility.

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May the Temple be speedily rebuilt in our time.

Teaneck, N.J.  
May 1996

Mitchell M. First



## *Abbreviations*

The following are the abbreviations used in the study:

### *Encyclopedias and Periodicals*

EJ	Encyclopaedia Judaica
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JE	Jewish Encyclopedia
JJLG	Jahrbuch der juedisch-literarischen Gesellschaft
JQR	Jewish Quarterly Review
MGWJ	Monatsschrift fuer Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums
PAAJR	Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research
RQ	Revue de Qumran
REJ	Revue des Études Juives
ZNW	Zeitschrift fuer die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft

### *Other Abbreviations*

MS=	Minyan Shetarot
SO=	Seder Olam Rabbah

The standard editions of the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds (i.e., Vilna and Krotoschin) have been used throughout. All citations to SO are to Milikowsky's edition, unless otherwise specified.

The transliteration of Hebrew has followed the general rules used by

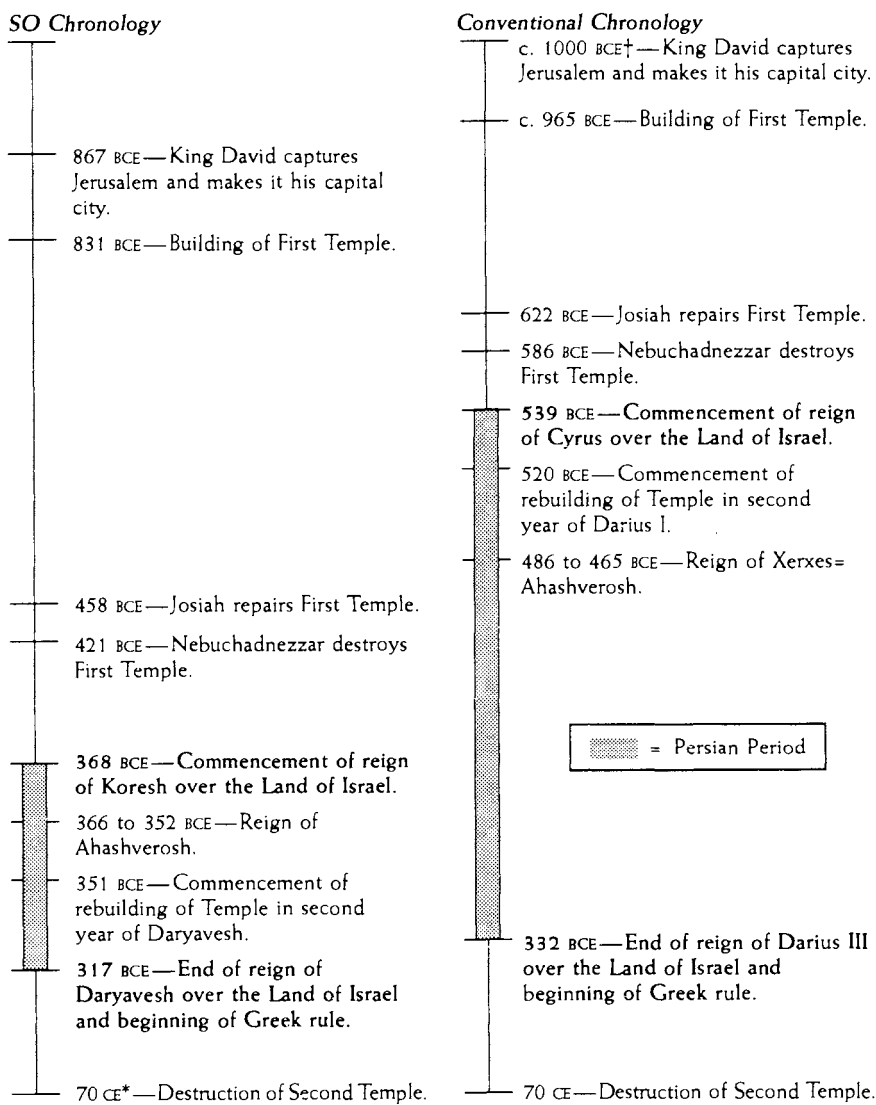


the Encyclopaedia Judaica, with the following exceptions: we have transliterated ך as h and ז as tz.

When referring to rabbinic figures, the title "Rabbi" (or its abbreviation "R.") has not been utilized because of the question that arises as to precisely which individuals should be referred to with this title. The decision not to utilize this title does not reflect any intent to detract from the honor or authority of rabbinic figures.

The phrase "Persian period" has been used in the study to refer to the period of Persian rule over the land of Israel from the return under Cyrus=Koresch until Alexander's wresting of control over the land of Israel from the last Persian king. To refer only to the period of Persian rule *during* the Second Temple period (i.e., the period from approximately the second year of Darius=Daryavesh until Alexander's wresting of control over the land of Israel from the last Persian king), the phrase "period of Persian dominion is used." (Occasionally, "period of Persian dominion during the Second Temple period" is written out for clarification.)

## *DIAGRAM: Comparison of the SO Chronology with the Conventional Chronology*



\*If the assumption is made that the date implicit in rabbinic chronology for the destruction of the Second Temple is 68 CE (or 69 CE), then two (or one) years should be subtracted from all the dates in the "SO Chronology" column (i.e., 867 BCE becomes 869 BCE.)

†The scholars do not agree as to the exact year. But according to almost all scholars, it was between 1005 BCE and 995 BCE.



## *Statement of Purpose*

According to *Seder Olam Rabbah* (SO), the work that forms the basis for almost all rabbinic chronology, the period from the defeat of the Babylonians by the Medeo-Persians until the beginning of Greek rule encompassed 52 years and spanned the reigns of three Persian kings.<sup>1</sup> According to the chronology that is universally accepted by historians today (conventional chronology), this period of Persian<sup>2</sup> rule over the land of Israel encompassed 207 years (539 to 332 BCE) and during this period more than ten Persian kings reigned.

This discrepancy between the traditional Jewish chronology and conventional chronology has not gone unnoticed. The purpose of this study is to collect and categorize the variety of Jewish responses to this discrepancy, both by Jewish scholars and rabbinic authorities. Part I provides an introduction to the discrepancy. Part II<sup>3</sup> contains the earliest Jewish responses to the discrepancy. In the major part of the study, Part III, the responses to the discrepancy from the time of Azariah de Rossi<sup>4</sup> (16th century) to the present time are collected and categorized. This unified collection and categorization of the many responses will enable

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1. According to SO, the reign of these three Persian kings was preceded by the reign of a Medean king named Daryavesh, who reigned 1 year (see App. A, n. 8.). The 1 year of this Medean king is counted as the first of these 52 years.

2. The conventional chronology knows of no Medean king Daryavesh and of no brief period of Medean rule preceding the reign of these Persian kings.

3. The responses collected in Part II range from the response of Saadiah Gaon (882–942) to the response of Abraham Zacuto (1452–c.1515).

4. De Rossi's discussion of the discrepancy was extensive and much-publicized and provoked much Jewish response. For this reason, the time of de Rossi serves as an appropriate demarcation between Part II and Part III.

students and scholars to have easy access to what has been written by Jewish scholars and rabbinic authorities about the discrepancy and will facilitate scholarly evaluation of the responses.

Part IV is an evaluation of the responses' attempts to answer the fundamental question raised by the discrepancy. Part V presents observations on the rabbinic responses. Part VI is a summary and conclusion.

*I*



**INTRODUCTION  
TO THE DISCREPANCY**



## *The SO Chronology*

SO is a rabbinic chronological work attributed by the Talmud<sup>5</sup> to R. Yose b. Halaftha (2nd century CE). SO's chronology of the Persian and Second Temple periods can be easily constructed from several passages within the work.<sup>6</sup> According to the SO chronology:

1. The length of the period from the defeat of the Babylonians by the Medeo-Persians until the beginning of the Greek period<sup>7</sup> was 52 years.

2. These 52 years spanned the reigns of one Medean king and three Persian kings: Koresh, Ahashverosh, and Daryavesh.

3. The length of the period from the commencement of the building<sup>8</sup> of the Second Temple in the reign of Daryavesh until the beginning of the Greek period was 34 years.

4. The length of the entire Second Temple period was 420 years. The period of Persian dominion spanned the first 34 of these years, and the periods of Greek, Hasmonean, and Roman dominion spanned the following 386 years.

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5. Yevamot 82b and Niddah 46b.

6. The main passages are printed in App. A.

7. SO never states what precise event comprises the demarcation between the Medeo-Persian period and the Greek period. All the calculations and comparisons made in this section make the usual assumption that the event intended was Alexander's wresting control of the land of Israel from the last Persian king.

8. The Bible gives the commencement of the building of the Second Temple as in the 2nd year of Daryavesh (Ezra 4:24; Haggai 1:14–15) and the completion of the building in his 6th year (Ezra 6:15). Close reading of SO reveals that, when SO counts its 34-year period of Persian dominion and its 420-year Second Temple period, it counts from the commencement of the building of the Second Temple, and not from the time the building was completed. See App. A, n. 11. For this reason calculation is made here and in the balance of the calculations below from the commencement of the building of the Second Temple.



If the destruction of the Second Temple took place in the year 70 CE, the SO chronology would imply that the Medeo-Persian period commenced in the year 369 BCE, that the commencement of the building of the Second Temple was in the year 351 BCE, and that the entire Medeo-Persian period spanned only the years 369 to 317 BCE.<sup>9</sup>

## *The Conventional Chronology*

The conventional chronology was derived largely from the narrative works of Greek historians from the Persian period and from the astronomical tables of the Egyptian astronomer Ptolemy (2nd century CE).<sup>10</sup> According to the conventional chronology:

1. The length of the period from the defeat of the Babylonians by the Persians until the beginning of the Greek period was 207 years.

2. These 207 years spanned the reigns of more than ten Persian kings. These kings included: Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius I, Xerxes I, Artaxerxes I, Darius II, Artaxerxes II, Artaxerxes III, Arses, and Darius III.

3. The length of the period from the commencement of the building of the Second Temple in the reign of Darius I until the beginning of the Greek period was 188 years.

4. The length of the entire Second Temple period was 589 years.

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9. In the above calculations, the unnecessary assumption is made that the years mentioned in the relevant passages in SO all represent full and complete years. Note also that there is no year "0" between 1 BCE and 1 CE. Thus an event that occurred exactly 420 full years prior to an event in 70 CE should be dated to 351 BCE, and not 350 BCE.

Note finally that most scholars and rabbinic authorities make the assumption that the date implicit in rabbinic chronology for the destruction of the Second Temple is 68 CE (or, less frequently, 69 CE). As a result, the dates they provide for events before the common era, according to the rabbinic chronology, are usually 2 (or 1) years earlier than the dates provided in this study.

10. The conventional chronology has also been confirmed by cuneiform inscriptions from the Persian period. For an overview of some of the major sources on which the conventional chronology is based, see App. B. (Note that there are disagreements among modern scholars, ranging from 1 to 2 years, over some of the dates in the conventional chronology.)

The period of Persian dominion spanned the first 188 of these years and the periods of Greek, Hasmonean, and Roman dominion spanned the following 401 years.

In the conventional chronology, the Persian period commenced in the year 539 BCE, the commencement of the building of the Second Temple was in the year 520 BCE,<sup>11</sup> and the entire Persian period spanned the years 539 to 332 BCE.

## *The Discrepancy*

A comparison of the two chronologies shows that discrepancies of about 154 to 169 years exist between them regarding the lengths of the Persian and Second Temple periods. These discrepancies are due almost entirely to the underlying discrepancy that exists between the two chronologies regarding the length of the Persian period, which SO views as spanning 52 years (including the brief reign of the Medean king Daryavesh) and the conventional chronology views as spanning 207 years.<sup>12</sup> (This discrepancy is illustrated in the Diagram on p. xvii.)

This discrepancy is not merely a discrepancy between the conven-

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11. The Bible (Haggai 1:14–15; Ezra 4:24) gives the building of the Second Temple as having commenced in the 6th month of the 2nd year of Darius. According to the system of reckoning employed by the Persians, although Darius I began to reign late in 522 BCE, his 1st year did not begin until the spring of 521 BCE and his 2nd year did not begin until the spring of 520 BCE. Following most Jewish scholars this study makes the assumption that the Jews in Judea were following this system. If one does not wish to make this assumption, then the appropriate date to assign to the commencement of the building is 521 BCE.

12. Other discrepancies exist between the two chronologies in the context of the Medeo-Persian and Second Temple periods which involve a much smaller amount of years. Aside from the one year discrepancy regarding the existence and reign of the Medean king Daryavesh (see nn. 1 and 2), there is also a discrepancy of about 15 years regarding the total of the Greek, Hasmonean, and Roman periods. (Most of this 15-year discrepancy seems to be due to an underlying discrepancy between the two chronologies regarding the length of the period from the beginning of Greek rule in the land of Israel until the commencement of the Seleucid era.) There is also a discrepancy of 1 to 2 years

tional chronology and a chronology of the Persian period found in one ancient rabbinic work. SO's chronology of the Persian and Second Temple periods is included in and adopted by the Talmud<sup>13</sup> and is viewed by all authorities as implicit in the accepted Jewish count from creation.<sup>14</sup> Any suggestion that the Persian or Second Temple periods were longer than the time assigned to them by SO is also an attack on the accuracy of the traditions of the Talmud and on the accuracy of the accepted Jewish count from creation.

This discrepancy is also not simply a discrepancy between rabbinic chronology and the conventional chronology. The SO chronology, or something close to it, is also implicit in verse 11:2 of the book of Daniel. This verse, in the form of a prediction, states that the Persian period would span the reigns of only a few Persian kings.<sup>15</sup> Any suggestion that

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regarding the year of the destruction of the Second Temple. These other discrepancies will not be discussed further in the study.

The discrepancy regarding the Persian period also has consequences for the periods prior to the Persian period. All the BCE dates stated in the conventional chronology from the time of King David (there is not really a "conventional chronology" prior to this point) through the end of the Babylonian period are about 130 to 170 years earlier than the corresponding BCE dates derived from the SO chronology, due largely to the discrepancy with regard to the length of the Persian period (see Diagram). (The exact amount of the discrepancy varies throughout the periods because the discrepancy with regard to the Persian period is sometimes offset by, and other times increased by, other smaller discrepancies that arise throughout the other periods.) One often-cited example is the date of the destruction of the First Temple. The conventional chronology dates the destruction of the First Temple by the Babylonians to 586 BCE. The SO chronology would imply that this event occurred in 421 BCE.

13. See Yoma 9a, Arakhin 12b, Avodah Zarah 9a, J. Megillah 72d (1:12), and the additional passages from the Talmud referred to in Part IV, n. 10. SO's chronology is also adopted by the Tosefta (Zevahim 13:3).

14. I.e., the calculation of the present year as the year 5,756 from creation is viewed by all authorities as based on the assumption that the Second Temple period spanned 420 years.

15. The verse refers to three Persian kings and then to a fourth king, who will all reign before the Greek period. The simplest understanding of the verse is that it refers to four *Persian* kings. SO understands the verse as consistent with its own chronology of one Medean and three Persian kings.

the Persian period spanned the reigns of ten or more Persian kings is an attack on the authority of this biblical verse.

Finally, it is important to point out that the underlying discrepancy with regard to the Persian period is actually composed of two separate discrepancies. The first discrepancy relates to the identity of the Persian king who reigned between Koresh (=Cyrus), the king who first allowed the Jews to return to the land of Israel, and Daryavesh (=Darius), the king in whose reign the Second Temple was built. The SO chronology views the king who reigned between them to be the Ahashverosh of the book of Esther, while the conventional chronology views the main king<sup>16</sup> who reigned between them to be Cambyses.<sup>17</sup> The second discrepancy relates to the number of Persian kings who reigned after the building of the Second Temple. The SO chronology views the Daryavesh in whose reign the Second Temple was built to have been the last Persian king to reign over the land of Israel<sup>18</sup> and assumes that Greek rule over the land of Israel commenced at the end of his reign. The conventional chronology views the Daryavesh in whose reign the Second Temple was built (=Darius I) to have been followed by many additional Persian kings before the commencement of Greek rule over the land of Israel.

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16. The conventional chronology views the period between Koresh=Cyrus and Daryavesh=Darius I to have spanned the reign of one additional Persian king aside from Cambyses. This additional king is Bardiya, who reigned for several months after Cambyses and before Darius I. See App. B, n. 1.

17. Although there are some rabbinic authorities who wish to argue for the of Ahashverosh with Cambyses, it has now become clear that Ahashverosh is to be identified with the king known to the Greeks as Xerxes (the son of the Darius=Daryavesh in whose reign the Second Temple was built). This became evident only in the nineteenth century when Old Persian cuneiform was deciphered and the names of the Persian kings in their Persian forms came to light. It was then discovered that the Persian form of Xerxes' name was "Khshayarsha," a name very close to the name אחשורוש. See App. B, n. 17, and App. C.

18. In order for SO to maintain the view that it does, it must interpret numerous biblical references to a king named Artahshasta as references to Daryavesh. This interpretation is very difficult in light of Ezra 6:14, which refers to both Daryavesh and Artahshasta and clearly implies that the two are separate kings.



## *II*



# *THE EARLIEST JEWISH RESPONSES TO THE DISCREPANCY*



In this section of the study, the earliest Jewish responses to the discrepancy between the view of the Persian period expressed in SO<sup>1</sup> and views that describe the Persian period as a protracted one<sup>2</sup> are collected and summarized. The responses collected in this section range from the response of Saadiah Gaon (882–942) to the response of Abraham Zacuto (1452–c. 1515).<sup>3</sup>

## 1 Saadiah Gaon (882–942)

Saadiah Gaon<sup>4</sup> refers to the view of the Christians and some others<sup>5</sup> that the Persian period spanned the reigns of seventeen<sup>6</sup> Persian kings. He

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1. Or an alternative rabbinic view of the Persian period close to the view expressed in SO. See Seder Malkhei Romi and Isaac Abravanel.

2. The responses collected in this section (with the exception of the response of Josippon) refer to views that describe the Persian period as spanning the reigns of ten to seventeen Persian kings. (In this period, there was no “conventional chronology.”)

3. Many more Jewish personalities were aware of the discrepancy than are included in this section. Any Jew who read any of the responses included in this section (with the exception of the response of Josippon) would have been aware of the discrepancy. Also, many Jews might have read some of the works of the nations that describe the Persian period as a protracted one, while themselves never referring to a discrepancy or to the view of the Persian period expressed in these sources. One example is Abraham Ibn Ezra (see App. D, 12), who refers many times in his commentaries to ספרי מלכי פרס (the books concerning the Persian kings), but never refers to a discrepancy between the SO view (or his own view, which contains one additional Persian king) and the view that was probably expressed in this source. (For another example, see App. E, n. 1.)

4. Saadiah, *Commentary on Daniel*, pp. 177 (commentary on Daniel 9:24–27), 193–94 (commentary on Daniel 11:2), and *Emunot ve-De’ot*, chap. 8, pp. 259–60.

Note that the commentary to Daniel ascribed to Saadiah Gaon in rabbinic Bibles was not authored by him. The view of the author of this commentary is collected in App. D, 10.

5. Arabic: *النجارية ومقعة الحولקים* (Hebrew translation: *הנצרים ומקעת החולקים*). Saadiah, *Commentary on Daniel*, p. 194.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 194, and *Emunot ve-De’ot*, p. 259. Saadiah does not name these 17 kings.



argues that Daniel 11:1–2 refutes such a claim and proves that the period between the Babylonian era and the Greek era could only have spanned the reigns of four kings: one Medean king and three Persian kings.<sup>7</sup>

Saadia believes that the view of the Christians is the result of their having purposely increased the length of the Persian period. He postulates that they purposely increased the length of the Persian period so that Daniel's prophecy about an anointed one who will be cut off<sup>8</sup> toward the end of the 70 weeks of years would fall chronologically around the time of Jesus.<sup>9</sup> He then criticizes the Christians for having the audacity to claim that the Jews purposely eliminated these same years (so that the above prophecy would not fall chronologically around the time of Jesus).<sup>10</sup>

7. Saadia, *Commentary on Daniel*, pp. 193–94, and *Emunot ve-De'ot*, pp. 259–60.

8. יכרת משיח ואין לו (an anointed one shall be cut off, and be no more) (Daniel 9:26).

9. Saadia, *Commentary on Daniel*, p. 177, and *Emunot ve-De'ot*, p. 259. According to the SO chronology, which Saadia affirms (see paragraph immediately below), the 490 years of Daniel 9:24–27 begin with the destruction of the First Temple and end with the destruction of the Second Temple. Saadia writes that the Christians moved the *terminus a quo* forward 50 years, to the time of Koresh, and the *terminus ad quem* backward 135 years, to the time of Jesus. (In accordance with certain rabbinic traditions, Saadia assumed that the time of Jesus was 135 years before the destruction of the Second Temple.) This forced the Christians to create a chronology in which the period from Koresh to Jesus spanned 490 years. The way they chose to do this, Saadia hypothesizes, was by adding 185 years to the Persian period.

When Saadia states his own view, he affirms the tradition that the Second Temple period spanned 420 years. See his *Emunot ve-De'ot*, p. 259 and *Commentary on Daniel*, p. 170.

It should be pointed out that Saadia's introduction to Megillat Antiochus (S. Atlas and M. Perlmann, "Saadia on the Scroll of the Hasmoneans," *PAAJR* 14, [1944], p. 20) contains a statement that the story of Hasmoneans took place ק"ח (118) years after the story of Mordechai and Esther. This statement would be inconsistent with the SO chronology. But at least one scholar (F. Rosenthal, "Saadyah's Introduction to the Scroll of the Hasmoneans," *JQR* 36, (1946), p. 302) has suggested that the ק"ח figure is a corruption, and this study agrees with this suggestion.

10. Saadia, *Commentary on Daniel*, p. 177.

With regard to the non-Christians, Saadia does not give any details about their view.<sup>11</sup>

## 2 Seder Malkhei Romi (10th century)

The author of the chronicle *Seder Malkhei Romi*<sup>12</sup> presents two separate chronologies of the Persian period. First he presents the chronology according to the Sages, describing the Persian period as spanning the reigns of Koresh, Ahashverosh, Artahshasta, and Daryavesh.<sup>13</sup> Then he presents the chronology according to the books of the Romans, describing the Persian period as spanning the reigns of ten Persian kings. He does not clearly choose one chronology over the other and states nothing more about the discrepancy. Because his response is brief, we have printed the entire passage here:

יש מסיפרי רומים מונים למדי ופרס שנים הרבה אבל לפי חשבון חכמים שאנו  
מונים לבבל שבעים שנה ולמדי ולפרס חמשים ושנים. כיצד נבוכדנצר מ"ה  
שנים. אויל מרודך בנו כ"ג שנים. בלשצר ב' הרי שבעים. לדריוש ולכורש  
ה'. לאחשורוש י"ד. לארתחשטא ל"ב. לדריוש אחת דכת' ביה והות בטלה  
וגר הרי חמשים ושנים:

אבל יש בספרי רומים שמונים מנין אחר: נבוכדנצר ל' שנה. כורש ל' שנה.  
גבישן שנים ט'. דריוש שנים ל". שרשן כ"א שנה. ארתחשטא מ'. דריוש י"ט.  
אדרתשן מ' שנה. אדרתשן אחר כ"ו שנה. ארסינה ג' שנה. דריי ו' שנה:

There are books of the Romans that count many years for the Medes and Persians. But according to the chronology of

11. Because there is nothing to indicate that Saadia knows that the view that describes the Persian period as a protracted one is not of Christian origin, it is possible that Saadia believes that the non-Christians derived their view from the Christian view.

12. *Seder Malkhei Romi*, in A. Neubauer, *Mediaeval Jewish Chronicles*, vol. 1, pp. 185–86, chron. IX. This chronicle was not published until 1887. Neubauer gave the chronicle the title *סדר מלכי רומי*, but the chronicle itself is not titled. According to D. Flusser in *Sefer Yosippon*, vol. 2, pp. 104–05, the chronicle was authored in Italy in the tenth century.

13. The chronology he presents here differs slightly from the SO chronology.

the Sages, as we count for Babylon 70 years, and for Medea and Persia 52 years, this is how (these years are reckoned): Nebuchadnezzar, 45 years. His son, Evil Merodach, 23 years. Belshazzar, 2 years. This is 70. Daryavesh and Koresh, 5. Ahashverosh, 14. Artahshasta, 32. Daryavesh, one, as it is written by him (Ezra 4:24): "and it ceased (until the second year of the reign of Daryavesh)." Thus, 52 (years).

But there are books of the Romans that count a different way: Nebuchadnezzar, 30 years. Koresh, 30 years. Cambyeses, 9 years. Daryavesh, 36 years. Xerxes, 21 years. Artahshasta, 40. Daryavesh, 19. Adatarshan, 40 years. Another Adatarshan, 26 years. Arses, 3 years. Daryavesh, 6 years.

### 3 Josippon (10th century)

Josippon does not refer to a discrepancy between two views of the Persian period. Nor does he clearly adopt the view that the Persian period was a protracted one. He does refer<sup>14</sup> to three Persian kings who are not mentioned, or not clearly mentioned, in the Bible: כמבישא (Cambyses), דריוש השני (Daryavesh ha-Sheni),<sup>15</sup> and שרשן (Xerxes). He also definitely

14. Josippon, pp. 48, 54, 279–80.

15. This is the Persian king whom Josippon views as the one defeated by Alexander. It is not entirely clear whether Josippon believes that this Daryavesh ha-Sheni is a second Persian king Daryavesh, or just a second Daryavesh, counting the Medean king Daryavesh as the first Daryavesh. In his description of the Persian period (*ibid.*, pp. 43–54), Josippon does not refer to any earlier Persian king Daryavesh. Nevertheless, this study takes the view that Josippon does believe that there was an earlier Persian king Daryavesh, because Josippon elsewhere (*ibid.*, p. 263) seems to refer to such a king.

One of the factors that leads Josippon not to mention an earlier Persian king Daryavesh in his description of the Persian period is Josippon's unusual view that some of the references to Daryavesh in the book of Ezra are references to the Medean king Daryavesh. See *ibid.*, p. 31 and n. 147. Because of this, Josippon seems to believe that the work of the rebuilding of the Temple was completed in the reign of the Medean king Daryavesh or in the reign of Koresh (*ibid.*, pp. 31, and 43–45). This is in contrast to the view of nearly all modern scholars and rabbinic authorities, who believe that the work of the rebuilding of the Temple

had before him some of the nonbiblical and nonrabbinic sources that described the Persian and Second Temple periods as protracted ones,<sup>16</sup>

was not completed until the reign of the Persian king Daryavesh, who reigned after (but not immediately after) the reign of Koresh.

Regarding Josippon's reference to Daryavesh ha-Sheni, it is possible that Josippon believes that this king is mentioned at Nehemiah 12:22. But it is clear from a reading of Josippon that Josippon's primary sources regarding this Daryavesh ha-Sheni were nonbiblical sources.

16. One of Josippon's sources was the writings of Josephus (translated into Latin). Josephus, in his discussion of the Persian period, mentions the following Persian kings: Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius, Xerxes, Artaxerxes, another Artaxerxes, and the last Darius. See his *Jewish Antiquities*, XI. Josephus also views the Second Temple period to have been a protracted one. See his *Jewish War*, I, para. 70; *Jewish War*, VI, para. 270; *Jewish Antiquities*, XIII, para. 301; and *Jewish Antiquities*, XX, para. 234. (Not all of Josephus' writings may have made their way into the Latin translations of Josephus on the desk of Josippon. Flusser, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 130–31, writes that what was on Josippon's desk from the writings of Josephus may have been only: 1) a translation into Latin of the first sixteen books of *Jewish Antiquities* and 2) the *Hegesippus*, which is mainly a Latin paraphrase of the *Jewish War*.)

Flusser, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 132–34, writes that Josippon's other sources for the Persian period seem to have included: 1) the Latin translation of the Bible, 2) Jerome's *Chronicon*, 3) the work of Orosius (fifth century CE) or some work based on it, and 4) certain early medieval Latin historical sources, most of which are lost.

In one place in his description of the Persian period, Josippon seems to mention some of his sources for the period. After one of his statements about Koresh, he writes (p. 46):

ויתר דבריו הלא הם כתובים על ספר מלכי מדי ופרס ועל  
ספר יוסף הכהן הוא יוסף בן גוריון אשר הגלה מירושלם  
בימי בספסינוס וטיטוס בנו ועל ספר מלכי רומנים

And additional matters about him are written in the book of the kings of Medea and Persia, and in the book of Joseph the priest [=Josephus], he is Joseph the son of Gorion who was exiled from Jerusalem in the days of Vespasian and his son Titus, and in the book of the kings of the Romans.

(Flusser, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 133, writes that the work intended by the last reference is Jerome's *Chronicon*.)

and his description of the Persian period is replete with events not found in the Bible or rabbinic literature.

Although Josippon's chronology of the Persian period is an ambiguous one, it seems that he follows the view that the Persian period was a protracted one. After describing the reigns of Koresh and Cambyses, he writes: *ויעברו אבותינו למלך כורש ולכל מלכי פרס אשר קמו אחרייו עבודה מתוקה*<sup>17</sup> (and our forefathers served Koresh, and all the kings who arose after him, with a pleasant service), without stating which or how many Persian kings reigned during this period. He then gives a lengthy description of the reign of Ahashverosh and the events of Purim,<sup>18</sup> without writing when this Ahashverosh reigned. At the conclusion of his description of the reign of Ahashverosh, he writes: *ויעברו אבותינו בנחת ובשקט לכל מלכי פרס עד אשר הומלך דרייש השני*<sup>19</sup> (and our forefathers served all the Persian kings in peace and quiet until the reign of Daryavesh ha-Sheni). It seems from this statement that he viewed the Persian period as spanning the reigns of several Persian kings between Ahashverosh and this Daryavesh ha-Sheni, who, in Josippon,<sup>20</sup> is the last Persian king. But he states no more about this and no names of Persian kings other than these four are included in his description of the Persian period.<sup>21</sup>

Much later, in his description of the Roman period, he refers to three Persian kings: Daryavesh, Artahshasta, and Xerxes (שרשן), whom he had not mentioned at all in his description of the Persian period.<sup>22</sup>

It may be that the ambiguous way Josippon described the Persian period was the result of his awareness of a discrepancy between the rabbinic view of the Persian period and a view that described the Persian

17. Josippon, p. 48.

18. Ibid., pp. 48–54.

19. Ibid., p. 54.

20. In the conventional chronology, the last Persian king was a *third* Persian king named Darius. If Josippon's view is that the Persian period spanned the reigns of two Persian kings named Daryavesh (see n. 15), Josippon's view may have been inspired by the fact that Josephus, in his description of the Persian period, mentions only two Persian kings with this name. See n. 16.

21. Josippon does not state how long the reign was of any of the kings that he does mention. (But in the case of Koresh, his reign is implied, *op. cit.*, p. 47, to have lasted at least 30 years.)

22. Josippon, pp. 263, 279–80.

period as a protracted one and his unwillingness to clearly affirm or reject either view.<sup>23</sup>

#### 4 Isaac Abravanel (1437–1508)

Isaac Abravanel discusses the Persian period extensively.<sup>24</sup> He states that in the books of the Romans (ספרי הלאומים) fourteen Persian kings are depicted as ruling over the land of Israel from the time of the Persians' defeat of the Babylonians until the time of Alexander the Great.<sup>25</sup> He names these kings and the lengths of their reigns.<sup>26</sup> He maintains that this chronology must be incorrect because it is inconsistent with the chronology of the Persian period found at Daniel 11:2.<sup>27</sup>

Abravanel is willing to assume that these fourteen Persian kings existed, but he postulates that most of them reigned in Persia *before* Koresh.<sup>28</sup> Abravanel suggests that the erroneous chronology arose because the Romans found a separate book of chronicles for each of the Persian kings, but did not know the order in which these kings reigned. On their own they decided that Koresh must have been the first Persian

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23. We do not know this for certain, for among other reasons, because we do not know if Josippon was even aware of the SO chronology or some other rabbinic chronology that viewed the Persian period as a short one. He never refers to SO and may not have had it, and he was not a rabbinic scholar with extensive familiarity with the Talmud and rabbinic literature. According to Flusser, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 111, he was far more at home in the Latin culture of the non-Jewish world than in the world of rabbinic learning.

24. Abravanel, *Ma'yenei ha-Yeshu'ah*, pp. 288–89 part 2, sec. 3; 375–76 part 10, sec. 7; 377–79 part 10, sec. 8; 383–85 part 11, sec. 3.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 384. See also, *ibid.*, p. 375.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 384. The fourteen kings he names include the ten kings listed at the beginning of App. B and the three additional kings referred to in App. B, n. 1. The other king he includes is Artabanus, in between Xerxes and Artaxerxes. Artabanus was an advisor to Xerxes who murdered Xerxes and plotted to kill Xerxes' son Artaxerxes. Artaxerxes discovered the plot and killed Artabanus. Artabanus is not usually counted by modern scholars as a separate Persian king.

27. Abravanel, *op. cit.*, pp. 375–76, 384.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 384. This suggestion is repeated many times by later Jewish responses. See Part III, responses A-8, A-13, A-14.

king, and they erroneously placed all the other Persian kings after him.<sup>29</sup>

Abravanel notes that Josephus also views the Persian period as a protracted one, but Abravanel argues that Josephus was merely relying on the erroneous chronology of the Romans.<sup>30</sup> He points out that Josephus contradicts himself many times in his chronological statements and cannot be used as a source with which to attempt to refute the Sages.<sup>31</sup> Abravanel also refers to some Christians who, in their interpretations of Daniel 9:24–27, view the Persian period as having been a protracted one. He observes that they obtained their view from the erroneous chronology of the Romans and from Josephus.<sup>32</sup> He also finds two Christians who, in their interpretations of Daniel 9:24–27, view the Second Temple period as having spanned 420 years.<sup>33</sup> Abravanel also affirms the tradition that the period of Persian dominion spanned only 34 years.<sup>34</sup>

But when Abravanel presents his own chronology, it differs slightly from the one found in SO. He writes that the period from Koresh to Alexander spanned the reigns of the following Persian kings: Koresh, Cambyses, Ahashverosh, Daryavesh, and perhaps an Artahshasta.<sup>35</sup> He believes that one must adopt the view that the Persian period spanned the reigns of at least three Persian kings *after* Koresh because of the statement made by the angel to Daniel at Daniel 11:2.<sup>36</sup>

In an effort to reconcile his four- or five-king chronology with the chronology found in SO, Abravanel writes<sup>37</sup>:

29. *Ibid.*, p. 384.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 375.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 375–76.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 375, 377.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 378.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 385.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 289.

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 383–84. He notes, based on Daniel 10:1, that this statement seems to have been made in the reign of Koresh and argues that since it refers to three *additional* Persian kings, Koresh cannot be one of these. Abravanel states that he is not sure whether the fourth king enumerated at Daniel 11:12 is meant as the fourth Persian king including Koresh, in which case the total of the Persian kings would be four, or the fourth Persian king after the first three, in which case the total of the Persian kings would be five.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 384.

חז"ל לא שללו שלא היו יותר מג' מלכים בפרס ולא מנו אותם.  
אבל אמרו בלבד אותם שקבלו ישראל מהם אם טוב ואם רע...

The Sages did not reject that there were more than three Persian kings. They did not count them. They mentioned only those who had consequences for Israel, whether for good or for bad . . .

It is clear from the context in Abravanel that this suggestion was only intended by him to account for SO's omission of one or two Persian kings (Cambyses and perhaps one other).<sup>38</sup>

Abravanel's view of the number of Persian kings is not the only view of his that deviates from the SO chronology. In this same work, Abravanel writes that the length of the Medeo-Persian period was 54 years.<sup>39</sup> Also, in a different work, he gives the length of the Second Temple period as 428 years.<sup>40</sup>

## 5 Abraham Zacuto (1452–c.1515)

Abraham Zacuto<sup>41</sup> provides a detailed description of what the Persian period looked like according to the non-Jewish sources. He describes each of the fourteen<sup>42</sup> Persian kings who were said to have

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38. But this suggestion is sometimes quoted out of context by later Jewish authors in a manner that gives the impression that Abravanel made his suggestion to account for SO's omission of the numerous Persian kings found in the conventional chronology. See e.g., *Sefer Daniyyel (Da'at Mikra)*, pp. 110, 305. (See Part III, n. 361.)

39. Abravanel, op. cit., pp. 289. See also, p. 376 (ג'ר שנה בין רב למעט).

40. Abravanel, *Zevah Pesah*, p. 76. In his *Ma'yenei ha-Yeshu'ah*, p. 289, he follows the tradition that the length of the Second Temple period was 420 years. (But he divides three years differently then they are divided in SO. He allocates 34 years to the period of Persian dominion, 145 years to the period of Greek dominion, 142 years to the period of Hasmonean dominion, and 99 years to the period of Roman dominion, in contrast to SO's allocation of 34 years, 180 years, 103 years, and 103 years to these respective periods.)

41. Zacuto A. *Sefer Yubasin*, sixth treatise, pp. 239–40.

42. The fourteen kings he describes are the same ones that Abravanel had described. See n. 26.



reigned during this 240 year period and some of the major events that occurred in their reigns.

This description of Zacuto's is found in a special treatise,<sup>43</sup> written to describe to his Jewish readers the history of the world according to the view of the non-Jews. Zacuto states at the beginning of this treatise that he does not necessarily agree with all the data presented in it and that the historians of the nations promulgate falsehoods.<sup>44</sup> Presumably, that is also his view of their chronology of the Persian period. Indeed, in the body of his *Sefer Yuhasin*, he takes the position that the Medeo-Persian period spanned 52 years and that the Second Temple period spanned 420 years, and does not mention any alternative view.<sup>45</sup> And, in his special treatise, at the conclusion of his description of the 240 year Persian period found in the non-Jewish sources, he remarks that the Sages disagreed with this view.<sup>46</sup>

43. Although written by Zacuto later than the *Sefer Yuhasin*, this treatise is usually printed with the rest of *Sefer Yuhasin* and labeled מאמר ששי (sixth treatise).

44. Zacuto, op. cit., introduction to sixth treatise, p. 231.

45. Zacuto, op. cit., pp. 11–13. Interestingly, nowhere in the description of the Persian period contained here does Zacuto state that the Persian period spanned the reigns of only three Persian kings.

46. In the manuscript of this special treatise published by Z. Filipowski, when Zacuto remarks that the Sages disagreed with the view expressed in the non-Jewish sources, Zacuto attributes to the Sages the view that the Persian period spanned ר"ץ (290) years. This ר"ץ figure must be an error. Filipowski had written that the manuscript he was using was filled with scribal errors in the sixth treatise (see *Sefer Yuhasin*, ed. Filipowski, p. 6). This must be one of them. (I have not been able to check what the figure is in other manuscripts.)

Note that Zacuto also writes in his special treatise (p. 239) that the Romans began to govern without a king six years after the Jews' building of the Second Temple, and that the length of time from that point until the reign of Julius Caesar was approximately 466 years כפי דעת זה (according to this view, i.e., the chronology expressed in this treatise), but was 306 years according to the דעת היהודים (view of the Jews). This seems to be a reference by Zacuto to the discrepancy in an alternate form, and no emendation needs to be suggested regarding these figures.

### III



## COLLECTION AND CATEGORIZATION OF JEWISH RESPONSES FROM THE TIME OF AZARIAH DE ROSSI THROUGH MODERN TIMES



In this part of the study, the Jewish responses to the discrepancy from the time of Azariah de Rossi through modern times are collected and categorized. Gathered are published references by Jewish authors to a discrepancy between the conventional chronology<sup>1</sup> and one or more of the main elements of the SO chronology<sup>2</sup>: the view that the Medeo-Persian period spanned 52 years, the view that the period of Persian dominion during the Second Temple period spanned 34 years, the view that the Persian period spanned the reigns of 3 Persian kings, and the view that the Second Temple period spanned 420 years.<sup>3</sup>

These responses have been categorized as follows:

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1. The term "conventional chronology" is used loosely here. The responses prior to the nineteenth century probably did not view the alternative view of the Persian and Second Temple periods as a "conventional chronology."

2. Some of these references to the main elements of the SO chronology do not refer to SO by name, but refer to one of the elements of the SO chronology and call it the chronology of "the rabbis," "the Talmud," or "R. Yose," and the like.

3. Not all of the responses collected explicitly contrast the view held by the SO chronology with the specific contrasting view held by the conventional chronology. For example, many of the responses in category A, while mentioning that there is an alternative view of the Persian or Second Temple periods, do not state that this view is one that views the Persian period as spanning 207 years, and the reigns of more than 10 Persian kings, and the Second Temple period as spanning 589 years. Nevertheless, it is usually clear that this is essentially the alternative view that they are rejecting.

## ***Category A: SO Chronology Is Correct: Conventional Chronology Is in Error***

The responses in this category believe that the SO chronology is correct<sup>4</sup> and that the conventional chronology is in error.

## ***Category B: Conventional Chronology Is Correct: SO Chronology Is in Error***

The responses in this category believe that the conventional chronology is correct and that the SO chronology is in error. They accept the received text of SO and the plain-sense interpretation of its passages, which leads them to reject its chronology. Many attempt to account for the SO chronology. Some state or imply that the author of the SO chronology knew that the chronology he stated was not the true chronology.

## ***Category C: Both the Conventional Chronology and the SO Chronology Are Correct***

The responses in this category believe that the conventional chronology is correct and postulate textual emendations or reinterpretations of one or more of the five passages in SO in which the main

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4. The responses in this category do not necessarily affirm all four main elements of the SO chronology, but all affirm at least one of them. See *Introduction to Category A*.

elements of the chronology are expressed. These emendations or reinterpretations render the passage in agreement with, much closer to, or not inconsistent with, the conventional chronology.

## Category D: Other Responses

The responses in this category are those responses that do not fit into any of the above three categories.<sup>5</sup>

Within each category, the responses are collected in the order of their year of publication.<sup>6</sup> A few individuals,<sup>7</sup> because they took different approaches in the same or separate works, are categorized in two different categories.

Finally, it must be noted that there are many Jewish scholars in this century who adopt the conventional chronology and refer briefly to the different SO chronology, without making any attempt to account for it. These responses contribute nothing toward understanding the cause of the widely divergent SO chronology, and, being responses of Jewish scholars and not rabbinic authorities, are of little interest as responses to the discrepancy. Though some of these responses have been collected and included in category B, there are many more of them, and little useful purpose would be served by gathering them all together.

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5. Category D is divided into four subcategories and includes responses that do *not* refer to a discrepancy between the conventional chronology and one or more of the main elements of the SO chronology, but which should nevertheless be considered responses. See *Introduction to Category D*.

6. The year noted next to each response is, unless otherwise indicated, the year it was first published. The year noted is not necessarily the year of the edition used for this study. If the author responded similarly in two separate works, the year of the earlier work is the one that is noted.

7. Azariah de Rossi, Abraham Akavya, and Hayyim Shvilly.

## Category A: SO Chronology Is Correct: Conventional Chronology Is in Error

### Introduction to Category A

In this category, all of those responses that believe that the SO chronology is correct and that the conventional chronology is in error are collected. These responses do not necessarily affirm all four main elements of the SO chronology, but all affirm at least one of them.<sup>8</sup> As

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8. The responses in this category vary in scope. Although some discuss both the lengths of the Persian and Second Temple periods, others discuss only the length of the Persian period and others discuss only the length of the Second Temple period. The only response in this category that does not explicitly affirm either the 420-year, 52-year, 34-year, or 3 king traditions is the response of Abraham Y. Karelitz, which affirms the Sages' view of the length of the Second Temple period, without specifically stating what that view is.

Many Jewish figures refer to the claim made by Azariah de Rossi (B-1) that the Jewish count from creation must be adjusted and, in response, affirm the traditional Jewish count, without mentioning any of the specific claims made by de Rossi regarding the lengths of the Second Temple or Persian periods. These Jewish figures have not been included in the study. Examples of these figures are: Isaac Finzi (16th century), in *Matzref la-Kesef*, ed. Cassel, pp. 123–39; Moses Provençal (16th century), *She'elot u'Teshuvot Rabenu Moshe Provintzalo*, vol. 1, nn. 64 and 68; Judah Moscato (16th century), in D. Kaufmann, "Contributions à l'histoire des luttes d'Azaria de Rossi," *RÉJ* 33, (1896), pp. 81–83, and see also Moscato's commentary (*Kol Yehudah*) to *Sefer Kuzari*, third treatise, para. 65, p. 136; Abraham Menahem Porto (16th century), in Kaufmann, op. cit., pp. 85–86; and Solomon Basilea (18th century), *Emunat Hakhamim*, chap. 24, p. 108.

Jewish figures who were involved in the issuances of proclamations forbidding the reading of de Rossi's work, or who published general criticisms of his work without specifically mentioning his chronological claims, are also not included in the study, even though de Rossi's chronological claims may have been part of what motivated these figures' responses to his work. For references to such figures, see M. Benayahu, "הפולמוס על ספר מאור עינים לרבי עזריה מן הארונים," *Asufot* 5, (1991), pp. 213–65.

might be expected, the responses in this category come solely from rabbinic authorities and other Orthodox Jewish writers.

The responses differ widely in the reasons they stress for affirming the SO chronology. Some stress the importance of adhering to the traditions of the Talmud, or the traditions of the Sages, or the traditions of SO. A few stress the importance of upholding the accepted count from creation. Some stress the importance of upholding the chronology implied at Daniel 11:2. Other reasons for affirming the SO chronology are mentioned as well.<sup>9</sup>

The responses also differ widely in their attitude toward the conventional chronology. Some readily dismiss it. Others take it more seriously and try to explain how such an erroneous chronology could have developed.

Although all the responses in this category affirm one or more of the 420-year, 52-year, or 34-year traditions, many of these responses believe that the Persian period spanned the reigns of more than three Persian kings. If a response in this category believes that the Persian period spanned the reigns of more than three Persian kings, this will be noted.

## 1 David Ganz (1592)

David Ganz,<sup>10</sup> in the second part of his *Tzemah David*,<sup>11</sup> presents a description of fourteen Persian kings who are recorded by the chronicles of the nations as having reigned in the Persian period. At the conclusion of this description, he states:<sup>12</sup>

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9. Note that many of the responses do not mention SO at all in their discussion.

10. Ganz, *Tzemah David*, part II, pp. 186–91.

11. This part of Ganz' *Tzemah David* is a chronicle of the kings of the nations based mostly on nonrabbinic sources.

12. Ganz, op. cit., part II, p. 191. Note also that in the introduction to this part (ibid., p. 163), Ganz had stated that he did not necessarily believe everything he included in it, because his sources for this part were Greek and other non-Jewish sources אשר פיהם דבר שוא (whose mouths speak falsehood) (alluding to Psalms 144:7–8: "rescue me . . . from the hand of strangers whose mouths speak falsehood").



אך אנחנו עדת ישראל הקדושים לא נאמין בספרי  
דברי הימים הנעשים על ידי מחברים אשר לא  
מבני ישראל המה....

But we, the holy congregation of Israel, will not put our trust  
in history books produced by authors who are not from the  
children of Israel . . .

In the *first* part of his work, a chronicle of Jewish history based mostly on rabbinic sources, he follows the SO chronology. He describes the Persian period as spanning the reigns of three Persian kings, and affirms the 52-year and 34-year traditions.<sup>13</sup> Throughout his work, Ganz is very concerned with upholding the accepted count from creation.<sup>14</sup>

In both parts of his work, Ganz refers to the numerous early Jewish authors cited by Azariah de Rossi (B-1) who believe that the Persian period spanned the reigns of more than three Persian kings.<sup>15</sup> In order to refute de Rossi's claim that the count from creation would have to be adjusted according to their views, he suggests how additional Persian kings could have reigned without affecting the total years of the Persian and Greek periods. Additional Persian kings could have reigned during the ten years between the last year of Daryavesh=Artahshasta mentioned in the Bible and the beginning of MS.<sup>16</sup> He suggests that when SO states that the period of Persian dominion spanned 34 years, all it may mean is that the Persian capital city was conquered after 34 years, and not that the last Persian king was killed.

13. Ganz, *op. cit.*, part I, pp. 54–59.

14. See, e.g., *ibid.*, part I, pp. 62–64. Ganz exhibits this concern even though he does not seem to believe that postulating any change in the count would have any consequences for matters of *halakha* (*ibid.*, part I, p. 24).

15. *Ibid.*, part I, p. 62, part II, pp. 186–87.

16. *Ibid.*, part I, p. 62. The last year of Daryavesh=Artahshasta mentioned in the Bible is his 32nd year. There are approximately 3 free years from this year (=the 31st after the rebuilding) until the 34th year after the rebuilding. (Ganz counts 4 free years here.) According to the Talmud (Avodah Zarah 10a), there are 6 years from the 34th year after the rebuilding until the beginning of MS.

## 2 Judah Loew (Maharal) (1598)

Judah Loew<sup>17</sup> vehemently rejects de Rossi's claims that the First and Second Temple periods spanned longer than the time periods assigned to them by the Sages. Loew describes the traditions that the First and Second Temple periods spanned 410 and 420 years as *kabbalot* (traditions) of the Sages.<sup>18</sup> He states that the only way to know the correct lengths of the First and Second Temple periods is to rely on these *kabbalot* and that anyone who attempts to derive the lengths of these periods from the biblical verses will err. He also notes that these *kabbalot* were accepted by both the Babylonian and the Jerusalem Talmuds. Loew also criticizes de Rossi for disagreeing with the *baraita* of R. Yose found at Avodah Zarah 9a, and with the count from creation, which is accepted by Jews everywhere.

Loew writes that it is bad enough that de Rossi attempts to undermine rabbinic traditions by pointing to the writings of the historians of the nations. But worse is that de Rossi attempts to undermine rabbinic traditions by pointing to biblical verses. By the latter, de Rossi is implying that R. Yose and all the Sages of Israel did not know the mistakes in de Rossi's arguments.<sup>19</sup>

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17. Loew, *Be'er ha-Golah*, pp. 139–40.

18. The tradition that the First Temple period spanned 410 years is mentioned in the Talmud (Yoma 9a). Although this tradition is not mentioned in SO, the statement in SO (chap. 11, p. 283) that 850 years elapsed from the time the Jews entered into the land of Israel (=the time of Joshua) until the time they departed (=the time of the destruction of the First Temple) seems to be based on this tradition. (The author of this 850-year statement almost certainly had a tradition or operated under the assumption that the period from the entry into the land of Israel until the building of the First Temple spanned 440 years. See I Kings 6:1 and Numbers 32:13. If so, he must have also had a tradition or operated under the assumption that the First Temple period spanned 410 years.)

19. *Ibid.*, p. 139. Loew concludes his discussion of de Rossi by issuing a prohibition against reading de Rossi's work (*ibid.*, p. 141).

It is interesting to note that, despite Loew's strong position, the author of an English translation of one of Loew's works adopted the conventional chronology in the work. See S. Mallin, *The Mizvah Candle*, pp. 31–33.

### 3 Isaac Cantarini (1710)

Isaac Cantarini<sup>20</sup> criticizes de Rossi for attempting to cast doubt on the accuracy of the accepted 420-year tradition. He stresses that the chronologies of the historians of the nations contradict one another and cannot be relied upon.

### 4 Jacob Emden (1757)

Jacob Emden<sup>21</sup> argues that those who view the Persian period to have been a protracted one cannot be correct because their view contradicts not just the statements of the Sages but also the biblical verses. He writes<sup>22</sup>:

ה' יצילנו מדעת החיצונים כילדי נכרים יספיקו  
המוסיפים הרבה במנין מלכי פרס ומאריכים  
שנותיהם מאד ולא ימצאו ידיהם ורגליהם בבית  
המדרש כי בהכרח יצטרכו להכחיש גם המקראות...

May God save us from the view of those outsiders, who "please themselves in the children of strangers" (Isaiah 2:6), who add many to the number of Persian kings and increase their years greatly. They do not know their way in Jewish learning because they will necessarily be forced to contradict the biblical verses<sup>23</sup> as well . . .

He affirms the tradition that the Medeo-Persian period spanned 52 years and corrects the text of SO that was before him that had assigned

20. Cantarini, *Et Ketz*, p. 7b.

21. Emden, *Mitpahat Sefarim*, pp. 83–84, and commentary on SO, in SO, ed. Leiner, pp. 88–89 (commentary on chap. 30).

22. Emden, commentary on SO, p. 88.

23. Emden does not state the biblical verses that he is referring to. Probably he has in mind Daniel 11:2.

250 years to this period.<sup>24</sup> He also declares the history works of the nations to be worthless and false and forbids the reading of them.<sup>25</sup> He affirms the accuracy of the accepted count from creation. But he adds that if the count would have to be changed, such a change would have no ramifications.<sup>26</sup>

Elsewhere,<sup>27</sup> in a responsum that does not explicitly refer to the discrepancy or to SO's statements regarding the Persian period, Emden characterizes SO as a work that is *נקייה וטהורה* (clean and pure) and criticizes de Rossi for having the audacity to attempt to disagree with the ancient Sages.

Nevertheless, Emden seems to disagree with one aspect of the SO chronology. In his commentary on SO,<sup>28</sup> he writes that Koresh, Daryavesh, and Artahshasta were three separate kings. If these three were separate kings and if Emden does not equate Ahashverosh with any of them, the Persian period would have spanned the reigns of at least four Persian kings.<sup>29</sup>

## 5 Wolf Pohrille (1887)

Wolf Pohrille<sup>30</sup> refers to de Rossi's attempt to prove from the successive generations of high priests of the Persian period recorded in the book of

24. Emden, commentary on SO, p. 89. He also affirms the 34-year tradition here and in his glosses to *Sefer Yubasin*. See *Sefer Yubasin*, ed. Filipowski, p. 12, n. 1. (Filipowski's edition includes the glosses of Emden's that Filipowski had found in the margin of an early edition of *Sefer Yubasin*.)

25. Emden, *Mitpahat Sefarim*, p. 83.

26. Loc. cit. For this reason, Emden writes here that de Rossi's suggesting a change in the count from creation was not his sin. Emden writes here that de Rossi's sin was only that he followed the *ספורי הבלי הגוים אשר פיהם דבר שוא* (see n. 12).

27. Emden, *She'elat Yavetz*, vol. 1, no. 33, p. 29b. Here, Emden adopts a much more critical attitude towards de Rossi than he did in his *Mitpahat Sefarim*.

28. Emden, commentary on SO, p. 88.

29. In his various writings (see, e.g., his commentary on SO, pp. 88–89), Emden states that he discusses the Persian period further in his glosses to *Sefer Dorot Olam* and *Tzemah David*. These glosses have not survived. (The work that Emden intends by the former is unclear.)

30. Pohrille, *Derekh Emunah*, pp. 1a–1b.

Nehemiah that the Persian period was a protracted one. Pohrille argues that the evidence from the book of Nehemiah is more consistent with the SO chronology, and he affirms the tradition of the Sages and SO that the period of Persian dominion spanned only 34 years.

## 6 Abraham Yeshayahu Karelitz (Hazon Ish) (1955)

Abraham Yeshayahu Karelitz,<sup>31</sup> in brief remarks, strongly affirms the chronology of the Sages, without discussing any details of the discrepancy or of the Persian period. He notes that the conclusions of science often change drastically over time and describes archaeology as a particularly unreliable science and one that is prone to forgery.<sup>32</sup> He concludes:

שנות בית שני בטוח מדברי חז"ל...  
ועל האדם לגרש מקרבו הרהורים בדבר  
ואשרי מי שלא קרא בספרים החיצוניים...

The length of the Second Temple is known securely to us from the Sages . . . and it is incumbent on one to remove from himself any doubting thoughts on this matter. Happy is he who has not read the outside books . . .

## 7 David Shmidel (1963)

David Shmidel<sup>33</sup> discusses the discrepancy as part of a critique of the historian Ze'ev Jawitz (C-3) and his attitude to traditions of the Sages. Shmidel writes that the 34-year tradition was declared to be correct by the Talmud and that alone should be sufficient to warrant its acceptance.

31. Karelitz, *Kovetz Iggerot*, vol. 1, no. 206, p. 182. This work was published in 1955. Karelitz died in 1953.

32. He mentions a case known to him in which a professor secretly placed a forged manuscript in the earth so that it would be later discovered and thought ancient.

33. Shmidel, "מה בין היסטור" כשרה לפסולה," *Diglenu*, Tevet-Shevat 5724, p. 7.

He criticizes Jawitz for placing more trust in Josephus and Philo than in the Sages, and for adopting a chronology that mandates an adjustment in the traditional count from creation. He notes that the traditional count from creation is the basis on which all the calculations of the *molad* are made. He also remarks that the conventional chronology, which Jawitz and modern scholarship is following, is the chronology adopted by the Christians. Finally, he observes that the 52-year tradition is expressed in numerous places in rabbinic literature and he criticizes Jawitz for relying on an obviously erroneous variant in SO and suggesting that SO contains two conflicting views.<sup>34</sup>

## 8 Shlomo Rotenberg (1967)

Shlomo Rotenberg<sup>35</sup> briefly refers to the claim that the Persian period spanned more years than the time allotted to it by the Sages. He suggests that some of the kings mentioned in the nonrabbinic sources may have ruled in Persia while it was still controlled by Babylonia, and that others may have ruled for 1 year or less. He also reiterates the suggestion made by Ganz that there are 10 free years within the framework of the SO chronology during which additional Persian kings could have reigned.

Rotenberg repeatedly affirms the 420-year,<sup>36</sup> 52-year,<sup>37</sup> and 34-year<sup>38</sup> traditions. But he also, following Ganz' suggestion, describes three *additional* Persian kings to have reigned in the 10 years between the last year of Daryavesh=Artahshasta mentioned in the Bible and the beginning of MS: a Daryavesh, an Arses, and a final Daryavesh.<sup>39</sup> He also adds a king to the early part of the Persian period, inserting a one-half-year reign

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34. According to Jawitz, SO contains an anonymous majority view that assigns 250 years to the Medeo-Persian period, and the view that assigns 34 years to the period of Persian dominion is only the individual minority view of R. Yose.

35. S. Rotenberg, *Toledot Am Olam*, vol. 1, p. 400. See also, *ibid.*, pp. 52, 237, and 411.

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 54 and 230–31.

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 52 and 400.

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 52, 54, and 411.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 371.

of an Artahshasta, whom he equates with Cambyses, in between the reigns of Koresh and Ahashverosh.<sup>40</sup>

## 9 Saul Lustig (1968)

Saul Lustig<sup>41</sup> writes that accepting an alteration of the count from creation would effect the calendrical calculations and the dates of the holidays, and would result in such grievous sins as the eating of leaven on the true day of Passover.<sup>42</sup> Accepting such an alteration would also be a pretentious step because it would mean attributing to the Sages either an error in their chronology or, חס וחלילה, a purposeful misstatement of the true chronology.<sup>43</sup>

He writes that the SO chronology and the conventional chronology are in agreement with regard to the total number of years that passed between the Exodus and the inauguration of MS, and only disagree about the proper division of these 1,000 years into periods.<sup>44</sup> When the conclusions of modern scholars do not fit with Jewish historical traditions, he believes that we should attribute this to insufficient data being available to the scholars or to erroneous premises being followed by them. In no event, should we abandon faith in our *Masoret* or alter our accepted count from creation.<sup>45</sup>

He quotes the portions of the response of Karelitz in which Karelitz had remarked that the conclusions of science often change drastically over time and had praised those who do not read the outside books.<sup>46</sup> He also refers to the attempt by Z. Jawitz (C-3) to claim that SO assigns 250

40. Ibid., pp. 256–57 and 412.

41. S. Lustig, "סדר הזמנים ע"פ התורה," *Shema'atin* 5, (1968), n. 19, p. 35, and "מדע מבוסס ומדע משוער," *Shema'atin* 6, (1969), n. 23, pp. 45–47.

42. Lustig, "מדע מבוסס," p. 46.

43. Loc. cit.

44. Lustig, "מדע מבוסס," pp. 45–46. He refers to some of the scholars who believe that the Exodus took place around the end of the fourteenth century BCE and discusses some of the evidence that supports this view. The date for the Exodus implicit from the SO chronology is approximately 1311 BCE.

45. Ibid., p. 47.

46. Lustig, "סדר הזמנים," p. 35.

years (and not 52 years) to the Medeo-Persian period.<sup>47</sup> He states that the reading followed by Jawitz is easily seen to be a scribal error because the 52-year tradition is found in many other places in rabbinic literature.

## 10 Abraham Zuartz (1968)

Abraham Zuartz<sup>48</sup> argues that the Second Temple period spanned only 420 years and makes a very unusual attempt to prove this. He cites archaeological evidence to prove that the Exodus took place in the 13th century BCE and claims that the historians agree that the Exodus took place at this time.<sup>49</sup> If this evidence is combined with the view that 480 years elapsed from the Exodus to the building of the First Temple,<sup>50</sup> and that the First Temple period alone spanned approximately 400 years, the conclusion is reached that the Second Temple period could not have commenced in the 6th century BCE.<sup>51</sup> Zuartz proclaims: סופרים והסטוריונים תקנו עצמכם! (Writers and historians, correct yourselves!)

However, Zuartz believes that the Persian period spanned the reigns of six Persian kings: Koresh (3 years), Ahashverosh (14 years), Artahshasta (1 year), Daryavesh (6 years), Artahshasta (32 years), and Daryavesh (approximately 2 years).<sup>52</sup>

47. Lustig, "מרע מבוסס," p. 46.

48. Zuartz, *Botzina le-Shba*, pp. 125–28.

49. This is not entirely true. Some historians place the Exodus and entry into Canaan one to two centuries earlier than this.

50. See I Kings 6:1.

51. The historians who believe that the Exodus took place as late as the thirteenth century BCE avoid this conclusion by discrediting the 480-year time span specified at I Kings 6:1.

52. Also, Zuartz views the 34 years as starting from the sixth year of Daryavesh, while the implication from SO (see App. A, n. 11) is that the 34 years start from the second year of this king.



## 11 Hayyim Dov Rabinovitz (1975)

Hayyim Dov Rabinovitz<sup>53</sup> discusses the discrepancy extensively. He repeatedly affirms the 420-year, 52-year, and 34-year traditions and all the dates he utilizes are the ones based on the adoption of these traditions. He claims that the conventional chronology is just a weak reconstruction based on insufficient sources and too many assumptions.<sup>54</sup> He states that if there is a discrepancy between the rabbinic view of the Persian period and the conventional chronology, it is the burden of the historians who adopt the conventional chronology to solve it.<sup>55</sup>

Nevertheless, he attempts to explain how the conventional chronology arrived at its erroneous view and suggests interesting arguments to justify his conclusion that the rabbinic chronology is the correct one. He suggests that regional governors and those who were second to the king may have been called (or called themselves) "king" and this may have caused historians and archaeologists to erroneously count them as separate kings.<sup>56</sup> He suggests that the Persians themselves may have exaggerated the number of years of their rule as part of an effort to exaggerate their own greatness. He also argues that the low population of the Jews in the Hasmonean period is more consistent with the Persian period having been a short one.<sup>57</sup> He also repeatedly notes that the alleged additional years are often characterized by the historians as silent

53. Rabinovitz, *Da'at Soferim le-Sefer Ezra ve-Nehemiah*, commentary on Ezra, pp. 3–4 and 52; and his *Hadrakhah be-Limud Toledot Yisrael*, vol. 1, pp. 9–10, 24–26, 32, and 42. See also *Tamtzit Divrei Yemei Yisrael*, pp. 38–39; and *Yemei ha-Bayit ha-Sheni*, p. 6.

54. Rabinovitz, *Hadrakhah be-Limud Toledot Yisrael*, vol. 1, p. 9; and *Da'at Soferim le-Sefer Ezra ve-Nehemiah*, commentary on Ezra, p. 3.

55. Rabinovitz, *Hadrakhah be-Limud Toledot Yisrael*, vol. 1, p. 26.

56. Rabinovitz, *Hadrakhah be-Limud Toledot Yisrael*, vol. 1, pp. 25 and 32; and *Da'at Soferim le-Sefer Ezra ve-Nehemiah*, commentary on Ezra, p. 4.

57. Rabinovitz, *Yemei ha-Bayit ha-Sheni*, p. 6. If the Persian period would have been a long one, the Jews would have greatly multiplied over that long period.

ones and suggests that this silence is explained perfectly by the rabbinic chronology, which views these additional years as nonexistent.<sup>58</sup>

His view of the kings who reigned during the Persian period does differ from the view of SO on one detail. In his view, the Artahshasta mentioned in the Bible in connection with Ezra and Nehemiah is not identical with Daryavesh. As Rabinovitz<sup>59</sup> sees it, during the period of Ezra and Nehemiah, the lawful heir to the dynasty, Daryavesh, was too young to rule. Artahshasta, a regional governor, was put in charge until Daryavesh got older.<sup>60</sup>

Rabinovitz<sup>61</sup> also suggests that SO may not necessarily be stating that Persian rule over the land of Israel ceased in the 34th year after the rebuilding. It may only be telling us that the greatness and strength of the Persians ended at this time, and that Greece became the major world power. Although Alexander may have passed through the land of Israel at this time, he did not necessarily conquer it, and additional Persian kings may have ruled over the land for a short period thereafter. Rabinovitz never specifies how long these additional Persian kings may have ruled, often stating that this is *לא ברור כל כך* (not so clear). Nor does he ever give us the names of the Persian kings who may have ruled during this period.

58. Rabinovitz, *Hadrakhah be-Limud Toledot Yisrael*, vol. 1, p. 25; and *Da'at Soferim le-Sefer Ezra ve-Nehemiah*, commentary on Ezra, p. 52.

59. Rabinovitz, *Hadrakhah be-Limud Toledot Yisrael*, vol. 1, pp. 10 and 42; and *Da'at Soferim le-Sefer Ezra ve-Nehemiah*, commentary on Ezra, pp. 53 and 82, and commentary on Nehemiah, p. 3.

60. Rabinovitz' suggestion is a clever attempt to be consistent with the implication from Ezra 6:14 that Daryavesh and Artahshasta are separate kings and the implication from SO that the Persian period spanned the reigns of only Koresh, Ahashverosh, and Daryavesh. In Rabinovitz' suggestion, Daryavesh always remained the formal king. Artahshasta was only a temporary caretaker ruler.

61. Rabinovitz, *Hadrakhah be-Limud Toledot Yisrael*, vol. 1, pp. 9, 10, 25, 26, 42, 46, and 47; *Tamitzit Divrei Yemei Yisrael*, pp. 38–39; *Yemei ha-Bayit ha-Sheni*, p. 6; and *Da'at Soferim le-Sefer Ezra ve-Nehemiah*, commentary on Nehemiah, p. 109.

## 12 David Hayyim Ibn Shalosh (1979)

David Hayyim Ibn Shalosh<sup>62</sup> discusses the discrepancy at length and shows an extensive knowledge of the nonrabbinic sources. He quotes from Herodotus, refers to cuneiform inscriptions from Behistun and Persepolis, and analyzes Aramaic papyri from Elephantine.

Nevertheless, he ardently maintains that the 420-year, 52-year,<sup>63</sup> and 34-year traditions are correct ones. Throughout he seems very troubled by the suggestion that the accepted count from creation would have to be altered.<sup>64</sup> He also believes that no chronology can be correct if it does not fit with the short Persian period implied by Daniel 11:2.<sup>65</sup> All of this leads him to make many arguments to attempt to discredit the conventional chronology.

He suggests that many of the rulers whom the Greek historians assumed were kings were in fact only local Persian governors.<sup>66</sup> The Greek historians may have been misled by the fact that, immediately after a king's death and before his successor was enthroned, many separate Persian governors might have called themselves "king," each in the hope that he would be the successor king. Also, the Persians themselves may have had a custom to call their own governors "king."

He goes to great lengths to show that the Greek historians were not reliable. He cites a case where Xenophon disagrees with Herodotus,<sup>67</sup> to show that even Greek historians did not respect Herodotus. He argues that the Greek historians would often exaggerate stories or make them up altogether, and that their sources were often unreliable folk tales obtained from the masses.<sup>68</sup> He cites a statement by Herodotus himself in which Herodotus admits that this is his method.<sup>69</sup> He discounts evidence from

62. Ibn Shalosh, *Ayyelet ha-Shahar*, especially pp. 87–117.

63. But he sometimes uses the number 53 instead of the number 52. See, e.g., *ibid.*, p. 93.

64. *Ibid.*, pp. 97 and 100.

65. *Ibid.*, pp. 97 and 102.

66. *Ibid.*, pp. 111–12.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 114.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 72. The statement is found in Herodotus' *Histories* at book VII,

cuneiform inscriptions, because the interpretation of the inscriptions is based in large part on assumptions.<sup>70</sup>

However, Ibn Shalosh<sup>71</sup> believes that the Persian period spanned the reigns of the following Persian kings: Koresh (3 years), Ahashverosh (14 years), Daryavesh son of Esther (6 years), Artahshasta=Xerxes=Artaxerxes (22 years), and Daryavesh (8 years).<sup>72</sup>

### 13 Hersh Goldwurm (1982)

Hersh Goldwurm<sup>73</sup> mentions the conventional chronology and presents his readers with a clear explanation of the discrepancy posed by it. He then writes that authorities such as Saadiah Gaon and Jacob Emden have insisted that the rabbinic chronology is incontrovertibly supported by the Bible. He also repeats the suggestion, in the name of the Abravanel, that some of the Persian kings mentioned in the ancient sources may have ruled Persia prior to its conquest of Babylonia. He concludes that "none of the ancient documents have the authority or were as scrupulously preserved by so many multitudes as the Tanach, Seder Olam, and the Talmud." He refers to the 420-year, 52-year, and 34-year traditions with approval, and all the dates that he adopts are based on these traditions.<sup>74</sup>

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para. 152. Ibn Shalosh, op. cit., p. 114, also cites a passage from Azariah de Rossi's *Me'or Einayim* (*Imrei Binah*, chap. 31, pp. 279–80), in which de Rossi had referred to an ancient Persian historian named Metastenes who allegedly had faulted Greek historians for writing history based on unreliable traditions. On Metastenes, see n. 102.

70. Ibn Shalosh, op. cit., p. 114.

71. Ibid., pp. 115–16.

72. With these figures, the author is able to maintain the tradition that the period of Persian dominion, counting from the second year of Daryavesh, spanned 34 years. In order to reconcile his chronology with the chronology expressed at Daniel 11:2, he interprets Daniel 11:2 to be referring to four Persian kings aside from Koresh (ibid., p. 115).

73. Goldwurm, *History of the Jewish People: The Second Temple Era* (ArtScroll History Series), pp. 211–12. Compare his *Daniel* (ArtScroll Tanach Series), p. 334 and *Chanukah* (ArtScroll Mesorah Series), p. 90 in which he adopts the SO chronology without any mention of the discrepancy.

74. E.g., he dates the destruction of the First Temple to 423 BCE, the return

However, when Goldwurm describes the kings who reigned during the Persian period, he includes an extra Darius.<sup>75</sup>

## 14 Isaac Simon Feder (1983)

Isaac Simon Feder<sup>76</sup> writes that there is a disagreement among historians about the number of Persian kings, some counting fourteen Persian kings and some counting less. He suggests that this disagreement arises because the ancient Persians did not know how to write and what has survived are unreliable traditions. He tells his readers that the accepted view<sup>77</sup> is that there were fourteen Persian kings, the first ten before the Persian conquest of Babylonia and the last four, starting with Koresh, after the Persian conquest of Babylonia.<sup>78</sup> The four kings whom

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under Koresh to 371 BCE, and the building of the Second Temple to 353 BCE. See Goldwurm, *History of the Jewish People: The Second Temple Era*, pp. 17, 25, and 29.

75. He calls the Darius in whose reign the Second Temple was built, and in whose reign Ezra and Nehemiah operated, Darius "II" (ibid., p. 32). (He refers to him as "II" to distinguish him from Darius the Mede.) But when he describes the king whom Alexander battled, he describes a Darius "III" (ibid., p. 48).

Goldwurm also states that "Jewish tradition" recognizes the possible existence of Cambyses (ibid., p. 212). But Goldwurm himself does not include Cambyses in his description of the Persian period.

Goldwurm also makes reference to Xerxes in a special chapter devoted solely to the rise of Greece and its wars with Persia. In describing these events, Goldwurm does not give any dates but is willing (unlike I.S. Feder) to describe the Greek wars with Persia as having taken place *after* the reign of Koresh. In this chapter, he points out that a Persian king named Xerxes battled the Greeks, and "according to some historians" Xerxes is Ahashverosh (ibid., p. 45).

76. Feder, *Toldedot ha-Dorot*, vol. 1, p. 48.

77. Presumably, he means the accepted view among the *rabbinic* historians. The subtitle of Feder's work is: *תולדות ישראל והעמים לפי השקפות חז"ל*.

78. Consistent with this view, he writes that the Persians' battles with the Greeks all took place *before* the reign of Koresh (op. cit., p. 48) and he mentions דריוס and כסרכס as some of the kings who reigned in Persia before its conquest of Babylonia and who led them in these battles (op. cit., pp. 64–65). (Feder spells this name דריוס, undoubtedly to attempt to distinguish him from the Persian king דריוש mentioned in the Bible, who reigned *after* the time of Koresh.)

Feder believes to have reigned after the Persian conquest of Babylonia are: Koresh, Cambyses, Ahashverosh, and Daryavesh.<sup>79</sup>

Feder<sup>80</sup> affirms the 52-year tradition, and all the dates that Feder<sup>81</sup> gives in his work are based on the adoption of the 420-year, 52-year, and 34-year traditions.

## 15 Chaim Heifetz (1991)

Chaim Heifetz<sup>82</sup> presents his readers with a radical revision of the history of the Persian period. The method he followed in his revision was to accept the framework of the Persian period found in the rabbinic sources as the correct one and attempt to integrate the data regarding the Persian period found in the Greek sources into this framework. He writes that traditionally the scholars have accepted only the framework found in the Greek sources as the correct one and attempted to integrate the data found in the Jewish sources into this framework. He believed that it was time for someone to attempt an integration by taking the opposite approach.<sup>83</sup>

Heifetz believes that he has a right to suggest his radical revision of the history of the Persian period because the conventional chronology of the Persian period is not based on a firm foundation. He writes that the ancient Greek historians were primarily concerned with collecting tales interesting to their readers, and not with writing truth or presenting

79. Feder, op. cit., pp. 48–49.

80. Ibid., p. 49.

81. For example, he dates the destruction of the First Temple to 422 BCE (ibid., p. 43) and the Persian conquest of Babylonia to 370 BCE (ibid., p. 49).

82. Heifetz, "מלכות פרס ומדי בתקופת בית שני ולפניה - עיון מחודש," *Megadim* 14, (1991), pp. 78–147.

83. A summary of Heifetz's radical revision is not included here because, in our view, the conventional chronology is based on a sufficiently firm foundation and is the correct one. It is sufficient to remark that Heifetz's radical revision of the history of the Persian period borrows a multitude of details from the Greek historians, archaeological discoveries, and other ancient sources, but bears little relation to anything previously written by (non-Orthodox) historians about the history of the Persian period because Heifetz has incorporated all these details into an entirely different framework.

accurate chronologies. He notes that we are not sure whether any statement presently found in the works of the ancient Greek historians was authored by the author of the work or was a later correction or insertion. He points out that the Greek historians contradict themselves on numerous occasions. He also points out that we do not have even one work from the time of Alexander the Great or the following century that contains a description of all the Persian kings from Cyrus to Darius III.<sup>84</sup> The earliest work to contain such a description is the *Bibliotheca Historica* of Diodorus, which only dates to the 1st century BCE. He also argues that the discoveries of archaeology do not provide an independent verification of the chronology constructed from the works of the Greek historians because the archaeologists only begin their work of interpretation after assuming that the conventional chronology is the correct one. He also suggests that some of the archaeological finds may be forgeries.

## 16 Brad Aaronson (1991)

Brad Aaronson<sup>85</sup> supports the radical revision of the history of the Persian period suggested by Heifetz. He believes that the evidence from archaeology and the Greek historians, when analyzed properly, supports the SO chronology as well as, if not better than, the conventional chronology. He believes that the doctrine of *אמונת חכמים* (faith in the pronouncements of the Sages) requires that the Sages be given the benefit of the doubt and that Jewish traditions not be conveniently adapted to the historical theories currently in fashion. He writes that if the conventional chronology was based on solid evidence, then something like the response of

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84. But from the Persian period itself, both the *Persica* of Ctesias and cuneiform inscriptions from the Persian palaces, which describe or list most of the kings, are available. See App. B. (But note that knowledge of Ctesias' description of the Persian period comes mostly from a ninth-century summary of it. See App. B, n. 6.)

85. Aaronson, "Fixing the History Books: Dr. Chaim S. Heifetz's Revision of Persian History," *Jewish Action*, (summer 1991), pp. 66–70, and (fall 1991), pp. 9–13.

Also included in the *Jewish Action*, fall 1991 (pp. 8–9) issue is a letter I wrote in response to Aaronson's article.

Simon Schwab (B-24) might be a fall-back position. But the weakness of the conventional chronology hardly warrants giving it this respect.

Aaronson writes that the Greek historians obtained their data primarily by recording unreliable folk traditions. He notes that they often disagreed with one another and even condemned one another as liars or frauds. He observes that the Greek historians picked up their information about Persia as travelers listening to the history of a foreign land, whereas the Jewish traditions regarding the Persian period, Aaronson suggests, originated in Babylonia and Persia and were passed down directly into the Babylonian Talmud.<sup>86</sup> Aaronson argues that local history is much less likely to be misunderstood than stories, often taken out of context, about other people's history.

In response to the argument<sup>87</sup> that the chronology derived from the Greek historians is independently confirmed by cuneiform inscriptions from the Persian palaces, he suggests that some of these inscriptions may be forgeries.<sup>88</sup> In response to the argument that the biblical data regarding the high priests of the Persian period support the conventional chronology, he argues that this data fits the SO chronology much better.

He claims that there is no source among rabbinic authorities to support placing the chronology of the Sages into the category of Aggadah,<sup>89</sup> and that we are not dealing with isolated rabbinic statements that might lend themselves to Aggadic interpretation, but instead are dealing with many statements that testify to a coherent picture of history held by the Sages. He writes that if we cannot believe the Sages when they made historical statements, "how can we believe them about anything?" He also claims that those who accept the conventional chronology accept a picture of history that snaps the chain that links

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86. Aaronson does not mention that the Jewish chronological traditions seem to have made their way into the Babylonian Talmud by incorporation from SO, a work presumably authored in Palestine.

87. I wrote this argument in my letter in response to Aaronson's article. I cited the cuneiform inscription of Artaxerxes III, referred to in App. B.

88. On the difficulties with such a suggestion, see App. B, n. 18.

89. But Aaronson seems to have overlooked the writings of Zerahiah b. Isaac ha-Levi, which perhaps provide such a source (see App. D, 13). Note that Zerahiah and many other medieval rabbinic authorities did not consider themselves bound by the SO chronology. See App. D.



Baruch the son of Neriah (the disciple of Jeremiah) and Ezra, thereby implicitly denying the claim that there is an unbroken chain of tradition from the time of Moses until the present.

## 17 Sholom Klass (1992)

Sholom Klass<sup>90</sup> writes that he cannot understand how any Orthodox Jew can adopt the conventional chronology, given that the Talmud, Rashi, Tosafot, and nearly all the Talmudic commentators accept the 420-year tradition.<sup>91</sup>

# ***Category B: Conventional Chronology Is Correct: SO Chronology Is in Error***

## **Introduction to Category B**

The responses in this category believe that the conventional chronology is correct<sup>92</sup> and that the SO chronology is in error. They accept the received text of SO and the plain-sense interpretation of its passages, which leads them to reject its chronology. Many attempt to account for the SO chronology. Some state or imply that the author of

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90. Klass, *Jewish Press*, week of March 6 to March 12, 1992, p. 84, and week of Nov. 19 to Nov. 25, 1993, p. 78.

91. Although the Talmud, Rashi, and Tosafot accept the 420-year tradition, there is nothing to indicate that these were aware of the views that described the Persian period as a protracted one. Similarly, most of the Talmudic commentators who accept the 420-year tradition were probably unaware of the views that described the Persian period as a protracted one. (The term "most" of the Talmudic commentators is used instead of "almost all" because many of the Talmudic commentators may have been aware of the responses collected in Part II of the study.)

92. Except that: 1) response B-1 views the Second Temple period as spanning 490 years (instead of 589 years) and 2) some of the responses from the 19th century may have adopted a "conventional chronology" slightly different from the one accepted today.

the SO chronology knew that the chronology he stated was not the true chronology.

It should be pointed out that the SO chronology must be accounted for, even if assumption is made that its author only had the Bible as a source for the chronology of the Persian period. The SO chronology views the Persian period as spanning the reigns of precisely three Persian kings and 52 years,<sup>93</sup> and views the period of Persian dominion during the Second Temple period as spanning precisely 34 years. Yet at least four different Persian kings seem to be described in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah: a Koresh, a Daryavesh, an Ahashverosh, and an Artahshasta.<sup>94</sup> And there is nothing in the Bible that points to the conclusion that the Persian period spanned precisely 52 years or that the period of Persian dominion spanned precisely 34 years.<sup>95</sup> There is also some evidence in the book of Nehemiah from which the author could perhaps have deduced that the Persian period was a protracted one.<sup>96</sup> SO does relate some of the main elements of its chronology to verse 6:14 of the book of Ezra and verses 9:24 and 11:2 of the book of Daniel,<sup>97</sup> which would tend to support a claim that these elements of its chronology were derived

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93. Including the 1 year of Medean rule. See Part I, n. 1.

94. It is the view of many scholars that the Daryavesh mentioned at Nehemiah 12:22 is a later Daryavesh than the one in whose reign the Second Temple was built, and that the Artahshasta mentioned in connection with the activities of Nehemiah is a different (perhaps earlier or later) Artahshasta from the one mentioned in connection with the activities of Ezra. If these views are correct (the first view probably is correct; the second view probably is not), then additional Persian kings are described in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. But if the author of the SO chronology would have only had the Bible as a source for the chronology of the Persian period, he would have had little reason to create distinctions between the various Persian king Daryaveshes and the various Artahshastas. (Note also that some scholars claim that the Artahshasta mentioned at Ezra 4:7–23 is to be identified with Cambyses or Bardiya, but most modern scholars reject this unlikely claim.)

95. See App. A, nn. 6 and 7.

96. The evidence is the description of the successive generations of high priests of the Persian period. On this evidence, see Part IV, and App. B.

97. See App. A, passages 1, 2, and 3.

from these verses. But the plain sense of these verses does not imply the chronology that SO relates to them.<sup>98</sup>

## 1 Azariah de Rossi (1574)

Azariah de Rossi<sup>99</sup> cites the testimonies of the ancient Greek historian, Xenophon<sup>100</sup>; the ancient Jewish writers, Philo<sup>101</sup> and Josephus; the ancient Egyptian astronomer, Ptolemy; and the church fathers, Eusebius and Jerome to show that the Persian period was a protracted

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98. The plain sense of Ezra 6:14 is inconsistent with the chronology that SO relates to it. See App. A, n. 5. The plain sense of Daniel 9:24 is very unclear. Arguments can be made to support the view that the chronology that SO relates to it reflects the plain sense of Daniel 9:24–27, and arguments can be made to rebut this view. See Part IV, n. 43. The plain sense of Daniel 11:2 could be interpreted to support the chronology that SO relates to it, but could be interpreted to support alternative chronologies as well. See App. A, n. 2.

99. De Rossi, *Me'or Einayim, Imrei Binah*, chaps. 29–42, pp. 275–367; and *Matzref la-Kesef* (especially the first treatise, chap. 2, pp. 13–17). De Rossi's response is a very lengthy one and the summary of it included here does not do it justice. De Rossi also makes statements inconsistent with the some of the statements included in this summary. He also makes attempts to reinterpret some of the statements in SO so that they are not inconsistent with the conventional chronology. For this reason, he is also included as response C-1.

100. Note that de Rossi misinterprets much of the material in Xenophon.

101. The work that de Rossi attributed to Philo and relied on seems to have been a forgery published in the 15th century. See *Matzref la-Kesef*, p. 168; E. Schürer, *The history of the Jewish people in the age of Jesus Christ*, vol. III.2, p. 870; and J. Weinberg, "Azariah de' Rossi and the Forgeries of Annius of Viterbo," *Aspetti della Storiografia Ebraica, Atti del IV Congresso Internazionale dell' AISG*, S. Miniato, 7–10 novembre 1983, Roma 1987, pp. 23–47. All of the responses in this study that refer to Philo's chronology of the Persian period seem to be referring to the spurious view of Philo cited by de Rossi. In the many works authored by Philo that are extant, there are no statements that enable us to approximate his chronology of the Persian or Second Temple periods, and the only Persian king that Philo mentions by name is Xerxes (*On Dreams*, II, para. 117). At least one church father (Clement, 3rd century, *Stromata*, bk. I, chap. 21, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2, p. 332) mentions a list of ancient kings authored by Philo, but this list is not extant.

one.<sup>102</sup> He also claims that the succession of high priests described at Nehemiah 12:10–11, the list of descendants of Jeconiah described at I Chronicles 3:17–24, and the reigns of the Persian kings described throughout the books of Ezra and Nehemiah are all inconsistent with the SO chronology and more consistent with a protracted Persian period.<sup>103</sup>

He makes many different attempts to account for the SO chronology. He suggests that the Sages may have been influenced by the short Persian period implied at Daniel 11:2.<sup>104</sup> He suggests that the Sages may have felt it appropriate to assign to the Second Temple period approximately the same amount of years as were assigned to the First Temple period.<sup>105</sup> Or they may have felt that Daniel 9:24 mandated the conclusion that the period from the beginning of the exilic period until the end of the Second Temple period spanned 490 years, leaving only 420 years for the Second Temple period.<sup>106</sup> Once the Second Temple period as a whole was assigned 420 years, the Sages were forced to view the period of Persian dominion as spanning only 34 years. They knew, based on their use of MS, that the length of the period from the commencement of MS until the destruction of the Second Temple was 380 years, and they had a tradition that Greek rule over the land of Israel commenced 6 years before the commencement of MS.<sup>107</sup> He also suggests that the Sages may have made the assumption that Simon the Just was the high priest who served in the generation immediately following Jeshua and that this

102. De Rossi, *Me'or Einayim, Imrei Binah*, chaps. 30–34, pp. 278–88. (The citations to Ptolemy are found elsewhere, at *Me'or Einayim, Imrei Binah*, chap. 42, pp. 360–61 and *Matzref la-Kesef*, first treatise, chap. 2, p. 16.) De Rossi also relies on the testimony of a purported Persian historian named Metastenes, whom de Rossi believes to have lived in the late 4th century BCE. There was no such Persian historian, and the work de Rossi relied on was a forgery published in the 15th century. See *Matzref la-Kesef*, p. 169, and the article by J. Weinberg cited in the note immediately above. De Rossi also cites other extrabiblical sources to show that the Persian period was a protracted one. Only the ones he relied most heavily upon are mentioned here.

103. De Rossi, *Me'or Einayim, Imrei Binah*, chaps. 37–39, pp. 310–25.

104. *Ibid.*, chap. 40, p. 325.

105. *Ibid.*, chap. 40, p. 326. De Rossi does not give any reason why the Sages may have felt it appropriate to do this, nor does any reason suggest itself.

106. *Ibid.*, chap. 40, p. 327.

107. *Ibid.*, chap. 40, p. 326.

assumption forced them to view the Persian period as spanning only one generation.<sup>108</sup>

He suggests that once the Sages chose to adopt the view that the Persian period was a short one, they forced themselves to ignore the contradictory evidence from Nehemiah 12:10–11 regarding the line of high priests.<sup>109</sup> They forced themselves to ignore this because it was important to them to fix one firm tradition regarding the length of the Persian period for future generations to follow.<sup>110</sup> De Rossi views this goal as having been a praiseworthy one, and observes that the Sages ignoring the contradictory evidence was, therefore, not error, as might have been thought, but חכמה (wisdom).<sup>111</sup>

De Rossi also suggests that the Sages may have chosen to include in their chronology only those years of the period of Persian dominion that were clearly expressed or implied in the Bible.<sup>112</sup> Additional time, the length of which was not clearly stated, was chosen to be ignored. He believes that in doing this the Sages may have been following a principle utilized by them in other contexts:<sup>113</sup>

כל ששמועו מרובה ושמועו מועט הפשת המרובה לא הפשת  
תפשת המועט תפשת.

Whenever something may imply a greater amount or a smaller amount: if you have seized on the greater amount, then you

108. Ibid., chap. 36, pp. 309–10.

109. Ibid., chap. 40, p. 326.

110. Ibid., chap. 40, pp. 326–27.

111. Loc. cit.

112. Ibid., chap. 40, p. 326. These were the 32 years of Artahshasta mentioned at Nehemiah 5:14 and 13:6 and the approximately 2 additional years that, de Rossi argues, Artahshasta's reign could be implied to have lasted. De Rossi writes that the Sages were not sure if the references to Artahshasta were references to Daryavesh by another name, but were willing to assume that they were, so as to be able to assign fewer years to the period (ibid., chap. 40, p. 327).

113. See, e.g., Sifra, Parshat Metzora (end of chap. 7), and J. Yoma 40a (2:4). De Rossi had also earlier (*Me'or Einayim*, *Imrei Binah*, chap. 35, pp. 299–300) cited this principle to explain some of the Sages' other chronological statements.

have not seized, but if you have seized on the smaller amount, then you have seized.

He also claims that the multiple dispersions and troubles suffered by the Jews may have caused their chronological traditions to have become confused.<sup>114</sup> He also notes that R. Yose did not always agree with the figures he included in his work<sup>115</sup> and suggests that, in this instance, R. Yose may have simply been transmitting traditions that he heard from other Jewish or Gentile Sages.<sup>116</sup>

De Rossi concludes that the Second Temple period spanned 70 more years than the 420 years allotted to it by the authors of the count from creation and that the count from creation must be increased accordingly.<sup>117</sup> He also believes that the period from the birth of Isaac to the

114. De Rossi, *Me'or Einayim, Imrei Binah*, chap. 42, p. 363. To support this approach, he cites a statement found in the Jerusalem Talmud regarding the date of the breaching of the walls of the First Temple. The view is expressed in the Jerusalem Talmud (68c, Ta'anit 4:5) that the date for this event specified in the Bible (9th of Tammuz) is an erroneous one (קילקול חשבונות יש כאן), and see the explanation of the *Korban ha-Edah*, ad. loc.: מרוב צרות טעו בחשבונות (because of the multitude of troubles, they erred in their calculations).

115. Citing Niddah 46b: חני לה ולא סבר לה (he recited it but he did not agree with it).

116. De Rossi, *Me'or Einayim, Imrei Binah*, chap. 42, pp. 363–64. See also his *Matzref la-Kesef*, second treatise, chap. 13, p. 95.

117. De Rossi, *Me'or Einayim, Imrei Binah*, chap. 41, pp. 351–56. He decides to fix 490 years as the length of the Second Temple period because he believes such a figure has support in the 490-year period described at Daniel 9:24 (under the assumption that the period described does *not* include the seventy exilic years). He is not willing to accept the extrabiblical sources to the extent that they imply that the Second Temple period spanned a time longer than that implied in the Bible. He also stresses that the extrabiblical sources disagree with one another regarding the precise length of the period, so he cannot assign a precise length to the Second Temple period based on them. Earlier (*ibid.*, chap. 38, p. 321), he had pointed out that Daniel 11:2 is not necessarily inconsistent with the view that the Persian period spanned the reigns of more than a few Persian kings. The verse may have only intended an enumeration of the most powerful ones.

Exodus and the period of the First Temple may have spanned more years than the 400 years and 410 years allotted to them.<sup>118</sup>

De Rossi expends much effort attempting to justify his right to disagree with the 400-year, 410-year, and 420-year traditions, and the count from creation based on them. He argues that these traditions were not traditions received from the prophets and are not foundations of faith.<sup>119</sup> He refers to numerous Jewish authors who preceded him who did not follow these traditions.<sup>120</sup> He also makes the claim that the rabbinic identification of the kings Koresh, Daryavesh, and Artahshasta<sup>121</sup> was only intended midrashically.<sup>122</sup> He also argues extensively that adopting any different chronology and accepting any change in the count from creation do not affect the calculations of the dates of the holidays or the performance of any of the commandments.<sup>123</sup>

De Rossi's chronological and other claims aroused much controversy among his contemporaries, and in many Jewish communities proclamations were issued forbidding the reading of his writings.<sup>124</sup>

118. Ibid., chap. 35, pp. 288–306 and chap. 41, p. 352. Note that, according to conventional chronology, the period of the First Temple spanned less than the 410 years assigned to it by the Sages. It spanned approximately 379 years (c. 965–586 BCE). See diagram, p. iii.

119. Ibid., chap. 35, pp. 291 and 303. See also ibid., chap. 42, p. 356 and *Matzref la-Kesef*, second treatise, chap. 13, p. 95.

120. De Rossi, *Me'or Einayim, Imrei Binah*, chaps. 35–36, pp. 288–310. See also *Matzref la-Kesef*, first treatise, chap. 2, pp. 8–15.

121. See Rosh ha-Shanah 3b, and variant of SO passage 3 (see App. A, n. 5). De Rossi's text of SO followed this variant.

122. De Rossi, *Me'or Einayim, Imrei Binah*, chap. 18, pp. 224–29. He writes that he was exceptionally happy to discover that Zerahiah ha-Levi (App. D, 13) had made this suggestion as well. De Rossi argues that the Sages only intended to teach that the three kings were alike in their benevolence to the Jewish people.

But it is questionable whether there is a rabbinic passage that teaches or assumes the identity of Koresh, Daryavesh, and Artahshasta. Most manuscripts of SO do not contain a passage in the form *הוא כורש הוא דריוש הוא ארתחשטא* (see App. A, n. 5). And, although a passage in this form is found at Rosh ha-Shanah 3b, various interpretations of the passage are possible. See App. D, n. 69.

123. Ibid., chap. 35, p. 303 and chap. 40, pp. 328–44 and 351.

124. For a detailed discussion of the response to de Rossi's writings by the

## 2 Samuel Joseph Fuenn (1847)

Samuel Joseph Fuenn<sup>125</sup> writes that de Rossi showed convincingly that the SO chronology must be incorrect because it is impossible to squeeze the six generations of high priests mentioned in the book of Nehemiah into the short span envisioned by the SO chronology. He also writes that the SO chronology must be rejected because it is inconsistent with the reliable ancient historians. He does not make any attempt to explain what caused the author of the SO chronology to give the chronology that he did.

## 3 Nachman Krochmal (1851)

Nachman Krochmal<sup>126</sup> writes that it is clear to him that the author of SO had no received tradition regarding the length of the Persian period and was forced to construct his chronology based solely on the limited data regarding the Persian period found in the Bible. He also believes that the author was following a midrashic principle requiring the assignment of the shortest of all possible lengths of time that could be derived from the biblical text.

## 4 Solomon Judah Rapoport (1852)

Solomon Judah Rapoport<sup>127</sup> makes the observation that if the data in SO is combined with one other rabbinic tradition, MS comes out to be exactly 1,000 years after the Exodus.<sup>128</sup> He suggests that the Sages of the

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various Jewish communities and rabbinic figures, see the article by M. Benayahu referred to at n. 8.

125. Fuenn, *Shenot Dor ve-Dor*, and *Divrei ha-Yamin li-Venei Yisrael*, vol. 1, pp. 20 and 120.

126. Krochmal, *Moreh Nevukhei ha-Zeman*, pp. 59 and 149–51. He also (*ibid.*, p. 127) refers with approval to de Rossi's writings on our subject.

127. Rapoport, *Erekh Millin*, p. 74.

128. This observation was made long ago by the Amoraim (see *Avodah Zarah* 10a). From data scattered throughout SO, it can be calculated that the 34th year of the period of Persian dominion marks the 994th year from the



late 4th century BCE purposely reduced the length of the period of Persian dominion to 34 years to achieve this result.<sup>129</sup> Their goal was to facilitate the adoption by the Jews of MS, because its adoption would serve as a show of support by the Jews for their new Greek rulers. Rapoport postulates that the Jews had previously been counting from the Exodus.<sup>130</sup> The Sages adjusted matters so that MS came out to be exactly 1,000 years after the Exodus to assure a smooth transition to the new system.<sup>131</sup>

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Exodus. The other relevant tradition is a tradition recorded in the Talmud (*Avodah Zarah* 10a), in the name of R. Yose, that for six years the Greeks ruled in Elam before their rule extended over the whole world. This tradition is not found in SO. The Amoraim understood this tradition to mean that there was a 6-year time span between the beginning of Greek rule in the land of Israel (i.e., the end of the 34-year period of Persian dominion) and the beginning of MS.

129. He explains that they were bound by passages in the Bible to give the length of the period from the Exodus until building of the First Temple as 480 years, the length of the First Temple period as approximately 410 years, and the length of the exilic period as 70 years. This left only 40 years that could be assigned to the period from the building of the Second Temple to the commencement of MS. Because (he assumes) they already had the 6-year tradition mentioned in the note above, this left them with only 34 years for the period from the building of the Second Temple to the end of the period of Persian dominion.

130. Perhaps implicit in this postulate is a belief that, prior to their adoption of MS, the Jews of the late 4th century BCE had an accurate knowledge of the length of the Persian period.

131. There are two main problems with Rapoport's suggestion that the shortened chronology of the period of Persian dominion was authored around the time of the introduction of MS and designed so that MS would come out to be exactly 1,000 years after the Exodus. First, the suggestion is based on the wholly hypothetical assumption that the 6-year tradition mentioned in n. 129 was in existence as early as the late 4th century BCE. More importantly, the elder generation of Jews living in the 4th century BCE would have been aware that the period of Persian dominion spanned significantly more than 34 years. It seems unlikely that the Sages of the late 4th century BCE would have been able to suddenly claim that this period spanned only 34 years. (Rapoport's further suggestion that the Jews were previously counting from the Exodus raises a similar difficulty. If the Jews had previously been counting from the Exodus, and counted periods of 480, 410, and 70 years (see n. 129), and then counted the

Rapoport briefly mentions the suggestion made by de Rossi (C-1) that the Sages were only counting the years of the Persian period during which the Persian kings ruled in tranquility over Israel. He rejects this suggestion because there is no reason the Sages should have adopted this particular limitation for the Persian period alone.<sup>132</sup>

## 5 Morris Raphall (1856)

Morris Raphall<sup>133</sup> believes that the peacefulness of the Persian period and the resultant lack of traditions of events of consequence induced the "Rabbins" to assume that the only Persian kings who reigned during this period were the ones mentioned in the Bible and that the period spanned only 52 years.

He also mentions that "some bigots" imputed a design on the part of the "Rabbins" to abridge the period known as "the 70 weeks of Daniel." But he unhesitatingly acquits the "Rabbins" of this charge.<sup>134</sup>

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period of Persian dominion approximately accurately, they would have been at a date well past the year 1,000 by the time MS arrived. The Sages of the late 4th century BCE would then not have been able to suddenly claim that MS was only 1,000 years after the Exodus.)

132. It must also be mentioned that in "Ueber die Chroniken oder Erinnerungstafeln in den israelitischen Kalendern," *Jahrbuch Für Israeliten* 3, (1844), pp. 243–67, Rapoport follows the SO chronology without referring to any discrepancy. Either Rapoport was unaware of the discrepancy at the time he wrote this article, or his views changed by the time he composed his *Erekb Millin*.

133. Raphall, *Post-Biblical History of the Jews*, vol. 1, pp. 32–33.

134. Raphall does not clarify what the claim of these bigots was. He may have been referring to a claim made by Christians that the Sages purposely shortened the Persian period so that Daniel's prophecy about an anointed one who would be cut off (Daniel 9:26) would not fall chronologically around the time of Jesus. Saadiah Gaon mentions that some Christians made such a claim. See Part II.

## 6 Levi Herzfeld (1863)

Levi Herzfeld<sup>135</sup> refers briefly to the SO chronology. He does not make any attempt to explain what caused its author to give the chronology that he did.

## 7 Joseph Derenbourg (1867)

Joseph Derenbourg<sup>136</sup> refers briefly to the tradition that the Persian period spanned 52 years. He claims that the number 52 appears many times in Jewish chronicles<sup>137</sup> and suggests that there may have been a predilection for this number.<sup>138</sup>

Derenbourg also points out that a phenomena similar to the Jewish reduction of the length of the Persian (Achaemenid) period is present in the chronologies of many ancient Arab and Persian historians. Many

135. Herzfeld, *Geschichte des Volkes Yisrael von der Zerstörung des ersten Tempels bis zur Einsetzung des Mackabäers Schimon zum hohen Priester und Fürsten*, vol. 1, p. 382.

136. Derenbourg, *Essai sur l'histoire et la géographie de la Palestine, d'après les Thalmuds et les autres sources rabbiniques*, p. 19.

137. Derenbourg does not give any examples. But our own search reveals that the following traditions involving the number 52 are included in SO: 1) the length of time from the Dispersion until the birth of Isaac (chap. 1, p. 212); 2) the length of Samuel's life (chap. 13, p. 297); 3) the length of time between the destruction of the First Temple and the death of Gedaliah (chap. 26, p. 410); 4) the length of time from the destruction of the First Temple until the return under Koresh (chap. 27, p. 418 and chap. 29, p. 433); 5) the length of the Medeo-Persian period (chap. 30, pp. 436–37); and 6) the length of time between the destruction of the Second Temple and the war of Ben Kozibah (chap. 30, p. 442). All of these are traditions of 52 years except the third one, which is a tradition of 52 days. (The above search was conducted on the text of SO published by Milikowsky. Search of other editions or manuscripts may yield slightly different results.)

138. But in the view taken by this study, the recurrence of the number 52 is probably nothing more than coincidence.

ancient Arab and Persian historians, in their chronologies, greatly reduce the length of the period subsequent to Alexander.<sup>139</sup>

## 8 Moses Zuckermandel (1871)

Moses Zuckermandel<sup>140</sup> states that the uneventfulness of the Persian period caused it to be largely forgotten. He also believes that the author of the SO chronology derived his view that the Second Temple period spanned 420 years by subtracting the 70 exilic years from the 490 years of Daniel 9:24. He also writes that the author of the SO chronology believed that the period from Alexander the Great until the destruction of the Second Temple spanned 386 years. After subtracting these 386 years from the 420 total years, he was left with only 34 years to assign to the period of Persian dominion.

## 9 Isidore Loeb (1889)

Isidore Loeb<sup>141</sup> writes that the rabbinic chronology from creation to the destruction of the Second Temple is only a symbolic chronology. He argues, for example, that precisely 410 years were allocated by the rabbinic chronology to the First Temple period because of a desire to have the total years from the building of the First Temple to the building of the Second Temple (410 plus 70) equal the total years from the Exodus to the building of the First Temple (480).

Regarding the chronology of the Second Temple period, he believes that the tradition that the Second Temple period spanned 420 years was derived by subtracting the 70 exilic years from the 490 years of Daniel 9:24, and points out that R. Yose states this clearly in the body of SO (chap. 29). He argues that the Jews used MS and were able to calculate the length of time from the beginning of MS until the destruction of the Second Temple, calculating it as 382 years. This figure was then changed to 380 years, because of the rabbinic chronology's preference for round

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139. See the sources cited by H. Mantel, in his *Anshei Knesset ha-Gedolah*, p. 302, n. 11.

140. Zuckermandel, "R' José's chronologische Angaben," *MGWJ* 20, (1871), p. 462.

141. Loeb, "Notes sur L'Histoire des Juifs," *RÉJ* 19, (1889), pp. 202–06.

numbers and because of its desire to have MS begin exactly 1,000 years after the Exodus.<sup>142</sup> He believes that some further adjustments were made that caused the chronology to state that the period of Greek dominion began 6 years before the beginning of MS. Subtraction of the 386 years from the 420 years left the chronology with only 34 years to assign to the period of Persian dominion and forced it to equate some of the separate Persian kings. He concludes that because the rabbinic chronology is only a symbolic chronology, its chronology of the Persian period should be treated with indulgence.

## 10 Baer Ratner (1894)

Baer Ratner<sup>143</sup> writes that the Sages certainly knew that the Persian period spanned the reigns of more Persian kings than the ones included in SO.<sup>144</sup> He suggests that only those Persian kings who were mentioned in the Bible and were of consequence for the Jews were included.<sup>145</sup> He seems to believe that the Sages were forced to shorten the Persian period

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142. Loeb seems to be assuming here that the initial assumption of the author of the chronology was that the period from the building of the Second Temple to the beginning of MS spanned 38 years. Later however (see text above), Loeb gives the impression that it was only the subtraction of the 386 years from the 420 years that forced the author to assign a short time to the period of Persian dominion. It is possible that all Loeb meant in his later statement was that the subtraction of the 386 years from the 420 years forced the author to reduce his chronology of the length of the period of Persian dominion from 38 or 40 years to 34 years. But it is also possible that Loeb's later statement reflects an alternative approach, an approach that assumes that the initial assumption of the author was that the period of Persian dominion spanned more than 38 or 40 years.

143. Ratner, *Seder Olam Rabbah*, vol. 1, pp. 113–14.

144. Even though Ratner writes this and also characterizes de Rossi's proofs that the Persian period was a protracted one as clear proofs, in one place Ratner does express some uncertainty as to whether the Persian period spanned more time than that assigned to it by the Sages.

145. Elsewhere (op. cit. p. 110), regarding a passage in SO (chap. 30, p. 442) that mentions eight Greek kings, Ratner makes the same point. He writes that there were more Greek kings than the ones in SO and that SO only included the ones who were of consequence for the Jews.

and limit who could be included because they were confined by a tradition that the entire Second Temple period spanned 420 years.

He also mentions the view of a scholar whom he does not name (C-2) who postulated that R. Yose's statement about the period of Persian dominion originally specified שלשים ור' (30 and 200), and was only later corrupted into שלשים ור' (30 and 4). Ratner notes that this scholar claimed to find support for his view in the fact that some editions of SO assigned 250 years, instead of 52 years, to the Medeo-Persian period. Ratner rebuts this scholar by showing that we see from the SO manuscripts and from a variety of other rabbinic sources that SO originally assigned 52 years to the Medeo-Persian period. Ratner writes that it is improper for those in modern times to suddenly postulate textual changes in SO to harmonize its text with their data.

## 11 Alexander Marx (1903)

Alexander Marx<sup>146</sup> believes that the author of the SO chronology derived his view that the Second Temple period spanned 420 years by subtracting the 70 exilic years from the 490 years of Daniel 9:24. He also writes that the author of the SO chronology believed that the period from the beginning of the Greek period until the destruction of the Second Temple spanned 386 years. After subtracting these 386 years from the 420 total years, he was left with only 34 years to assign to the period of Persian dominion.

## 12 Joseph Jacobs (1905)

Joseph Jacobs,<sup>147</sup> citing Loeb, writes that R. Yose stated the length of the Second Temple period to be 420 years because of his desire to make his chronology agree with the 490-year period predicted at Daniel 9:24. Because the exilic period was assumed to have lasted 70 years, only 420 years were left for the Second Temple period. Jacobs also writes that the period of Persian dominion was shortened by R. Yose to 34 years to make the interval between the Exodus and MS exactly 1,000 years.<sup>148</sup>

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146. Marx, *Seder Olam*, p. x.

147. Jacobs, "Chronology," *JE* 4 (1905), pp. 70–71.

148. But if making MS begin exactly 1,000 years after the Exodus was an

### 13 Ahron Marcus (1905)

Ahron Marcus<sup>149</sup> writes that R. Yose had no nonbiblical sources for the Persian period. He did not have the annals of Jerusalem, which were destroyed in the Hadrianic persecution, nor did he have a copy of Josephus.<sup>150</sup>

Marcus believes that R. Yose derived his view that the Second Temple period spanned 420 years by subtracting the 70 exilic years from the 490 years of Daniel 9:24. After subtracting 380 years for the period from the beginning of MS until the destruction of the Second Temple, he was left with only 40 years to assign to the period from the building of the Second Temple until the beginning of MS.<sup>151</sup>

Marcus claims that the Sassanid kings themselves had forgotten history and erroneously identified the earlier Persian kings Cyrus, Darius,

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important goal of R. Yose's, we would expect some sort of statement in SO that MS commences exactly 1,000 years after the Exodus, or enough data included in SO to enable us to derive this conclusion. Yet we have neither. MS is mentioned only one time in SO (see below) and the time of its arrival in relation to an earlier period is not described. The 6-year tradition mentioned in n. 128, which alludes to the time of MS and enables the 1,000-year calculation, is also not included in SO. (The fact that this 6-year tradition is not included in SO would also support an argument that this tradition did not arise until after the 34-year tradition. But this argument can be easily rebutted. See Part IV, n. 34.)

It is also possible to question whether MS would have had such a strong influence on the chronology if the chronology was authored in Palestine in the 2nd century CE. It seems from SO that the use of MS may not have been widespread in Palestine at this time and that the Palestinian practice was to date events from the destruction of the Second Temple. See SO, chap. 30, p. 440.

Note finally that Elijah of Vilna interprets SO's statement (chap. 30, p. 440) *ובגולה כותבין בשטרות למניין יוונים אלפא* to include the implication that MS commenced exactly 1,000 years after the Exodus. See Elijah's commentary on SO, in SO, ed. Leiner, p. 91. But most modern scholars reject this interpretation.

149. Marcus, *Barsilai*, p. 317, and "Zur jüdischen Chronologie," *JJLG* 4, (1906), pp. 331–39, and *Jüdische Chronologie*, pp. 12–15.

150. Marcus, "Zur jüdischen Chronologie," p. 336 and *Jüdische Chronologie*, p. 12.

151. Marcus, *Jüdische Chronologie*, p. 12.

and Artaxerxes with one another. He suggests that this is what caused some of the Amoraim,<sup>152</sup> who had dealings with the Sassanid royal courts, to make this identification as well.<sup>153</sup>

Finally, he argues that although the number of years assigned to the Persian period is incorrect, the total number of years that the SO chronology assumes to have passed from the Exodus until the beginning of MS (1,000 years) is correct.<sup>154</sup>

## 14 Max Seligsohn (1905)

Max Seligsohn<sup>155</sup> writes that the SO chronology is the result of its author's insistence on agreement with the text of Daniel 9:24, less his subtraction of 70 years for the exilic period and 386 years for the time that had elapsed, according to rabbinic tradition, between the beginning of the Greek period and the destruction of the Second Temple.

## 15 Eduard Mahler (1916)

Eduard Mahler<sup>156</sup> refers briefly to the SO chronology. He does not make any attempt to explain what caused its author to give the chronology that he did.

152. See Rosh ha-Shanah 3b.

153. Marcus, *Barsilai*, p. 317 and *Jüdische Chronologie*, pp. 12–13. Marcus does not give his source for his statement that the Sassanid kings erroneously identified the kings Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes with one another. Note also that the equating of the two kings Daryavesh and Artahshasta is already found in SO, which seems to have been a Tannaitic work, and would therefore date prior to the Sassanid period. Regarding the intent of the *הוא כורש הוא דריוש הוא ארתחשטא* passage at Rosh ha-Shanah 3b, see the additional note at the end of App. D.

154. Marcus, *Jüdische Chronologie*, pp. 12–15. He believes that the Exodus occurred around 1312 BCE and that SO's understatement of the length of the Persian period is offset by its overstatement of the length of the period from the Exodus until the building of the First Temple.

155. Seligsohn, "Seder 'Olam Rabbah," *JE*, vol. 11, p. 148.

156. Mahler, *Handbuch der jüdischen Chronologie*, pp. 132, 416, and 466.



## 16 Hayyim Bornstein (1921)

Hayyim Bornstein<sup>157</sup> believes that the author of SO knew that the Persian king defeated by Alexander was named Daryavesh, and that the author erroneously equated this Daryavesh with the Daryavesh mentioned in the book of Ezra, in whose reign the Second Temple was built. Because the author believed that these two were identical, he was forced to conclude that the Artahshasta mentioned after Daryavesh was identical as well.<sup>158</sup>

The author of SO then saw that, according to all his data, including his tradition that MS began 6 years after the end of the period of Persian dominion,<sup>159</sup> MS came close to beginning exactly 1,000 years after the Exodus.<sup>160</sup> Because he knew that the chronology he had derived was only

157. Bornstein, "תאריכי ישראל," *Hatekufah* 9, (1921), pp. 218–21.

158. Bornstein's belief that the author of SO knew that the Persian king defeated by Alexander was named Daryavesh is a reasonable one. The author of the First Book of Maccabees knew this detail. See 1 Maccabees 1:1.

But Bornstein's suggestion that this belief would have caused the author to equate this Daryavesh with the Daryavesh of the book of Ezra can be disputed. The number of SO could just as easily have concluded that the Persian period spanned the reigns of five Persian kings (Koresh, Ahashverosh, Daryavesh, Artahshasta, and Daryavesh), and then he would not have had to equate Daryavesh with Artahshasta, kings who are clearly indicated by Ezra 6:14 to be separate kings. (Daniel 11:2 would not have been an obstacle to concluding that the Persian period spanned the reigns of five Persian kings. It could have been interpreted to be describing a Persian period of four Persian kings aside from Koresh. See App. A, n. 2). The author of SO could also have found support in the book of Nehemiah for the idea that there was a Persian king named Daryavesh who reigned after the Artahshasta of the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. See Nehemiah 12:22.

159. See n. 128.

160. Assuming 480 years from the Exodus until the building of Solomon's Temple, 410 years for Solomon's Temple, 70 years between the Temples, 31 years for the reign of Daryavesh=Artahshasta starting from when the rebuilding commenced (the rebuilding did not commence until Daryavesh=Artahshasta's second year), and six years from the last year of Daryavesh=Artahshasta's reign until MS, MS comes out to be 997 years from the Exodus.

an approximation anyway, he was willing to adjust his figures slightly so that MS would come out to begin exactly 1,000 years after the Exodus.<sup>161</sup> In this way, the chronology he created would have a profound delineation between the biblical period and the postbiblical period. In addition, use of dates calculated according to MS would enable the Jewish people to be constantly reminding themselves of the amount of years that had passed since the greatest event of their history, the Exodus from Egypt.<sup>162</sup>

Bornstein also writes that the author's assumption that the Second Temple period spanned 420 years was derived by subtracting the 70 exilic years from the 490 years of Daniel 9:24.

## 17 Philip Biberfeld (1935)

Philip Biberfeld<sup>163</sup> makes the suggestion that the count from creation was already in use at the time the SO chronology was authored<sup>164</sup> and that the goal of the author of SO was to create a chronology that would justify it. The count from creation could be justified only if a total of 1,380 years would be allocated to the period from the Exodus until the destruction of the Second Temple. Bound by this total, the author was forced to reduce the length of the Second Temple period and the period of Persian dominion within it. Biberfeld notes that the SO chronology does not fit with the plain sense of the Bible and describes the SO chronology as having an aggadic character.

In a later work,<sup>165</sup> he writes that the author of SO was correct about

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161. He added three years to the reign of Daryavesh=Artahshasta.

162. Any date stated according to MS, with 1,000 years added to it, gives the total amount of years that passed from the Exodus until that date.

Although Bornstein assumes that the widespread use of MS influenced the author of SO, the use of MS may not have been so widespread in Palestine, where SO was presumably authored. See n. 148.

163. Biberfeld, "Zur jüdischen Chronologie," *Nachalat Tzvi* 9–10, (1935), pp. 314–15.

164. Most scholars do not make this assumption but assume instead that the count from creation arose later than the SO chronology and was derived from it.

165. Biberfeld, *Universal Jewish History* vol. 1, pp. 29–33.

the total length of time that passed between the Exodus and the destruction of the Second Temple but was incorrect about its proper apportionment. Biberfeld claims that the Exodus took place around 1312 BCE and believes that the author of SO knew this as well. Thereafter, the author of SO mistakenly followed a literal understanding of I Kings 6:1 and dated the building of the First Temple to 480 years after the Exodus.<sup>166</sup> The author of SO knew that the Second Temple was destroyed in 70 CE; therefore he was left with only 902 years to distribute from the building of the First Temple to the destruction of the Second Temple. This forced him to reduce the length of the Second Temple period and the period of Persian dominion within it.<sup>167</sup>

## 18 Ephraim Urbach (1946)

Ephraim Urbach<sup>168</sup> refers briefly to the SO chronology. He does not make any attempt to explain what caused its author to give the chronology that he did.

## 19 Harold Ginsberg (1948)

Harold Ginsberg<sup>169</sup> believes that the Rabbis only knew the Persian kings mentioned in the Bible. Their statement that the Persian period spanned the reigns of just three Persian kings was prompted by a belief that "Artahshasta" was just a throne name. He notes that Elias Bickerman had (orally) suggested that the practice of the Arsacid kings (3rd century BCE to 3rd century CE) of each calling themselves "Arsaces" may have inspired this belief.<sup>170</sup>

Ginsberg mentions the view of the Rabbis in the context of a

166. According to Biberfeld, the correct interpretation of the verse is that 480 years elapsed from the beginning of *the era* of the Exodus, meaning *the death of Joseph*, until the building of the First Temple.

167. In this work, Biberfeld does not describe the SO chronology as having an aggadic character nor state that the SO chronology was a chronology created to justify the accepted count from creation.

168. Urbach, "מתי פסקה הנבואה," *Tarbitz* 17, (1946), p. 2.

169. Ginsberg, *Studies in Daniel*, pp. 19 and 72, n. 53.

170. But it seems unlikely that Arsacid practices would have influenced the

discussion of the view of the Persian period held by the author of chapters 7–12 of the book of Daniel. Ginsberg, like most modern scholars, believes that these chapters were authored in the 2nd century BCE, and that the author of these chapters viewed the Persian period as spanning the reigns of four Persian kings. Implicit in Ginsberg's discussion is the position that the view of the Persian period held by the Rabbis is not so surprising, given the fact that the 2nd century BCE author of chapters 7–12 of the book of Daniel seemed to have held a view very close to it.<sup>171</sup>

## 20 Solomon Zeitlin (1949)

Solomon Zeitlin<sup>172</sup> refers to the tradition that the Second Temple period spanned 420 years and believes that a certain passage in the Damascus Document of the Dead Sea Scrolls<sup>173</sup> reflects the same chronological scheme.<sup>174</sup> Citing Arakhin 12b, he claims that the notion that the Second Temple period spanned 420 years is only "a late Talmudic tradition."<sup>175</sup> He then disputes the antiquity of the Dead Sea Scrolls,

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chronology of the Rabbis if the chronology of the Rabbis was authored in Palestine, a land not subject to the Arsacids.

171. See Part IV, pp. 122–123. A non-Jewish scholar, C. Torrey, had previously made essentially this same point. See his "Medes and Persians," *JAOS* 66, (1946), pp. 1–5.

172. Zeitlin, "'A Commentary on the Book of Habakkuk' Important Discovery or Hoax?" *JQR* 39, (1949), pp. 238–39.

173. The Damascus Document was a document first published by S. Schechter in 1911. When the Dead Sea Scrolls were later discovered, copies of it were found among them.

174. The Damascus Document (ed. Schechter, p. 1) refers to a certain event that took place 390 years after the destruction of the First Temple by Nebuchadnezzar. Zeitlin believes that the author of the Damascus Document intends a reference to the time of Hillel. If the author also believed, in accordance with rabbinic tradition (Shabbat 15a), that the time of Hillel was only 100 years before the destruction of the Second Temple, he must have also believed that the total length of time between the destruction of the First Temple and the destruction of the Second Temple was 490 years.

175. Zeitlin does not mention that this tradition is found in both SO (in the name of R. Yose) and the Tosefta (Zevahim 13:3). The material in both these works is generally assumed to date to the Tannaitic period.

claiming that if these works knew this "late Talmudic tradition," they could not have been authored in pre-Tannaitic or Tannaitic times.

## 21 Pinkas Weis (1950)

Like Zeitlin, Pinkas Weis<sup>176</sup> also believes that the chronological scheme reflected in this passage in the Damascus Document is the same as the one expressed in SO. Unlike Zeitlin, however, and like most other scholars, Weis believes that the Dead Sea Scrolls are of pre-Tannaitic origin. According to Weis, what we have in the Damascus Document is the SO chronology in a work that *precedes* the time of SO.<sup>177</sup>

## 22 Abraham Akavya (1953)

Abraham Akavya<sup>178</sup> writes that the Jews at the time of R. Yose knew very little about the events of the period after the Bible was closed. This

176. Weis, "The Date of the Habakkuk Scroll," *JQR* 41, (1950), p. 142.

177. If Weis would be correct, the consequences would be far-reaching. But the interpretation of the Damascus Document that he and Zeitlin adopt is entirely speculative. Both the *terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem* of the 390 years are unclear and, most likely, the 390 figure does not reflect a chronological assumption of the author of the document but simply a borrowing of a figure from Ezekiel 4:5.

Weis and Zeitlin were not the first to suggest that the chronological scheme reflected in the above passage in the Damascus Document is the same as the one expressed in SO. They were preceded by a non-Jewish scholar, G. Hölscher. See his "Zur Frage nach Alter und Herkunft der sog. Damaskusschrift," *ZNW* 28, (1929), p. 42. Prior to this, another non-Jewish scholar had suggested that the Damascus Document was following a hypothesized rival rabbinic chronology related to, but not the same as, the one found in SO. See G. Margoliouth, "The Sadducean Christians of Damascus," *Expositor* 8/2, (1911), pp. 504–07.

178. Akavya, *Ha-Lu'ah ve-Shimusho be-Kronologiyya*, pp. 63 and 152–54, and "תקופת שיבת ציון מבחינה כרונולוגית," *Tarbitz* 37, (1968), pp. 329–37. See also I. Amorai, Z. Beharav, and A. Akavya, *Daniyyel, Ezra, Nehemiah*, pp. 178–79.

It must be noted that Akavya's writings contain many statements, some of which contradict the statements included here. Akavya's writings also include an attempt to reinterpret some of the passages in SO so that they are not

caused R. Yose to erroneously date the visit of Alexander to the period of Nehemiah.<sup>179</sup> R. Yose's erroneous view of the early part of the Persian period was caused by his noticing that the year mentioned next after the mention of the 6th year of Daryavesh is a 7th year.<sup>180</sup> The mention of a 7th year following a 6th year suggested to him that these years must have been consecutive ones and that the Artahshasta whose 7th year is described must have been the same as the Daryavesh whose 6th year is described.<sup>181</sup>

Akavya theorizes that R. Yose did not have access to the history works of the nations because these were generally located in special palace archives, accessible only to those close to the king.<sup>182</sup> Even if he would have had access to such works, R. Yose would not have viewed them as reliable.<sup>183</sup> For these reasons, R. Yose used only the Bible in constructing his chronology of the Persian period. Because he used only the Bible, he could not uncover the parts of the Persian period skipped over by the Bible.<sup>184</sup>

Akavya maintains that R. Yose derived all the details of his chronology from the Bible.<sup>185</sup> For example, the identification of Artahshasta with Daryavesh was derived from the mention of the 7th year of Artahshasta soon after the mention of the 6th year of Daryavesh. That Daryavesh=Artahshasta reigned precisely 35 years was also derived by R. Yose from the Bible.<sup>186</sup>

Akavya writes that the succession of the high priests of the Persian

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inconsistent with the conventional chronology. Akavya is therefore included as response C-11 as well.

179. Akavya, *Ha-Lu'ah*, p. 154.

180. See Ezra 6:15 and 7:8.

181. Akavya, "תקופת," p. 332. See also Amorai, Beharav, and Akavya, *Daniyyel, Ezra, Nehemiah*, p. 179.

182. Akavya, "תקופת," p. 331.

183. Loc. cit.

184. Akavya, *Ha-Lu'ah*, p. 63, and "תקופת," p. 331.

185. Akavya, *Ha-Lu'ah*, p. 63, and "תקופת," pp. 331 and 336.

186. Akavya, "תקופת," p. 332. This claim is a very difficult one. Although it is clear from the Bible that Artahshasta reigned some additional time after Nehemiah was called to him in his thirty-second year (Nehemiah 13:6), the exact amount of this additional time is not specified in the Bible, nor can it in any way be derived. Akavya calls these years: עור ג' שנים היוצאות בסתום מן המפורש.

period is what proves that the SO chronology is not the correct one.<sup>187</sup> Because the Jewish count from creation is based on the SO chronology, it is not a correct count.<sup>188</sup> But this does not mean that the Jewish count from creation should not be used. Any counting system may always be used provided its user knows how to relate it to other systems.<sup>189</sup>

## 23 Yehezkel Kaufmann (1956)

Yehezkel Kaufmann<sup>190</sup> refers briefly to the SO chronology. He does not make any attempt to explain what caused its author to give the chronology that he did.

## 24 Simon Schwab (1962)

Simon Schwab<sup>191</sup> posits that the Sages who authored the SO chronology purposely stated an incorrect chronology. They did this to prevent people using their chronology to accurately predict the time of the coming of the Messiah. They did not take this step of stating an incorrect chronology on their own. They had noticed a divine command to Daniel to obscure a part of the Persian period in his book.<sup>192</sup> In

187. Akavya, "תקופה," p. 336.

188. Akavya, "תקופה," p. 337.

189. Loc. cit.

190. Kaufmann, *Toledot ha-Emunah ha-Yisre'elit*, vol. 4, part 1, p. 379, n. 2.

191. Schwab, "Comparative Jewish Chronology," in *Jubilee Volume presented in honor of the eightieth birthday of Rabbi Dr. Joseph Breuer*, pp. 177–97.

A revised version of this article was published in S. Schwab, *Selected Speeches*, pp. 255–81 (1991). In the revised version, Schwab presents the same general suggestion, with modification of certain details. Appended to the revised version is an epilogue (pp. 281–85) in which Schwab raises some difficulties with his suggestion, states that he no longer endorses it, and retracts his adoption of the conventional chronology. What seems to trouble him the most is that accepting the conventional chronology of the Persian period poses a challenge to the accuracy of the accepted count from creation. This count, he writes, is "sacred territory which only fools do not fear to tread upon."

192. They had noticed this command in the instruction to Daniel at Daniel 12:4: קץ עת קץ ואחרי כן יסגור ספר עד זמן סוף ("But you, Daniel, obscure the matters, and seal the book, until the time of the end").

accordance with this command, they decided to obscure and eliminate the same part of the Persian period from their own chronology.<sup>193</sup>

Schwab believes that his suggestion helps explain the introduction into Judaism of MS, a non-Jewish method of counting, by the Sages of the late 4th century BCE. Schwab claims that the introduction of this new method of counting was part of this same scheme to obscure the chronology of the prior period.<sup>194</sup> Schwab also seems to believe that the

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Schwab also finds a numerical allusion to his theory that the true chronology of the Second Temple period was hidden by Daniel. He notes that the *gematria* of סוד דניאל (Daniel's secret) is 165 and claims that this is exactly the number of years by which the SO chronology differs from the conventional chronology. (But the discrepancy between the chronologies regarding the length of the Second Temple period is more closely approximated at 169 years. See Part I.)

193. In the original article, he theorizes that the years that were eliminated were 165 in number and ran from 516–351 BCE. In the revised version, he theorizes that the years that were eliminated were 168 in number and ran from 481–313 BCE. (In the revised version, due to the new focus on the number 168, he no longer includes the *gematria* described in the note above.)

194. From this argument that Schwab makes, it seems that he believes that the purposely incorrect chronology was authored by the Sages of the late 4th century BCE. But from other arguments he makes and from other passages in his response (see, e.g., the passage quoted in the beginning of the note immediately below), it seems that he believes that the purposely incorrect chronology was authored by the Sages of around the Tannaitic period.

If his suggestion is that the chronology was authored by the Sages of the late 4th century BCE, one difficulty with it is how the Sages of this period would have been able to suddenly claim that the period of Persian dominion spanned only 34 years, when the elder generation of Jews at the time would have known that this was not the case. The introduction of MS would not have suddenly obliterated the memory of a protracted period of Persian dominion from the minds of the elder generation.

If his suggestion is that the chronology was authored by the Sages of around the Tannaitic period, we should point out that there is no evidence in SO to suggest that preventing messianic calculations was a concern of this work. Also, we are not aware of any evidence in classical rabbinic literature linking R. Yose with a concern for preventing messianic calculations. (But compare Zohar, Va-Yera, 118a.) Of course, it is theoretically possible that one of the causes of the incorrect chronology was a desire on the part of the Tannaitic Sages to prevent



Sages who authored the SO chronology had an accurate knowledge of the chronology of the Persian period, notwithstanding the chronology that they stated.<sup>195</sup>

Schwab also discusses some of the earlier responses to the discrepancy by Orthodox writers and argues that they are all unsatisfactory. He also points out the diversity of views among the traditional biblical commentators regarding the chronology of the Persian kings. He also writes that there is no doubt that, according to the literal meaning of Ezra 6:14, the three kings mentioned there are separate Persian kings. The rabbinic statements that equate these kings<sup>196</sup> should be understood as *drash* only. He argues that it was only the "post-Talmudic calendar makers" who first considered the rabbinic statements that equate these kings to be an authentic basis for chronology.<sup>197</sup> He also points out that if the

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accurate messianic calculations. But there is no reason to seriously consider such a suggestion when other far less speculative suggestions are available; namely, that the causes of the incorrect chronology were the insufficient sources regarding the Persian period that were in front of the Tannaitic Sages and the desire of these Sages to relate their chronology to Daniel 9:24. See Part IV.

195. He writes that the Sages who authored the chronology "obviously [had] a thorough knowledge of the entire history of the Second Commonwealth." Schwab, *op. cit.*, p. 189 (1962 article) and p. 269 (1991 article).

It should be pointed out that anyone in category B who believes that the author of the SO chronology had an accurate knowledge of the chronology of the Persian period must answer not only the questions of where the author would have obtained such an accurate knowledge and what would have motivated him to shorten the period, but also the question of what would have caused the author to place Ahashverosh in a different position than his true position. Because Ahashverosh is identical with Xerxes (see App. B, n. 17, and Appendix C), the true position of Ahashverosh is immediately *after* the Daryavesh in whose reign the Temple was rebuilt. The SO chronology, on the other hand, places Ahashverosh immediately *before* this Daryavesh. Schwab attempts to respond to this question (without discussing it) by claiming that Ahashverosh is to be identified with Cambyzes. But the identification of Ahashverosh and Cambyzes cannot be maintained. See App. B, n. 17.

196. See Rosh ha-Shanah 3b, and SO, passage 3 (App. A).

197. But this is incorrect. Both SO and the Talmud consider the equating of Daryavesh and Artahshasta to be an authentic basis for chronology. See, e.g., the statement in SO (chap. 29, p. 434) that Ezra came to the land of Israel in the

conventional chronology of the Second Temple and Persian periods is correct, the Jewish count from creation must be adjusted by 165 years and the true year from creation is much closer to the end of the 6th millennium.

Finally, he suggests how some of the statements in SO can now be understood in a manner consistent with the conventional chronology. For example, the 420-year tradition can now be understood in a manner consistent with the conventional chronology if understood as a tradition of the number of years of the Second Temple starting from when the walls of Jerusalem were consecrated by Ezra and Nehemiah in 351 BCE.<sup>198</sup>

## 25 Issachar Jacobson (1964)

Issachar Jacobson<sup>199</sup> adopts the conventional chronology, mentions the SO chronology, and refers his readers to the response of Schwab.<sup>200</sup>

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year after the sixth year of Daryavesh, the statement of R. Ashi at Arakhin 13a, and the statement of R. Yosef at Rosh ha-Shanah 3b. Also, SO's statement that the period of Persian dominion spanned 34 years almost certainly assumes the equating of Daryavesh and Artahshasta.

It is also incorrect to refer to the calendar makers as "post-Talmudic." The present count from creation scheme seems to have already been in some use during the Amoraic period. See *Avodah Zarah* 9b. (And if we assume, as Schwab does, that the count from creation scheme accepts the equating of Daryavesh and Artahshasta as an authentic basis for chronology, then the Amoraim who adopted this scheme can also be presumed to have accepted the equating of Daryavesh and Artahshasta as an authentic basis for chronology.)

198. Schwab makes this suggestion in his original article, in which he assumes that Ezra and Nehemiah date to the reign of Artaxerxes III. In his revised version, he moves Ezra and Nehemiah back to the reign of Artaxerxes I, but claims that 351 BCE may have been the year Simon the Just completed his restoration of the Temple. The 420-year tradition could then be understood as a count from that event.

199. Jacobson, *Netiv Binah*, vol. 1, p. 269. 1964 is the year the second edition of this work was published. I have not seen the first edition.

200. That Jacobson adopts the conventional chronology also appears from his *Hazon ha-Mikra*, p. 252, in which he refers to a papyrus from Elephantine and accepts the scholarly opinion that this papyrus dates from between 515–495 BCE.

## 26 Hayyim Shvilly (1964)

Hayyim Shvilly<sup>201</sup> writes that the view that the Second Temple period spanned 420 years arose due to an erroneous interpretation of the "70 weeks" of Daniel 9:24. He reinterprets numerous passages in the book of Daniel in light of the conventional chronology and makes messianic predictions based on his new interpretations and calculations.

## 27 Elias Bickerman (1968)

Elias Bickerman<sup>202</sup> briefly mentions the 52-year tradition in the context of a discussion of erroneous chronologies from ancient times. He notes that the lack of chronological certainty in ancient times also made it possible for the Sassanids, in their traditions, to have greatly reduced the length of the period between the rule of Alexander and Sassanid rule.

## 28 Aryeh Neuman (1969)

Aryeh Neuman<sup>203</sup> believes that an effort should be made to see if R. Yose's statements can be understood in a manner other than their simple meaning.<sup>204</sup> He also argues that it is important for Orthodox educators to deal with these types of discrepancies. Ignoring them will only result in students' discovering the discrepancies later, and coming to disrespect the statements of the Sages.

201. Shvilly, *Heshbonot ha-Ge'ullah*, p. 24. See also *ibid.*, p. 11.

Note that in his earlier work, *Hazon ha-Hayyim*, Shvilly had reiterated the suggestions of Z. Jawitz (C-3) and adopted the view that SO assigned 250 years to the Persian period. He has thus also been included as response C-10.

202. Bickerman, *Chronology of the Ancient World*, p. 89. For more on the view of Bickerman, see response B-19.

203. Neuman, "החינוך לאמונה ולמדע," *Shema'atin* 5, (1969), nn. 21–22, pp. 88–90.

204. Because he never suggests any other meaning, he is included in category B. But he does praise the effort at reinterpretation made by Jawitz (C-3), without reiterating the specifics of Jawitz' suggestions.

He also quotes a responsum of one of the Geonim,<sup>205</sup> who writes that Jews loyal to rabbinic tradition should not feel themselves bound by the Sages' medical statements and should check them with expert doctors before relying on them. This seems to be Newman's view of the approach to be taken to the Sages' historical statements as well.

## 29 Judah Rosenthal (1972)

Judah Rosenthal<sup>206</sup> refers briefly to the SO chronology, calling it a "confusion."

## 30 Benny Isaacson (1972)

Benny Isaacson<sup>207</sup> seems to believe that the author of SO was bound by a prior rabbinic tradition to assign 420 years to the Second Temple period. This rabbinic tradition was derived by the subtraction of the 70 exilic years from the 490 years of Daniel 9:24. After the author assigned a total of 386 years to the periods of Greek, Hasmonean, and Roman dominion, he was left with only 34 years to assign to the period of Persian dominion.

Isaacson refers to attempts by two scholars<sup>208</sup> to reinterpret the 34-year tradition in a manner consistent with the conventional chronology. He criticizes their specific attempts and such attempts in general. He writes that the ancient rabbinic chronographers did not possess the scientific and archaeological methods that enable modern scholars to arrive at far more accurate conclusions, and that the interest of the ancient rabbinic chronographers was not so much academic as religious. Tradition had to be upheld at all costs, especially in the face of dissident sectarians. He does not elaborate as to what dissident sectarians the author of SO may have been responding to.

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205. This responsum is published in B.M. Lewin's *Otzar ha-Geonim*, vol. 10 (Tractate Gittin), p. 152. Newman states that the author of this responsum is Sherira Gaon. (Lewin had not noted the name of its author.)

206. Rosenthal, "Seder Olam," *EJ*, vol. 14, p. 1092.

207. Isaacson, "Chronology," *EJ*, vol. 16, p. 1265.

208. Englander (C-6) and J. Lauterbach (C-9).

### 31 Mordechai Breuer (1973)

Mordechai Breuer<sup>209</sup> believes that the SO chronology was not meant to be taken literally or understood as a statement of historical fact. He argues that the Sages were not trying to supply historical and chronological data, and that their statements were often meant only symbolically and have a deeper meaning. He notes that the Sages' geographical and cosmological statements are often not taken literally but looked at for their deeper meaning, and argues that the Sages' chronological statements should be treated the same way.<sup>210</sup>

He refers to some rabbinic authorities who, in other contexts, did not understand the Sages' historical statements in their literal sense and looked to their deeper meaning.<sup>211</sup> He cites many rabbinic figures and Orthodox scholars from the early 20th century who accepted the conventional chronology.<sup>212</sup> He argues that accepting the conventional chronology is not inconsistent with the doctrine of *אמונת חכמים* (faith in the pronouncements of the Sages) or with the observance of time-dependent commandments. It is not inconsistent with the former because the chronological statements in SO were not meant to be taken literally. It is not inconsistent with the latter because, in the sphere of *halakha* and the observance of time-dependent commandments, Jews loyal to rabbinic

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209. Breuer, "הוראת ההיסטוריה ואמונת חכמים," *Shema'atin* 10, (1973), nn. 36–37, pp. 52–62.

210. The problem with the approach suggested by Breuer is that SO is a work that seems to have been intended to fix the Jewish chronological framework for future generations. The only types of statements that would likely have been chosen for inclusion in it (whether statements authored by the author of SO or statements collected by him) were statements that *were* meant to be taken literally and understood as statements of historical fact.

211. The authorities he refers to are Abraham Ibn Daud, Nahmanides, and Judah Loew. Breuer claims that had Loew (A-2) known of all the evidence that refutes the SO chronology, Loew would have taken the position that the SO chronology was not meant to be taken literally.

212. E.g., Heymann Kotték (DIII-1), Kalman Kahana (DIII-3), Isaac Halevy (DIII-5), Ahron Marcus (B-14), Philip Biberfeld (B-17), Simon Schwab (B-24), and Jonas Bondi (C-7).

tradition will always remain bound by the calendrical calculations established by the Amoraim and Geonim.<sup>213</sup>

Despite Breuer's arguing that the chronological statements in SO were meant only symbolically and have a deeper meaning, he never suggests what this symbolic or deeper meaning is.<sup>214</sup>

### 32 Elihu Schatz (1973)

Elihu Schatz<sup>215</sup> writes that the view that the Second Temple period spanned 420 years was probably derived by subtracting the 70 exilic years from the 490 years of Daniel 9:24. He also suggests that the author of the SO chronology mistakenly equated Darius I with Darius III. He also writes that the 52-year tradition may be explainable on the assumption that the author had an accurate knowledge of the length of the period from Cyrus until the last year of Darius I (538–486 BCE), but thought Darius I to be the last Persian king.<sup>216</sup>

### 33 Ben Zion Wacholder (1973)

Ben Zion Wacholder<sup>217</sup> refers to R. Yose's statement that the period from the destruction of the First Temple until the destruction of the Second Temple spanned 490 years and describes it as a "midrashic exegesis," and as "hermeneutics of Daniel 9:24." He also writes<sup>218</sup> that SO

213. Breuer cites the Talmudic declaration (Rosh ha-Shanah 25a): אַתָּם אֶפְּלוּ שׁוֹגְגִין אַתָּם אֶפְּלוּ מְזִידִין אַתָּם אֶפְּלוּ מוֹשְׁעִין (you may fix the festivals even if you err inadvertently, even if you err deliberately, and even if you are misled).

214. He is therefore included in category B and not category C.

215. Schatz, *Proof of the Accuracy of the Bible*, pp. 93–95. See also his *Daniyyel ve-Nevu'ato*, pp. 18–19.

216. But SO has a different view of the period from Cyrus to Darius I than does the conventional chronology. SO views these 52 years as comprising the reigns of Daryavesh (Medean), Koresh, Ahashverosh, and Daryavesh. The conventional chronology views these 52 years as comprising the reigns of Cyrus, Cambyses, Bardiya, and Darius I.

217. Wacholder, "The Calendar of Sabbatical Cycles During the Second Temple and the Early Rabbinic Period," *HUCA* 44, (1973), pp. 173–174.

218. Wacholder, *Essays on Jewish Chronology and Chronography*, p. viii.

"grotesquely" dates the building of the Second Temple to 34 years before the Seleucid era.<sup>219</sup>

### 34 Moses Herr (1977)

Moses Herr<sup>220</sup> writes that the author of the SO chronology only knew of the few Persian kings mentioned in the Bible. He mentions Herodotus, Berosus, Xenophon, and Josephus and rejects the notion that the Sages had any of their works or any nonbiblical sources for the Persian period. He also tells his readers that the suggestions of Bornstein are sensible, without repeating them. Finally, he points out that a similar occurrence of a great reduction of the length of a period is found in the chronology of the Sassanids. The Sassanids, in their chronology, greatly reduced the length of the period between the beginning of Seleucid rule and their rule.<sup>221</sup>

### 35 Jay Braverman (1978)

Jay Braverman<sup>222</sup> writes, in the name of Loeb, that the tradition that the Second Temple period spanned 420 years began with R. Yose, who forced his chronology to agree with Daniel 9:24–27.

219. Wacholder's view that the *terminus ad quem* of SO's 34 years is the commencement of MS is contrary to Avodah Zarah 10a and contrary to the view of almost all scholars and rabbinic authorities.

220. Herr, "תפיסת ההיסטוריה אצל חז"ל," *Divrei ha-Kongres ha-Olami ha-Shishi le-Madda'ei ha-Yahadut* 3, (1977), p. 135, n. 31.

221. For details, see the sources cited by H. Mantel, in his *Anshei Knesset ha-Gedolah*, p. 302, n. 11.

222. Braverman, *Jerome's Commentary On Daniel*, p. 108, n. 10. Braverman's work also includes a discussion of a little-known Jewish choronological view referred to in Jerome, which interprets the "seventy weeks" of Daniel 9:24–27 differently from the way these weeks are interpreted in SO. For more than this view, see the additional note at the end of App. D.

### 36 Hayyim Mantel (1983)

Hayyim Mantel<sup>223</sup> writes that the SO chronology arose when the Persian period came to be forgotten and the Jews began to equate different Persian kings. He notes that Josephus also seems to have made errors of identification regarding the Persian kings, placing Ezra and Nehemiah in the reign of Xerxes, instead of in the reign of Artaxerxes.<sup>224</sup> Mantel additionally claims that the Sassanids, in their chronologies, also reduced the length of the Persian (Achaemenid) period.

### 37 Samuel Kedar (1984)

Samuel Kedar<sup>225</sup> makes the same suggestion as Schwab.<sup>226</sup> He writes that the Sages purposely stated an incorrect chronology in order to prevent people from using their chronology to accurately predict the time of the coming of the Messiah. In certain instructions that were given to Daniel,<sup>227</sup> the Sages saw a divine command to obscure a part of the Persian period.

He seems to believe that the SO chronology was authored around the Tannaitic period.<sup>228</sup> He also seems to believe that the Sages who authored the chronology had an accurate knowledge of the chronology of

223. Mantel, *Anshei Knesset ha-Gedolah*, pp. 122 and 302.

224. See Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, XI, paras. 120–83. Mantel also claims that underlying Josephus' chronology of the Persian period is an erroneous equating of Darius II with Darius III.

225. Kedar, "החשם"ד - האמנם ל", *Bikkurim*, Shevat 1984, pp. 93–99.

226. Kedar does not refer to Schwab, but the similarities between Kedar's response and Schwab's response are striking. Kedar even includes the same *gematria* as Schwab (סוד דינאל equals 165).

227. See the instruction given to Daniel quoted at n. 192.

228. He describes the authors of the SO chronology as having lived approximately 500 years after the Persian period. (But he also mentions the use of MS in connection with the plan to obscure the Persian period, and it could be inferred from this that he believes that the SO chronology was authored around the time of the introduction of MS.)



the Persian period, notwithstanding the chronology that they stated.<sup>229</sup> He concludes that because the conventional chronology of the Second Temple and Persian periods is correct, the Jewish count from creation must be adjusted and the true year from creation is much closer to the end of the 6th millenium.

### 38 Joseph Tabori (1984)

Joseph Tabori<sup>230</sup> suggests that the authors of the SO chronology operated under the erroneous assumption that the outline of the entire Persian period was reflected in the Bible. This led him to believe that the last Persian king mentioned in the Bible was the same as the one defeated by Alexander.

He also suggests that the author derived the view that the Persian period spanned the reigns of only three Persian kings from Daniel 11:2, and perhaps also from Daniel 7:5.<sup>231</sup> Tabori believes that the author also

229. He writes: אין בפנינו לא טעות ולא שיכחה אלא הסתרה מכוונת (we do not have before us [a case of] error or forgetting but of purposeful hiding).

Note that Kedar does not discuss the identity of Ahashverosh and nowhere deals with question regarding the placement of Ahashverosh raised at n. 195.

230. Tabori, "התקופה הפרסית בעיני חז"ל," *Millet* 2, (1984), pp. 65–77.

231. The problem with suggesting that the author derived the view that the Persian period spanned the reigns of three Persian kings from Daniel 11:2 is that the verse does not mandate this conclusion. The verse could also be interpreted to be indicating that the Persian period spanned the reigns of four, or perhaps five, Persian kings. See App. A, n. 2.

The problem with suggesting that the author derived the view that the Persian period spanned the reigns of three Persian kings from Daniel 7:5 ("And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear . . . and it had three ribs in its mouth . . .") is that there is nothing in this verse that indicates that the three ribs (חלה עלעין) symbolize kings. We even have evidence that rabbinic tradition understood the חלה עלעין as symbolizing something else entirely. See *Kiddushin* 72a, and *Yalkut Daniel*, section 1064. (But one can find rabbinic commentators who interpret the חלה עלעין to symbolize the three Persian kings. See, e.g., the commentaries of Rashi and Metzudat David to Daniel 7:5.) Note also that there is nothing in Daniel 7:5 that indicates that the beast referred to symbolizes the Persian empire. But practically all Amoraic sources view this beast as symbolizing either the Persian empire, the Medean empire, or both empires

had a firm tradition that the length of the period from the beginning of the Greek period until the end of the Second Temple period was 386 years. After subtracting these 386 years from the 420 years allocated by Jewish tradition to the entire Second Temple period, he was left with only 34 years to assign to the period of Persian dominion. Tabori believes that the 420-year tradition was probably derived by subtraction of the 70 exilic years from the 490 years of Daniel 9:24.

Regarding the 52-year figure for the length of the Persian period, Tabori believes that such a figure could have been derived from the data in the Bible, after the initial determination that the period of Persian dominion spanned 34 years was made. Alternatively, 52 years may have been assigned to the Persian period to parallel the 52 years that had been assigned to the period from the destruction of the First Temple until the return under Koresh, 52 years in which "no man passed through Judah."<sup>232</sup>

Tabori also makes the suggestion that the chronology of the Sages may have been influenced by historiosophic considerations. The Sages may have believed that Persian rule and culture had little lasting influence on the Jewish people and may have felt it proper from a historiosophic perspective to describe the Persian period as a short one.

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together. See, e.g., Kiddushin 72a, Genesis Rabbah 99:2, and Esther Rabbah 10:13. (For additional references, see J. Braverman, *Jerome's Commentary On Daniel*, pp. 86–87. Note that many of the sources that state that the beast symbolizes the "Medean" empire should probably be understood as being of the view that the beast symbolizes the "Medeo-Persian" empire.)

232. See SO, chap. 27, p. 418 (חמשים ושנים שנה לא עבר איש ביהודה), and chap. 29, p. 433.

Note, however, that SO's 52-year tradition regarding the length of the postdestruction exilic period seems to include the one year of the Medean king Daryavesh as its last year, while SO's 52-year tradition regarding the length of the Persian period seems to include the one year of the Medean king Daryavesh as its first year. The two 52-year periods thus slightly overlap. If the author of the SO chronology was trying to create another 52-year period to parallel the 52-year period from the destruction to the return, he should have assigned 52 years to the Persian period alone, and not 52 years to the total of the Medean and Persian periods.

### 39 Berel Wein (1984)

Berel Wein<sup>233</sup> adopts the conventional chronology and admits that the Jewish way of counting is in error by 166 years. He mentions the suggestion of Schwab and comments that not everybody agrees with him. Wein states that he himself has no answer to the problem and that we will have to wait for Elijah to explain what happened.

### 40 Henry Guggenheimer (1987)

Henry Guggenheimer<sup>234</sup> writes that the author of the SO chronology derived his view that the Second Temple period spanned 420 years by subtracting the 70 exilic years from the 490 years of Daniel 9:24. The author had a tradition regarding the length of time from the Greek period until the destruction of the Second Temple, but had only biblical verses for the prior period.

### 41 Samuel Hakohen (1988)

Samuel Hakohen<sup>235</sup> agrees with the suggestion made by Schwab that the Sages purposely stated an incorrect chronology so as to prevent people from using their chronology to accurately predict the time of the coming of the Messiah. He also repeatedly refers with approval to the statement of Abravanel that the Sages only enumerated those Persian kings whose reigns were of consequence to the Jews and never intended to deny the existence of the others.

He also argues for the more general proposition that the Sages were

233. Wein, lectures of Nov. 28 and Dec. 5, 1984, "The Beginning of the Second Commonwealth" and "The Men of the Great Assembly." (These lectures are published as the first two tapes in the "History I" series.)

For an additional response by Wein, see Add.

234. Guggenheimer, *Seder Olam*, pp. 79 and 83.

235. Hakohen, *Mavo le-Sifrei Shivat Tziyyon ba-Mikra*, pp. 59–79.

(Note also that Hakohen was one of the authors of the *Da'at Mikra* edition of the book of Daniel. Regarding the response to the discrepancy expressed in this work, see n. 361.)

not concerned with history and chronology and made their historical and chronological statements for their own educational purposes. He believes that the doctrine of *אמונת חכמים* requires one to take this into account when attempting to understand the Sages' historical and chronological statements. He claims that the Sages may have viewed it proper, from their perspectives, to make the statement that the period of Persian dominion spanned 34 years, and that this statement was not intended as a statement of a historical fact in the ordinary scientific sense. He also writes that the Talmudic equating of the Persian kings Koresh, Daryavesh, and Artahshasta was only a midrashic one. He believes that the Sages who authored the SO chronology knew the true chronology of the Persian and Second Temple periods,<sup>236</sup> notwithstanding the historical and chronological statements that they made.

He also refers to many rabbinic authorities who viewed Daryavesh and Artahshasta as separate kings or mentioned Cambyses or stated the length of the Second Temple period as other than 420 years. He brings these to show that the chronological statements of the Sages were not viewed by these rabbinic authorities as firm pronouncements with which no disagreement was allowed.

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236. Hakohen, *Mavo le-Sifrei Shivat Tziyyon ba-Mikra*, pp. 68 and 71. It is unclear in precisely which period Hakohen believes the SO chronology was authored. Although Hakohen approves of the thrust of Schwab's suggestion, he never mentions the argument made by Schwab that the scheme was connected with the introduction of MS into Judaism in the late 4th century BCE. When he refers to the authors of the chronology, he usually refers simply to חז"ל.

Note also that, unlike Schwab, Hakohen (op. cit., pp. 73–77) seems to adopt the identification of Ahashverosh with Zerxes. Yet Hakohen never answers the question regarding the placement of Ahashverosh raised at n. 195.

## *Category C: Both the Conventional Chronology and the SO Chronology are Correct*

### Introduction to Category C

The responses in this category believe that the conventional chronology is correct and postulate textual emendations or reinterpretations of one or more<sup>237</sup> of the five passages in SO in which the main elements of the SO chronology are expressed. These emendations or reinterpretations render the passage in agreement with, much closer to, or not inconsistent with the conventional chronology.<sup>238</sup> The five passages in SO in which the main elements of the SO chronology are expressed are the five passages printed in Appendix A.

Many of the responses in this category base their response on the fact that, in some printed editions of SO,<sup>239</sup> passage 4 states that the Medeo-Persian period spanned 250 years, instead of 52 years. It should be pointed out at the outset that there is no support in any manuscripts of SO for this reading.<sup>240</sup> Nor is there support in any manuscripts of SO

237. Many of the responses discuss only one or two of the five passages and ignore the others. None deal with all five of the passages. (Indeed, the problem with all of these responses is that the SO chronology is a clear and consistent one, expressed in many passages in SO. Any emendation or reinterpretation of some of SO's passages does not change the fact that the SO chronology is still expressed in other of SO's passages. See Part IV.)

238. But not all the responses believe that the original correct form or proper understanding of the passage was still known by the time SO itself was composed.

239. The first printed edition (Mantua, 1513), and the many later printed editions based on the Mantua edition.

240. All of the manuscripts collected by Milikowsky assign 52 years to the Medeo-Persian period in passage 4 (except one Genizah fragment, which assigns 12 years). See App. A, n. 6, and see C. Milikowsky, *Seder Olam: A Rabbinic Chronography*, p. 437.

for any of the other emendations suggested by the responses in this category. With regard to the reinterpretations suggested, as will be seen, all are far-removed from the plain sense of the text.<sup>241</sup>

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That the reading in passage 4, which assigned 250 years to the Medeo-Period, was an erroneous one was pointed out long ago by D. Ganz (sixteenth century). See his *Tzemah David*, part I, p. 58.

Additional verification that 52 years is the rabbinic tradition regarding the length of the Medeo-Persian period comes from a tradition in the name of R. Samuel b. Nahman alluding to the length of the Medeo-Persian period. This tradition is found in numerous places in rabbinic literature. According to this tradition (relating to Genesis 28:12), Jacob was shown the angel of Babylon ascending 70 rungs and then climbing down, the angel of Media ascending 52 rungs and then climbing down, the angel of Greece ascending 180 rungs and then climbing down, and the angel of Edom climbing and climbing. In all of the places in which this tradition is recorded, the number of rungs that the angel of Media is described as ascending is 52. (Although the tradition describes an angel of Media, it is obvious from the context that it is the length of the entire Medeo-Persian period that is being alluded to.) This tradition in the name of R. Samuel b. Nahman is recorded at *Leviticus Rabbah* 29:2; *Tanhuma*, Va-Yetze, 2; *Pesikta de-Rab Kahana*, piska 23; and *Yalkut Jeremiah*, section 312. This tradition is also recorded at *Yalkut Va-Yetze*, section 121; *Pirkei De-Rabbi Eliezer*, chap. 35; and *Midrash Tehillim* on Psalm 78:32 (p. 174a). In *Yalkut Va-Yetze*, it is recorded anonymously; in *Pirkei De-Rabbi Eliezer*, it is recorded in the name of R. Levi; and in *Midrash Tehillim*, it is recorded in the name of R. Berakhyah, R. Levi, and R. Simeon ben Yose, in the name of R. Meir.

A statement that the Medeo-Persian period spanned 52 years is also found in *Yalkut Ezra*, section 1068. There is also a passage in *Seder Olam Zuta* that refers to a Medeo-Persian period of 52 years, but there is a question as to the precise meaning of the passage.

241. Each of the suggestions made by the responses in this category can be criticized on many grounds, but we have only included a limited number of criticisms in the notes. For additional material in criticism of these suggestions, see Part IV, pp. 115–117.

## 1 Azariah de Rossi (1574)

Azariah de Rossi<sup>242</sup> suggests that passage 5 was only counting the years of Persian dominion during which the Persian kings ruled in tranquility over the land of Israel, while excluding those years during which these kings were weak and preoccupied with foreign enemies or domestic struggles.<sup>243</sup> He notes that Abravanel had long ago suggested that the Sages never intended to deny that there were more Persian kings than the three they named.

He also suggests that passage 5 was not intended as a statement that the period of Persian dominion spanned only these years. Instead, it was intended as a statement of the number of years of Persian dominion that its author knew for certain, the ones that could be derived explicitly or by approximation from the Bible.<sup>244</sup> The author of the statement knew that the period spanned some additional years but was not making any statement about them, not knowing their exact amount.<sup>245</sup>

De Rossi further suggests that the tradition that the Second Temple period spanned a total of 420 years only arose after passage 5 was misinterpreted.<sup>246</sup>

242. De Rossi, *Me'or Einayim, Imrei Binah*, chap. 40, pp. 326–27. De Rossi was also categorized previously as response B-1.

243. But there is nothing in passage 5 to indicate that its author was only counting the years of Persian dominion during which the Persian kings ruled in tranquility over the land of Israel. The author of passage 5 seems to have intended comprehensive counts when he counted the years of Greek, Hasmonean, and Roman dominion.

244. De Rossi is also of the view that the years of the period of Persian dominion included in the Bible are only those years during which the Persian kings ruled in tranquility over the land of Israel. He thus seems to combine his separate suggestions.

245. But there is nothing in passage 5 to indicate that its author was only counting the years of Persian dominion that he knew for certain.

246. But passage 5 is found in SO in the name of R. Yose and the tradition that the Second Temple period spanned 420 years is found in SO (passage 2) in the name of R. Yose as well. The tradition that the Second Temple period spanned 420 years is also found in another early source, the Tosefta (Zevahim 13:3).

## 2 Anonymous (1894)<sup>247</sup>

Baer Ratner<sup>248</sup> refers to the view of a scholar whom he does not name who suggests that passage 5 originally specified a period of 230 years for the period of Persian dominion. According to this scholar, the original text of this passage specified שלשים ו' (thirty and two hundred), and this became corrupted into שלשים וד' (thirty and four). This scholar observed that some editions of passage 4 specified 250 years as the length of the Medeo-Persian period and saw this as a confirmation of his suggestion.<sup>249</sup>

## 3 Ze'ev Jawitz (1895)

Ze'ev Jawitz<sup>250</sup> states that passage 4 assigns 250 years to the Medeo-Persian period, and believes that the passage, presented anonymously in SO, reflects the majority rabbinic view.<sup>251</sup>

With regard to passage 5, stated in SO in the name of R. Yose, Jawitz observes that assigning only 34 years to the period of Persian dominion is inconsistent with verses in the books of Nehemiah and Chronicles and inconsistent with all the other ancient sources. He states that anyone who investigates this period with a clear mind cannot deny the fact that this period was a long one.

Jawitz first suggests that passage 5 simply represents the individual erroneous view of R. Yose. He postulates that this view became normative

247. We have not been able to determine the identity of this scholar and have accordingly assigned the year 1894 to this response, since Ratner's reference to this scholar was published in that year.

248. Ratner, *Seder Olam Rabbah*, vol. 1, p. 113. Ratner himself was categorized previously as response B-10.

249. Ratner does not tell us how (if at all) this scholar attempted to deal with passages 1, 2, and 3.

250. Jawitz, *Toledot Yisrael*, vol. 3, *Motza Davar* 15, pp. 31–32.

251. Jawitz does not mention the version of this passage that assigns 52 years to the Medeo-Persian period. He also does not mention that passages 1 and 3 are also presented anonymously in SO, and these passages express the view that the Persian period spanned the reigns of only three Persian kings.



and was used in calculating the years from creation because it alone was mentioned in the Talmud.<sup>252</sup>

He later suggests that passage 5 originally read מלכות פרס לפני הבית (the kingdom of Persia, *before* the time of the Temple, existed thirty-four years). If this was R. Yose's statement, it would be very close to the conventional chronology.<sup>253</sup> In this suggestion, the assumption is that R. Yose never makes any statement regarding the length of the Persian period during the time of the Temple, even though he makes statements regarding the lengths of all the surrounding periods. Jawitz suggests that R. Yose may not have received a clear tradition from his teachers regarding the length of this period. Even though he may have had historical chronicles for the period, he may not have been willing to make a statement to his students based on these alone. The majority of the Sages, however, were willing to make a statement about the length of the entire Medeo-Persian period. Either they received a tradition from their teachers regarding its length, or they were willing to make a statement based on the historical chronicles alone.

#### 4 Samuel Krauss (1898)

Samuel Krauss<sup>254</sup> believes that passage 4 originally specified a period of 250 years, was a tradition about the length of the Persian period alone,<sup>255</sup> and was the anonymous majority rabbinic tradition. He claims

252. See Avodah Zarah 9a. But it seems from other passages in the Talmud that R. Yose's view was the accepted view even in Amoraic times. See Part IV, n. 10.

253. Jawitz states that the Persian period commenced around 550 BCE, after Cyrus defeated the Lydians, and that R. Yose was counting from this time. But it seems unlikely that R. Yose would have been counting from an event that had no consequence for the Jews in the land of Israel, who remained subject to Babylonian rule until 539 BCE.

The more fundamental objection to Jawitz' suggested reading of לפני is that passage 2, also stated in the name of R. Yose, assigns 420 years to the Second Temple period. Jawitz does not refer to passage 2 in his discussion.

254. Krauss, "The Great Synod," *JQR* 10, (O.S.) (1898), pp. 355–56 and pp. 725–26.

255. And not the length of the Medeo-Persian period.

that נ"ב (52) is a common figure for spans of time in the Talmud and that this is what caused it to be copied into passage 4 in place of the original ר"ן (250).

Krauss then suggests a drastic reinterpretation of passage 5.<sup>256</sup> He claims that underlying this statement were the beliefs of R. Yose that the Jews began to date their documents to the Persian era in 550 BCE and that they continued to do so until 300 BCE, over 30 years into the Greek era.<sup>257</sup> Krauss claims that all R. Yose meant was that the practice of counting from year 1 of the Persian era, which continued approximately 34 years too long, was what caused the anonymous tradition to overstate the length of the Persian period by this same amount.<sup>258</sup>

Krauss also mentions a suggestion that the 52-year tradition may have been a tradition of the number of years of the Persian period during which the Persian empire flourished.<sup>259</sup>

## 5 Hayyim Hirschensohn (1908)

Hayyim Hirschensohn<sup>260</sup> believes that it is impossible for the Sages to have made the error of attributing only 34 years to a period which lasted 189 years and suggests that the original rabbinic tradition was that the period of Persian dominion spanned 134 years.<sup>261</sup> He notes that all three other statements in passage 5 contain a number beginning with מאה

256. Krauss writes that "it is impossible to assume that a man who was so punctilious about the years, should have assigned thirty-four years instead of one hundred and fifty to the Persian dominion during the temple." (Krauss appears to make his own error in computation here.)

257. Greek rule over the land of Israel commenced in 332 BCE.

258. Krauss acknowledges that his reinterpretation of passage 5 is a drastic one, and he never explains how he would attempt to deal with passages 1, 2, and 3.

259. Krauss attributes this suggestion to Wolf Einhorn, citing Einhorn's commentary to Leviticus Rabbah 29:2 (פירוש מהר"ו), in *Midrash Rabbah*, vol. 2, p. 83). But, although Einhorn does use the phrase בחוקף מלכותה there in connection with the 52-year tradition, there is nothing to indicate that Einhorn was aware of the discrepancy and intending to address it when he used the phrase.

260. Hirschensohn, *Sefer Yamim mi-Kedem*, pp. 226–30 and 233–45.

261. *Ibid.*, pp. 226–27.

(one hundred) and theorizes that the שלשים וארבע (thirty-four) was also once preceded by מאה.

To explain the fact that SO elsewhere contains a statement that the total years of the Second Temple period were 420, he postulates that passage 5 was an ancient tradition and was already in its defective form by the time it reached the author of SO.<sup>262</sup>

Hirschensohn realizes that even his hypothesized original rabbinic chronology diverges from the conventional chronology by 55 years, and he is willing to admit that the conventional chronology is the correct one.<sup>263</sup> He does observe that some of the ancient sources quoted by de Rossi (B-1) seemed to view the Persian period as slightly shorter than the Greek historians did, and suggests that the rabbinic view may have been based on these sources and was not a lone view.<sup>264</sup>

Based on his conclusion that the chronology of the Persian period derived from the Greek historians is the correct one, Hirschensohn publishes a table giving new dates from creation.<sup>265</sup> To justify his right to disagree with the SO chronology and present his new reckonings, he provides his readers with a discussion of the value of having different opinions, claiming that all true sciences are full of disagreements.<sup>266</sup> He also stresses the importance of searching for truth, especially where *halakhah le-ma'aseh* is not involved.<sup>267</sup> He notes that many Talmudists disagreed with SO on aspects of its chronology and according to them, the reckoning from creation would also be different.<sup>268</sup> Finally, he claims that the reason the Sages chose to follow the SO chronology was not

262. Ibid., pp. 227 and 230. He also, *ibid.*, pp. 226–27, rejects the suggestion that passage 5 was only intended as a chronology based on the explication of verses and was never intended to be a historical chronology. Passage 5, he believes, originated prior to the composition of SO and cannot be understood in the context of other SO passages that might exhibit this characteristic. Passage 5, moreover, is not linked to any verses.

263. Ibid., p. 227 and pp. 239–40.

264. Ibid., pp. 227–29.

265. Ibid., App., pp. 27–37. Hirschensohn's new dates from creation also incorporate corrections that he made regarding other periods.

266. Ibid., pp. 233–34.

267. Ibid., p. 235.

268. Ibid., p. 241.

because they were sure it was the correct one. They chose to follow it because, in this area filled with uncertainty, it was necessary for them to choose one view to follow consistently to obtain a total reckoning.<sup>269</sup>

## 6 Henry Englander (1919)

Henry Englander<sup>270</sup> suggests that the 52-year tradition may originally have been a tradition of the number of years that the Persians ruled over the land of Israel *after* the Jews there had become a true religious community. In Englander's view, the Jews in the land of Israel did not become a true religious community until new laws were promulgated in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, in approximately the 20th year of Artaxerxes II.<sup>271</sup>

Englander goes on to hypothesize that the laws promulgated at that time underwent revision and that the final codification and acceptance of the new laws did not take place until after Nehemiah's second visit, which took place sometime after the 32nd year of Artaxerxes II. Englander then suggests that the 34-year tradition may originally have been a tradition of the number of years that the Persians ruled over the Jews in the land of

269. Ibid., pp. 244–45.

270. Englander, "Problems of Chronology in the Persian Period," *Journal of Jewish Lore and Philosophy* 1, (1919), pp. 100–03.

271. According to the conventional chronology, the 20th year of Artaxerxes was approximately 384 BCE. (Englander is making the assumption that the Artaxerxes with whom Ezra and Nehemiah dealt was Artaxerxes II, but this is not necessarily the case.)

But the way the 52-year tradition is expressed in SO makes it seem to be a count of the entire period of Medeo-Persian rule over Israel. Also, because it is a count of a *Medeo*-Persian period, it would at least seem to be counting a part of the Persian period that is contiguous with the Medean period. Also, the Persian kings mentioned in SO are Koresh, Ahashverosh, and Daryavesh, and it is reasonable to presume that the years of the Persian period counted are those years of kings that SO mentions, and not some other years. Most importantly, we see from passage 2 that SO views the entire period from the destruction of the First Temple to the destruction of the Second Temple as spanning only 490 years, and from passages 1 and 3 that SO views the entire Persian period as spanning the reigns of only three Persian kings.

Israel from the time when the laws were finally codified and accepted until the Greek period. Englander believes that the author of this tradition was of the view that the Jews in the land of Israel did not become a true religious community until this codification and acceptance.<sup>272</sup>

## 7 Jonas Bondi (1925)

Jonas Bondi<sup>273</sup> suggests that the שלשים וארבע (thirty-four) found in passage 5 originally read שלש וארבעים (forty-three) and that the passage only intends to number the years of the period of Persian dominion from when the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt.<sup>274</sup> Bondi believes, based on other evidence, that the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt in 377 BCE.<sup>275</sup>

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272. But the way the 34-year tradition is expressed in SO makes it seem to be a count of the entire period of Persian dominion during the Second Temple period. Also, the Persian kings mentioned in SO are Koresh, Ahashverosh, and Daryavesh, and it is reasonable to presume that whatever years of the Persian period are counted in SO come from the reigns of kings that SO mentions, and not from the reigns of other kings. Most importantly, we see from passage 2 that SO views the entire period from the destruction of the First Temple to the destruction of the Second Temple as spanning only 490 years, and from passages 1 and 3 that SO views the entire Persian period as spanning the reigns of only three Persian kings.

273. Bondi, "Die Perserkönige der Bibel nach Rabbi Jose," *JJLG* 17, (1925), pp. 328–29.

274. But the way the 34-year tradition is expressed in SO, it seems to be a count of the entire period of Persian dominion during the Second Temple period. Also, the Persian kings mentioned in SO are Koresh, Ahashverosh, and Daryavesh. It is reasonable to presume that whatever years of the Persian period are counted in SO come from the reigns of kings that SO mentions, and not from the reigns of other kings. Most importantly, we see from passage 2 that SO views the entire period from the destruction of the First Temple to the destruction of the Second Temple as spanning only 490 years, and from passages 1 and 3 that SO views the entire Persian period as spanning the reigns of only three Persian kings. Also, the 34-year count in passage 5 is consistent with the 52-year count in passage 4 (see Part IV, n. 4). Also, the 34-year count in passage 5 (read in conjunction with the 180-year, 103-year, and 103-year counts in the balance of passage 5) is consistent with the 420-year count in passage 2.

275. Bondi notes that Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities*, XI, para. 179) states that the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt by Nehemiah in the 28th year of Xerxes.

## 8 Jacob Gutkovski (1932)

Jacob Gutkovski<sup>276</sup> essentially reiterates the views of Jawitz. He states that passage 4 assigns 250 years to the Medeo-Persian period and represents the anonymous majority view.<sup>277</sup> He states that passage 5 represents the individual erroneous view of R. Yose, which became the normative one because it alone was mentioned in the Talmud. He states that verses in Nehemiah, Chronicles, and other ancient sources all show that the period of Persian dominion was a long one and contradict R. Yose's view. In a footnote, he refers with approval to Jawitz' other suggestion that בִּפְנֵי in R. Yose's statement was originally לִפְנֵי.

## 9 Jacob Lauterbach (1934)

Jacob Lauterbach<sup>278</sup> suggests that the original reading in passage 4 was ר"ך or ר"כ (220) and that the original reading represented an approximately accurate tradition about the length of the Persian period.<sup>279</sup> He theorizes that the original reading was then corrupted into ר"ן or ר"נ (250). He briefly dismisses the נ"ב (52) reading in a footnote.

He postulates that passage 4 was originally a part of passage 5 and

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Because Josephus confused Xerxes with an Artaxerxes, Bondi concludes that the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt in the 28th year of an Artaxerxes. Bondi claims that the Artaxerxes with whom Nehemiah dealt was Artaxerxes II.

276. Gutkovski, *Korot Am Olam*, pp. 12–13.

277. Like Jawitz, he does not even mention that other editions of SO assign 52 years to this period. He does refer to the response of Ratner (B-10) (who had argued that the correct version of passage 4 assigned 52 years to the Medeo-Persian period). He tells his readers that Ratner's comments and emendations are not compelling, without mentioning them.

278. Lauterbach, "Misunderstood Chronological Statements in the Talmudic Literature," *PAAJR* 5, (1934), pp. 77–81.

279. According to the conventional chronology, the Persian empire was founded in 550 BCE, when the Persians defeated the Medes, and lasted until 332 BCE. (Lauterbach, op. cit., p. 80, writes that the Persian empire was founded with Cyrus' conquest of "Babylon" in 549 BCE. Lauterbach surely intended "Media" instead of "Babylon" here, and, like many other scholars, Lauterbach used 549 BCE, instead of 550 BCE, as the date for Cyrus' conquest.)

that it immediately followed R. Yose's statement that מלכות פרס בפני הבית שלשים וארבעה שנה. He believes that this statement of R. Yose's must be reinterpreted<sup>280</sup> and postulates, like Jawitz, that it must have been a statement of the years of the Persian period *before* the Second Temple was built. Either this was the meaning of בפני here, or what we have today is a copyists' error for the original לפני.

In Lauterbach's reconstruction, passage 5 thus originally contained a statement about the length of the Persian period before the Temple (34 years) followed by a statement of the length of the entire Persian period (220 years).<sup>281</sup> Lauterbach hypothesizes that the first statement was then misunderstood, and the second statement came to be considered out of place.<sup>282</sup> This caused it to be moved to an earlier place in SO.<sup>283</sup>

Lauterbach does observe that the Amoraim repeatedly state that the total years of the Second Temple period were 420, and thus certainly understood R. Yose's statement about a 34-year period to be a statement about the period of Persian dominion *during* the Second Temple. But Lauterbach claims that the Amoraim misunderstood the original Tannaitic statement.<sup>284</sup>

280. He believes that we have no right to impute to R. Yose, the outstanding Jewish historian of his time, "gross ignorance of historical facts and inaccuracy in computing chronological data."

281. In Lauterbach's view, both of these statements commence their count from the founding of the Persian empire, when the Persians defeated the Medes. But that these statements would commence their count from an event that had no consequence for the land of Israel seems unlikely. The Jews in the land of Israel remained subject to Babylonian rule until 539 BCE.

282. It was preceded by a statement that appeared to be about the length of the period of Persian dominion *during* the Second Temple and followed by three other statements that also appeared to be statements about the lengths of periods of dominion *during* the Second Temple.

283. Lauterbach also implies that the movement of this passage to an earlier section is what caused it to be transformed into a statement of the length of the Medeo-Persian period, when, in its original form, it was only a statement of the length of the Persian period.

284. Lauterbach makes no mention of the fact that the both the Tosefta (Zevahim 13:3) and SO (passage 2, in the name of R. Yose) also state that the Second Temple period spanned only 420 years. Most of the material in both of these works is generally assumed to date to the Tannaitic period. Lauterbach also makes no mention of passages 1 and 3, which express the view that the Persian period spanned the reigns of only three Persian kings.

## 10 Hayyim Shvilly (1935)

Hayyim Shvilly<sup>285</sup> reiterates Jawitz' suggestions.<sup>286</sup> He also refers with approval to the suggestion that passage 5 originally assigned 134 years to the period of Persian dominion.<sup>287</sup>

He refers to the view that the Second Temple period spanned 420 years and states that this view arose due to an erroneous interpretation of the "seventy weeks" of Daniel.<sup>288</sup> He entitles a section of his work הוכחות שבית שני עמד הרבה יותר מח"ך שנה ("Proofs that the Second Temple Stood Much Longer than 420 Years"),<sup>289</sup> and includes evidence from a variety of sources (Philo, Aramaic papyri from Elephantine, and the books of Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah) that the period of Persian dominion spanned more than 34 years. He writes that anyone who is not just a stubborn person should be convinced of this.

## 11 Abraham Akavya (1953)

Abraham Akavya<sup>290</sup> suggests that R. Yose was not trying to enumerate all the years of the Persian period that he knew about but only those years

285. Shvilly, *Hazon ha-Hayyim*, pp. 12 and 39–41. Shvilly was categorized previously as response B-26, based on the response reflected in his later work *Heshbonot ha-Ge'ullah*.

286. But, in one place, when Shvilly states the text of passage 4, he subtly changes ומדי (and Medea) to עמדה (stood), so the passage reads: מלכות פרס עמדה מאתים וחמשים שנה (the kingdom of Persia stood 250 years).

Like Jawitz, Shvilly does not even mention the version of passage 4 that specifies a period of 52 years.

287. See response C-5.

288. Shvilly, *Hazon ha-Hayyim*, p. 42.

289. *Ibid.*, pp. 12–15.

290. Akavya, *Ha-Lu'ah ve-Shimushe be-Kronologiyah*, pp. 152–53, and "תקופת הבית השני," *Tarbitz* 37, (1968), p. 336. See also his *Sidrei Zemanim be-Divrei Yemei Yisrael*, p. 227, and I. Amorai, Z. Beharav, and A. Akavya, *Daniyyel, Ezra, Nehemiah*, p. 179.

Note that Akavya was categorized previously as response B-22, and his writings contain many statements, some of which contradict the statements included here.



that are included, either expressly or by implication, in the Bible.<sup>291</sup> The proper way to interpret the passages in SO, he argues, is as follows<sup>292</sup>:

כל שני מלכי פרס (הנוכחות במקרא) נ"ב שנה.  
 (משני) מלכות פרס בפני הבית (נמנו במקרא רק) ל"ד שנה.  
 ואי אחת מוצא (במקרא) לפרס מלכים אלא שלשה...

All the years of the kings of Persia (that are mentioned in the Bible) are 52 years.

(Of the years of) the kingdom of Persia during the time of the Temple, (mentioned in the Bible are only) 34 years.

And you find for Persia (in the Bible) only three kings.<sup>293</sup>

In support of his claim that R. Yose never believed that the years he enumerated were the only ones, Akavya notes that R. Yose did not sum up all the years he enumerated and include the date from creation in SO.<sup>294</sup> R. Yose did not do this, Akavya implies, because R. Yose knew that the years he enumerated were not sufficient to be summed up to obtain an accurate count.

Akavya suggests that it was the Amoraim who first summed up the years enumerated in SO and created the erroneous Jewish count from

291. Akavya claims that implied in the Bible is the idea that Artahshasta reigned precisely 35 years. This claim is a very difficult one. See n. 186.

292. Akavya, "תקופה," p. 336. See also *Ha-Lu'ah*, p. 153.

293. But there is nothing in the plain sense of these passages that suggests the interpretation that Akavya wishes to read into them. Also, in passage 5, R. Yose enumerates 34 years for the period of Persian dominion in a context where he is clearly not restricting himself to enumerating only years included in the Bible. Also, the fact that R. Yose expresses a chronology that assigns precisely 34 years to the period of Persian dominion and approximately 35 years to the reign of Daryavesh=Artahshasta shows that R. Yose was not simply enumerating only years included in the Bible. See App. A, n. 7. Also, Akavya does not mention his reinterpretation in connection with passages 1 and 2. Passage 2 clearly states that R. Yose views the entire period from the destruction of the First Temple to the destruction of the Second Temple as spanning only 490 years, and this passage does not lend itself to reinterpretation along the lines suggested by Akavya with respect to passages 3, 4, and 5. Passage 1 also does not easily lend itself to such a reinterpretation.

294. Akavya, *Sidrei Zemanim*, p. 227 and *Ha-Lu'ah*, p. 152.

creation.<sup>295</sup> He suggests that they may have misunderstood the data presented in SO and R. Yose's limited purpose.<sup>296</sup> He suggests alternatively that, knowing full well that SO's chronology was not a comprehensive one, they decided it was better to sum up the years enumerated in SO and create a complete Jewish chronology, than admit to lack of knowledge of certain periods and thereby leave Jewish chronology ambiguous for future generations.<sup>297</sup>

## 12 Charles Raddock (1965)

Charles Raddock<sup>298</sup> briefly mentions the Talmudic tradition that the Second Temple period spanned 420 years and suggests that the computation may have excluded periods of intermittent disruption from 516 BCE to 70 CE, when the Temple was inactive.<sup>299</sup>

## 13 Adin Steinsaltz (1982)

Adin Steinsaltz<sup>300</sup> refers with approval to the version of passage 4 that specifies a period of 250 years.<sup>301</sup>

295. Akavya, *Ha-Lu'ah*, pp. 152–53. See also Amorai, Beharav, and Akavya, *Daniyyel, Ezra, Nehemiah*, p. 179.

296. Akavya, *Ha-Lu'ah*, pp. 152–54. See also Amorai, Beharav, and Akavya, *Daniyyel, Ezra, Nehemiah*, p. 179.

297. Akavya, *Sidrei Zemanim*, p. 9. The suggestion that there was a desire by the Sages to create a complete Jewish chronology, and not leave Jewish chronology ambiguous for future generations, is a very reasonable one. But it is the view of this study that this desire already influenced the statements of the *Tannaim*. See Part IV.

298. Raddock, *Portrait of a People*, vol. 1, pp. 142 and 255.

299. But there is no reason to think that the period of Persian dominion was one of much disruption. On the contrary, it seems (from the limited evidence available) that the period of Persian dominion was a relatively calm one. (Raddock does not mention the fact that most of the discrepancy is due to a discrepancy involving the period of Persian dominion, and may not have been aware of this.)

300. Steinsaltz, *Talmud Bavli*, vol. 13 (Betzah-Rosh ha-Shanah), p. 17 (commentary on Rosh ha-Shanah 3b), *ha-Hayyim*.

301. He writes: וראה . . . הגרסה על מאתים (וחמישים) שנות שלטון פרסי. By his use of the parentheses, and his failure to refer to years of Medean rule, he also seems

## 14 Rahamim Sar-Shalom (1984)

Rahamim Sar-Shalom<sup>302</sup> adopts some of the suggestions made by Akavya. Sar-Shalom writes that the purpose of the author of SO was only to state the number of years of the Persian period that were included in the Bible, and that a lack of understanding of this purpose by the Amoraim is what caused them to calculate the date from creation erroneously.

# Category D: Other Responses

## Introduction to Category D

The responses in this category are of four types and are divided into four parts to reflect these types.

DI consists of responses that explicitly refer to the discrepancy between the conventional chronology and the SO chronology but do not take a position as to which chronology is correct.

DII and DIII consist of responses that do not refer to the discrepancy

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to be making his own suggestion that the original tradition was one of 200 years, and that it was a tradition about the length of the Persian, and not the Medeo-Persian, period.

A few lines earlier, Steinsaltz had dated Artaxerxes I to 464 to 425 BCE, which shows that Steinsaltz adopts the conventional chronology. His adoption of the conventional chronology also seems to be implicit in other places in his commentary. See Steinsaltz, op. cit., vol. 14, (Ta'anit-Megillah), p. 50, (commentary on Megillah 12a), *ha-Hayyim*. See also *ibid.*, p. 47, (commentary on Megillah 11a), *ha-Hayyim*.

It is also worth mentioning that Steinsaltz' *The Essential Talmud* (1976) (translated from the Hebrew by C. Galai) contains a parenthetical insertion that describes the Persian period as spanning the years 539 to 332 BCE (without referring to the discrepancy). *Ibid.*, p. 14. The context was Steinsaltz' discussion of the period of the Great Assembly. This parenthetical insertion was not present in the Hebrew edition of this work.

302. Sar-Shalom, *She'arim la-Lu'ah ha-Ivri*, p. 161.

but should nevertheless, for various reasons,<sup>303</sup> still be considered "responses." DII consists of those responses that adopt the SO chronology without mentioning the conventional chronology and DIII consists of those responses that adopt the conventional chronology without mentioning the SO chronology.

DIV consists of two miscellaneous responses, which do not fit any of the previous categories.

## *DI. Responses That Present Both the SO Chronology and the Conventional Chronology without Taking a Position as to Which Is Correct*

### 1 Aryeh Kaplan (1981)

Aryeh Kaplan,<sup>304</sup> in his commentary on the Pentateuch, refers many times to a "163-year" discrepancy with the conventional chronology, and does not take a position as to which chronology is correct. His references are found in those portions of his commentary in which he attempts to specify exact dates before the common era for events described in the Pentateuch. Due to his unwillingness to take a position as to which chronology is correct, he usually specifies two alternate dates, 163 years apart.<sup>305</sup>

303. See the introductions to DII and DIII.

304. Kaplan, *The Living Torah*, p. 36, (commentary on Genesis 12:15), p. 112, (commentary on Genesis 41:1), p. 142, (commentary on Exodus 1:8), p. 150, (commentary on Exodus 2:23), and p. 417, (commentary on Numbers 13:22).

305. For example, in his commentary on Exodus 1:8, which refers to the ascension of a new king who did not know Joseph, Kaplan writes that this event could have occurred in 1400 BCE, in which case the new king would have been Thutmose IV, or 1563 BCE, in which case the new king would have been Ahmose.

For an earlier reference to the discrepancy by Kaplan, see *MeAm Lo'ez: The Book of Esther*, p. 222, n. 18. See also *ibid.*, p. xv, in which Kaplan follows the SO chronology without mentioning a discrepancy.

Regarding *The Living Nach*, only part of it has been published as of the

## 2 Jacob Meidan (1991)

Jacob Meidan<sup>306</sup> writes a thorough introduction to the discrepancy and does not take a position as to which chronology is correct. He outlines both chronologies, discusses some of the evidence that supports each one, and points out many of the consequences that arise from adopting one or the other.

He critically evaluates and dismisses many of the responses to the discrepancy by the rabbinic authorities and Orthodox scholars of this century, and argues that there is definitely a discrepancy of a large and serious nature between the two chronologies. He dismisses the emendation in the text of SO adopted by Jawitz (C-3). He rejects the arguments of Breuer (B-31) and Hakohen (B-41) that the statements in SO were not meant to be taken literally or understood as statements of historical fact, and the argument of Schwab (B-24) that the SO chronology is the result of an effort to obscure a number of years. Meidan argues that the statements in SO were meant to be taken literally and as statements of

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present date (vol. 1: Early Prophets, and vol. 2: Later Prophets). In the sections authored by Y. Elman (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel), no BCE dates are provided. In the sections authored by M. Schapiro (Twelve Prophets), BCE dates are provided, but the author is not consistent in the scheme he follows. Sometimes he follows the BCE dates derived from the SO chronology (see vol. 2, pp. 488–89 and 628; see also p. 748), and other times he follows the BCE dates derived from conventional chronology (see vol. 2, pp. 678–80, 692, 721, and 743). For example, in the introduction to Jonah (p. 628) the author states that the year Jonah prophesied was approximately 640 BCE, and that this was approximately 54 years before Assyria became the most powerful nation in the region. The author then refers his readers for more details to the introduction to Nahum. But, in that introduction (p. 678), the author states that Assyria became the most powerful nation in the region commencing around 745 BCE. Also, in one place the author dates Josiah to 467 BCE (p. 488), but in another place the author dates Josiah to 640 BCE (p. 721). The author never informs his readers that there is a discrepancy between conventional and rabbinic chronology and that he had two alternative chronological schemes to choose from.

306. Meidan, "מבוא למאמרו של ח' חפץ על מלכות פרס ומד", *Megadim* 14, (1991), pp. 47–77. See also *Megadim* 22, (1994), pp. 93–94.

historical fact and were part of a complete world view that the Sages had regarding the Persian period and the chronology of events within it.

He suggests two underlying factors that may have motivated rabbinic authorities throughout the ages to remain firm in rejecting the conventional chronology. They may have believed that the conventional chronology was a chronology constructed so that Christian interpretations of the Bible would be fulfilled. Alternatively, they may have viewed the conventional chronology as an implicit attack on the reliability of the oral law. The reliability of the oral law derives from the claim that there is an unbroken chain of tradition from Moses through the ages. If one accepts the conventional chronology, then the Persian period is much more spread out than Jewish tradition had assumed, and some of the postulated links in the chain may not have known one another.

## *DII. Responses That Adopt the SO Chronology without Mentioning the Conventional Chronology*

Perhaps thousands of Orthodox writers since the time of Azariah de Rossi have recited the SO chronology without mentioning the conventional chronology.<sup>307</sup> Most of these were probably not aware of the conventional chronology, and thus their adoption of the SO chronology should not be taken as a response to the discrepancy and as a rejection of the conventional chronology.

However, Orthodox writers in recent years who are either historians or chronologists, or who have some scholarly background and often do incorporate facts from nonrabbinic sources, or who author a commentary on one of the biblical books from the Medeo-Persian period, can probably be presumed to be aware of the discrepancy.<sup>308</sup> Their adoption of the SO

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307. For example, there are probably hundreds of brief references to a 420-year Second Temple period in Talmudic commentaries.

308. It is impossible to read any conventional history work without becoming immediately aware of the fact that, from the time of King David until

chronology (or a chronology close to it<sup>309</sup>) and omission of any reference to the conventional chronology should be taken as a response to the discrepancy and as a rejection of the conventional chronology. We have collected some of these responses here. We have also included Meir Loeb ben Jehiel Michael (Malbim) here because he too seems to have been aware of the conventional chronology and responding to it.

## 1 Meir Loeb ben Jehiel Michael (Malbim) (1874)

Malbim<sup>310</sup> adopts the tradition that the period of Persian dominion spanned 34 years. He suggests how the successive generations of high priests described at Nehemiah 12:10–11 can be reconciled with this tradition and writes that he does not understand all the noise that has been made about these verses.<sup>311</sup> He also adopts the tradition that the Second Temple period spanned 420 years.<sup>312</sup>

However, when he describes the number of Persian kings, in one place he describes the Persian period as spanning the reigns of four Persian kings,<sup>313</sup> and in other places he writes that there are various views as to the number of Persian kings and that there is no certainty in this area.<sup>314</sup>

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Alexander the Great, the work will date events much earlier before the common era than the chronology derived from SO would.

309. Some of the responses included in category DII believe that the Persian period spanned the reigns of four or five Persian kings.

310. Malbim, commentary on Nehemiah 12:10–11.

311. See also his commentary on I Chronicles 3:24.

312. Malbim, commentary on Daniel 9:25.

313. Malbim, commentary on Daniel 11:2.

314. Malbim, commentary on Ezra 6:14. See also his commentary on Ezra 7:1. It might be argued that Malbim's remarks in his commentary on Ezra 6:14: *במלכי פרס ושמונת ואין בזה דבר ברור כבר נפלו שיטות ודעות שונות במנין*, and his similar remarks in his commentary on Ezra 7:1 constitute an allusion by Malbim to the view of the Persian period as a protracted one and a willingness to consider the possibility that this view is the correct one. But it seems more likely, especially from the contexts, that Malbim is only acknowledging the views expressed by some of the earlier Jewish authors that the Persian period spanned the reigns of

## 2 Moses Weinstock (1962)

Moses Weinstock<sup>315</sup> describes the period of Persian dominion as spanning 34 years, the entire Second Temple period as spanning 420 years, and the kings who reigned during the Persian period as being Koresh, Ahashverosh, and Daryavesh.

## 3 Abraham Kurman (1965)

Abraham Kurman<sup>316</sup> writes that the building of the First Temple took place in the year 2928 and equates this year with 832 BCE. He also writes that Ezra's arrival in Israel took place in the year 3413 and equates this year with 347 BCE.<sup>317</sup>

## 4 Avigdor Miller (1971)

Avigdor Miller<sup>318</sup> writes that the length of time from the destruction of the First Temple until the destruction of the Second Temple was 490 years. He also consistently uses the dates from creation that are implicit

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four of five Persian kings and that he is considering the possibility that these views may be the correct ones.

Note also that in his commentary on I Chronicles 3:24 Malbim is willing to adopt the view that the Artahshasta of the time of Nehemiah is identical with the Daryavesh in whose reign the Temple was rebuilt.

315. Weinstock, *Seder Olam Rabbah ha-Shalem*, vol. 3, pp. 459–61 and 468–70. Weinstock, op. cit., p. 462, refers to the view that the Artahshasta mentioned after Daryavesh is not identical with Daryavesh but does not adopt this view.

316. Kurman, *Mavo le-Torah she-bi-Khetav ve-she-be-al Peh*, p. 205. 1965 is the year the second edition of this work was published. I have not seen the first edition.

317. In a more recent note, "על הכרונולוגיה של תקופת בית השני," *Ha-Ma'ayan*, 30 (1990), n. 4, p. 63, Kurman refers to the discrepancy. He writes that he is happy to have read about the important study by C. Heifetz (A-15) and to know that someone has finally decided to deal with the problem. (In this note, Kurman continues to adopt the SO chronology. He dates MS as exactly 1,000 years from the Exodus.)

318. Miller, *Torah Nation*, p. 309.



from the SO chronology. He writes that Ezra arrived in Israel in the year 3413,<sup>319</sup> that Alexander visited Jerusalem in the year 3448<sup>320</sup> and that the Second Temple was destroyed in the year 3829.<sup>321</sup> He also writes that the Great Assembly did not continue for generations but concluded with the death of its founders.<sup>322</sup>

However, his description of the Persian period includes references to five Persian kings: Koresh, Daryavesh, Ahashverosh, Artahshasta, and Darius.<sup>323</sup> Also, he equates Ahashverosh with Xerxes<sup>324</sup> and because of this seems conflicted as to whether Ahashverosh should be placed before Daryavesh, in accordance with the SO chronology, or after Daryavesh, in accordance with the conventional chronology.<sup>325</sup>

Miller's omission of any reference to the discrepancy is surprising, because Miller otherwise made a point of including the views of conventional historians so he could attempt to rebut them.

## 5 Meir Zlotowitz (1976)

Meir Zlotowitz<sup>326</sup> dates the founding of the Babylonian empire by Nebuchadnezzar to 442 BCE and the beginning of the reign of Ahashverosh to 368 BCE.

319. Ibid., p. 53.

320. Ibid., p. 89.

321. Ibid., pp. 99 and 309.

322. Ibid., p. 86.

323. Ibid., pp. 31–47 and 89.

324. Ibid., pp. 40 and 42.

325. On the one hand, he tells us, *ibid.*, p. 42, that Ahashverosh ruled before the Temple was rebuilt. On the other hand, he does not mention Ahashverosh until after his statement, *ibid.*, p. 38, that the Temple was completed in the sixth year of Daryavesh, and in several passages, *ibid.*, pp. 40, 46, and 62, gives the impression that Ahashverosh was the king who reigned immediately prior to the Artahshasta of the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

326. Zlotowitz, *The Megillah* (ArtScroll Tanach Series), pp. xxi–xxii. See also his *Megillas Eichah* (ArtScroll Tanach Series), p. 142.

## 6 Zechariah Fendel (1981)

Zechariah Fendel<sup>327</sup> writes that the period of Persian dominion spanned 34 years and that the Second Temple period spanned 420 years. He believes that there was an additional Persian king named Artahshasta or Cambyses, who reigned for one-half year between Koresh and Ahashverosh.<sup>328</sup>

## 7 Yosef Rabinowitz (1984)

Yosef Rabinowitz<sup>329</sup> describes the Medeo-Persian period as spanning the years 371 to 318 BCE and the reigns of only three Persian kings: Koresh, Ahashverosh, and Daryavesh.<sup>330</sup> He dates the destruction of the First Temple to 422 BCE, and the reign of the Daryavesh who rebuilt the Temple to 353 to 318 BCE.<sup>331</sup>

Rabinowitz' failure to mention the discrepancy posed by the conventional chronology is surprising because he takes the trouble to discuss two issues involving 1-year discrepancies.<sup>332</sup> He also discusses how the successive generations of high priests described at Nehemiah 12:10–11 can be reconciled with a 34-year period of Persian domin-

327. Fendel, *Legacy of Sinai*, p. 114.

328. Ibid., p. 124, and p. 291, n. 9. See also *ibid.*, p. 120, n. 74, and p. 121, n. 76. (But compare *ibid.*, p. 114, n. 32.) Fendel's source for the notion that there was such an additional Persian king is Elijah of Vilna. Elijah of Vilna, *Kol Eliyyahu*, pp. 105–08 (commentary on Rosh ha-Shanah 3b), writes that there was an Artahshasta who reigned briefly before Ahashverosh and who ordered the termination of the work of the rebuilding. Fendel also notes that Rashi (commentary on Daniel 11:2) mentions a king named Cambyses, who reigned after Koresh.

329. Rabinowitz, *Ezra* (ArtScroll Tanach Series), p. 58.

330. He, *ibid.*, pp. 146 and 152, refers to the view that the Artahshasta mentioned at Ezra 6:14 is a later king than Daryavesh. But he does not adopt this view. See, e.g., *ibid.*, p. 147, his translation of the latter part of Ezra 6:14 ("and by the consent of Cyrus and Darius Artahshast king of Persia").

331. Ibid. pp. 57–58.

332. Ibid., pp. 58–59, (the lack of a year 0 between 1 BCE and 1 CE, and the possibility that the dates from creation implied from the current Jewish calendar differ by 1 year from the dates from creation implied from the SO chronology).

ion,<sup>333</sup> but makes no mention of the fact that these successive generations gave others grounds to think that the period was a protracted one.

## 8 Eliezer Shulman (1984)

Eliezer Shulman<sup>334</sup> consistently uses the dates from creation that are implicit from the SO chronology. He writes that the Second Temple was built in the year 3408, that Ezra arrived in Israel in the year 3412, and that the Artahshasta of the time of Ezra was the same as the Daryavesh in whose reign the Temple was rebuilt.

## 9 Mattis Kantor (1989)

Mattis Kantor<sup>335</sup> consistently follows the SO chronology. He dates the destruction of the First Temple to 423 BCE, the rebuilding to 353 BCE, the return under Ezra to 348 BCE, and the destruction of the Second Temple to 69 CE.

# DIII. Responses That Adopt the Conventional Chronology without Mentioning the SO Chronology

Any Jewish author who adopts the conventional chronology and omits any mention of the SO chronology is, if he is aware of the SO chronology, responding to it and making a decision to reject it. Such responses number in the thousands and it would be difficult and serve little scholarly interest to collect them.<sup>336</sup> But if the Jewish author who adopts the conventional chronology and omits any mention of the SO

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333. Rabinowitz, *Nechemiah* (ArtScroll Tanach Series), p. 194.

334. Shulman, *Seder ha-Korot ba-Tanakh*, e.g., pp. 87 and 158–63. See also *ibid.*, p. 180.

335. Kantor, *The Jewish Time Line Encyclopedia*, e.g., pp. 57, 71, and 75–77.

336. We would not know precisely which Jewish authors who do not mention the SO chronology were nevertheless aware of it, and it would be of

chronology is an Orthodox rabbi, an ostensible follower of rabbinic tradition, and most likely aware of the SO chronology, that the author does this is of great interest. Some of the Orthodox rabbis who do this are listed here.<sup>337</sup>

## 1 Heymann Kotték (1915)

Heymann Kotték<sup>338</sup> dates the destruction of the First Temple to 586 BCE and the rebuilding to 516 BCE.

## 2 Simon Glazer (1930)

Simon Glazer<sup>339</sup> dates the rebuilding of the Temple to 516 BCE, and tells us that Darius I reigned from 521 to 485 BCE, and that Xerxes=Ahashverosh reigned from 485 to 464 BCE. He adds that the Jews lived "for almost a century" in peace under Persian rule, after the demise of Ezra and Nehemiah.

## 3 Kalman Kahana (1935)

Kalman Kahana<sup>340</sup> dates the destruction of the First Temple to 586 BCE.

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little interest to show that many Jewish authors, not respectful to rabbinic tradition in general, do not follow the SO chronology.

337. Because the responses categorized here make no mention of the SO chronology, it is not known whether their authors believe that the SO chronology is incorrect (akin to the responses in category B), or correct, assuming textual emendation or reinterpretation (akin to the responses in category C). (It is also possible that some of the responses categorized here were not aware of the SO chronology and the discrepancy it posed.)

338. Kotték, *Geschichte der Juden*, pp. 1–4.

339. Glazer, *History of Israel*, vol. 2, pp. 220–23 and 266–67.

340. Kahana, "Jüdische Chronologie," *Nachalat Tzevi* 9–10, (1935), pp. 273–75. Kahana does refer to the discrepancy here and this response should have been categorized in category B. He takes the position that the Sages' chronological statements were not meant as statements of actual history and, therefore, should not be viewed as binding.

Subsequently Kahana came to support the SO chronology. See Jacob Katz, *Be-Mo Einai*, p. 114, in which Katz notes that Kahana wrote in the publication of the Po'alei Agudat Israel (*She'arim*) that Katz' historical work (*Toledot Yisrael*

## 4 Joseph Hertz (1938)

Joseph Hertz<sup>341</sup> lists 586 BCE as the date of the destruction of the First Temple and 520 BCE as the year of its rebuilding.

## 5 Isaac Halevy (1939)

Isaac Halevy<sup>342</sup> tells us that Ahashverosh is to be identified with Xerxes. He also writes that the Great Assembly was founded after the arrival of Ezra and Nehemiah in the reign of Artaxerxes and spanned a תקופה של כמה דורות (period of several generations).<sup>343</sup>

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*ve-ha-Ammim*, which followed the conventional chronology) could not be used because it deviated from the Talmudic tradition in its chronology of the Second Temple period. I am grateful to Rabbi Menachem Silber for this reference. (I have not seen the writings of Kahana referred to by Katz.)

341. Hertz, *The Pentateuch And Haftorahs*, p. 979 (chronological table). See also *ibid.*, p. 229. 1938 is the year the first one volume edition of this work was published. The work was published earlier, over the course of several years (1929–36), in five separate volumes.

342. Halevy, *Dorot ha-Rishonim: Tekufat ha-Mikra*, pp. 262 and 265. Halevy died in 1914, before this volume of his work was published.

343. It is clear from other parts of Halevy's writings that Halevy did not believe that the Great Assembly continued into the Hellenistic period. See, e.g., *Dorot ha-Rishonim*, vol. 1, (מסוף ימי החשמונאים עד ימי נציבי רומא), p. 196.

Additional arguments to support the view that Halevy adopted the conventional chronology are made by M. Breuer. See his "הוראת ההיסטוריה ואמונת חכמים," *Shema'atin* 10, (1973), p. 59, nn. 36–37. (Breuer notes, for example, that an article published by Halevy's son in one of the annuals of the JLC followed the conventional chronology. Halevy played a role in the publication of these annuals.)

It must be pointed out that many instances can be found in the *Dorot ha-Rishonim* regarding the late Second Temple and subsequent periods in which Halevy used the dates from creation that are derived from the SO chronology. See, e.g., *Dorot ha-Rishonim*, vol. 1, p. 166. It can be argued that the fact that Halevy used these dates indicates that he followed the view of the length of the Persian period that is built into them. But it is also possible that Halevy used these dates only because they were the ones that would be most familiar to his readers

## 6 Gilbert Klaperman (1956)

Gilbert Klaperman<sup>344</sup> dates the destruction of the First Temple to 586 BCE and the building of the Second Temple to 515 BCE. He describes Israel as having lived for 200 years under Persian rule.

## 7 Shelomoh Danziger (1973)

Shelomoh Danziger<sup>345</sup> lists all the Persian kings recorded in the conventional chronology from Cyrus to Darius III without giving any indication that he disputes their existence. He then proceeds to argue for the identification of Ahashverosh with Xerxes.

## 8 Meir Herskovics (1973)

Meir Herskovics<sup>346</sup> dates Koresh to 539 to 530 BCE, Cambyses to 530 to 522 BCE, Darius to 522 to 486 BCE and Xerxes to 486 to 465 BCE. He adopts the identification of Ahashverosh with Xerxes and attempts to shed light on the book of Esther with material provided by Herodotus regarding Xerxes.

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and did not intend to take any position regarding the length of the Persian period by his use of them.

There are very few statements regarding the Persian period in the volumes of the *Dorot ha-Rishonim* published before the *Tekufat ha-Mikra* volume, and Halevy does not clearly express any view of the length of the Persian period in these volumes. Halevy (*Dorot ha-Rishonim*, vol. 1, p. 197, n. 18) wrote that he intended to devote a section of his work to the Great Assembly. But he died before being able to do so.

344. Klaperman, G. and L., *The Story of the Jewish People*, vol. 1, p. 186, and vol. 2, e.g., pp. 17, 25, and 215 (table).

345. Danziger, "Who Was the Real Akhashverosh?" *Jewish Observer*, Feb., 1973, p. 12.

346. Herskovics, "יהוחן של המן והתמודדותו נגד יהודה וירושלים," *Or ha-Mizrah* 22, (1972–73), pp. 233–41, especially p. 236, n. 16.

## 9 Abraham Bloch (1978)

Abraham Bloch<sup>347</sup> follows the conventional chronology in numerous places. For example, he dates the destruction of the First Temple to 586 BCE,<sup>348</sup> and states that the Second Temple spanned the years 516 BCE to 70 CE.<sup>349</sup> When he mentions specific Persian kings, he dates Cyrus to 558 to 529 BCE, Cambyses to 529 to 522 BCE, Darius I to 521 to 485 BCE, Xerxes to 485 to 465 BCE, Artaxerxes I to 465 to 424 BCE, and Darius II to 424 to 404 BCE.<sup>350</sup>

## 10 Abraham Rosenfeld (1986)

Abraham Rosenfeld<sup>351</sup> dates the destruction of the First Temple to 586 BCE. Also, in response to an elegy that alludes to a 900-year period from the time of the building of the First Temple until the destruction of the Second Temple,<sup>352</sup> he comments that "according to our reckoning, the Temple was destroyed . . . 1,037 years after King Solomon."<sup>353</sup>

347. Bloch, *The Biblical and Historical Background of the Jewish Holy Days*, pp. 14–15, 79–87, 122–25, 195–203, 232, 244, and 247.

348. *Ibid.*, p. 123.

349. *Ibid.*, p. 232.

350. *Ibid.*, pp. 79–80 and 87. In his discussion of the date and identification of Ahashverosh, *ibid.*, pp. 79–87, he refers to many rabbinic passages relating to the Persian period, but he never mentions the rabbinic passages that assign 34 years to the period of Persian dominion, and 52 years and three Persian kings to the entire Medeo-Persian period. He also, *ibid.*, pp. 86–87, interprets some of the rabbinic passages bizarrely, in ways that assume that the authors of the passages knew the conventional chronology.

351. Rosenfeld, *Tisha B'av Compendium*, pp. xii, xv, and 36.

352. Presumably, the author of the elegy arrived at this figure by following the SO chronology and summing the numbers 410 (length of the First Temple period), 70 (length of the exilic period), and 420 (length of the Second Temple period).

353. Rosenfeld, *op. cit.*, p. 124, n. 1.

## 11 Irving Greenberg (1988)

Irving Greenberg<sup>354</sup> dates the Babylonian exile to the 6th century BCE, the destruction of the First Temple to 586 BCE, and the building of the Second Temple to the year 515 BCE.

## 12 Shlomo Riskin (1991)

Shlomo Riskin<sup>355</sup> dates Cyrus' permission to rebuild the Temple to 538 BCE and writes that the historical period of the Book of Esther is 485 to 455 BCE.<sup>356</sup>

## 13 Emanuel Rackman (1992)

Emanuel Rackman<sup>357</sup> dates the capturing of Jerusalem by the Babylonians to 586 BCE.<sup>358</sup>

## 14 Louis Bernstein (1994)

Louis Bernstein<sup>359</sup> dates the destruction of the First Temple and the assassination of Gedaliah to 586 BCE.

354. Greenberg, *The Jewish Way*, pp. 221, 226, and 294.

355. Riskin, "And now, a toast to those great anti-Semites," *Jerusalem Post* (International edition), week ending Feb. 23, 1991, p. 23. See also Riskin, "New Jew, old Jew," *Jerusalem Post* (International edition), week ending Dec. 23, 1995, p. 31, in which Riskin dates the destruction of the First Temple to 587 BCE.

356. 455 BCE is certainly a typographical error. The intended period is no doubt 485 to 465 BCE, the period of the reign of Xerxes.

357. Rackman, "Making waves," *The Jewish Week*, Mar. 27 to April 2, 1992, p. 28.

358. The text here reads "536" BCE. But "536" is certainly a typographical error and it is much more likely that it represents an error from an original "586" than it is that it represents an error from an original "422," "423," "421," or "420."

359. Bernstein, *Jewish Press*, week of Jan. 14 to Jan. 20, 1994, p. 34.



## 15 Haskel Lookstein (1995)

Haskel Lookstein<sup>360</sup> dates the assassination of Gedaliah to 586 BCE.

It is also noteworthy that two editions of the Bible published by Orthodox institutions: The Soncino Books of the Bible (The Soncino Press, 1945 to 1952) and *Da'at Mikra* (Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1970 on) consistently adopt the conventional chronology in their commentaries, with barely a mention of the SO chronology of the Persian period.<sup>361</sup>

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360. Lookstein, "More Guilty Are We Than Others," *The Jewish Week*, Nov. 17, 1995, p. 8.

361. For the Soncino adoption of the conventional chronology, see *Daniel. Ezra. Nehemiah*, pp. ix, 109–10 and 179; *The Five Megilloth*, p. 195; *The Twelve Prophets*, pp. 335–36; *Ezekiel*, p. 1; and *Jeremiah*, pp. ix–xi.

The Soncino commentaries never mention the 34-year or 52-year traditions or the tradition that the Persian period spanned the reigns of only three Persian kings. The Soncino commentary on Daniel does include a statement that Daniel 9:24 is referring to "70 years of the Babylonian exile and 420 years during which the Second Temple existed." See *Daniel. Ezra. Nehemiah*, p. 77. See also *ibid.*, p. 78, commentary on Daniel 9:26 ("according to another calculation, its terminus is the destruction of the Second Temple."). But the Soncino commentary on Daniel 9:24–27 does not mention that the view that the Second Temple period existed 420 years is only a rabbinic view and that the balance of the Soncino commentary on the book of Daniel and the Soncino commentaries on all the other biblical books do not adopt this rabbinic view but adopt the conventional chronology.

For the *Da'at Mikra* adoption of the conventional chronology, see, e.g., *Ezra ve-Nehemiah*, introduction, p. 10, and app., pp. 3 and 36; *Hamesh Megillot*, introduction to Esther, p. 5; *Trei Asar*, vol. 2, app., pp. 1–2; *Sefer Yehezkel*, introduction, p. 8; and *Sefer Yirmeyah*, introduction, pp. 12–19, nn. 5–8 and 13–18, and p. 643, n. 140. The *Da'at Mikra* commentaries on these and the other biblical books (with the exception of the *Da'at Mikra* commentary on the Book of Daniel, see below) never mention the 34-year, 52-year, or 420-year traditions or the tradition that the Persian period spanned the reigns of only three Persian kings. (But the *Da'at Mikra* commentary on Ezra and Nehemiah does mention the rabbinic equating of Daryavesh and Artahshasta. See *Ezra ve-Nehemiah*, app., pp. 3, n. 15, and 32, n. 4.)

There are only two commentaries in the *Da'at Mikra* series in which the

large discrepancy between conventional chronology and rabbinic chronology is mentioned: the commentary on Kings (authored by J. Kiel) and the commentary on Daniel (authored by Kiel and S. Hakohen).

The commentary on the book of Kings (*Sefer Melakhim*, 1989) makes reference to the discrepancy (*Sefer Melakhim*, vol. 2, app., p. 90). In this section on the dates of the Jewish kings of the First Temple period, the commentary mentions that there is a discrepancy of about 150 years between conventional and rabbinic chronology regarding these dates and, without giving further details about the discrepancy, refers the readers to the responses of Breuer (B-31), Tabori (B-38), and Hakohen (B-41). The commentary then goes on (app., pp. 91–93) to provide two chronological tables for the dates of the Jewish kings of the First Temple period: 1) one table that lists the dates of these kings on a count from creation reckoning, counting up to the year 3338 and following rabbinic chronology (this table, by its nature, takes no position regarding the length of the Persian period), and 2) a second table that lists the BCE dates of these kings according to the conventional chronology (from the reign of David, 1004 BCE, to the end of the reign of Zedekiah, 586 BCE) (this table, by its nature, reflects an adoption of the conventional chronology of the Persian period). The commentary does not provide its readers with a table of the BCE dates of these kings that would result from adoption of rabbinic chronology.

The commentary on Daniel (*Sefer Daniyyel*, 1994) makes explicit reference to the discrepancy in two places. In a footnote to Daniel 7:7 (p. 167), the commentary refers briefly to the discrepancy and refers its readers to the responses of S. Hakohen, C. Heifetz (A-15), and J. Meidan (DI-2). In a footnote to Daniel 9:24–27 (p. 236), the commentary refers briefly to the discrepancy and refers its readers to the responses of Heifetz and Meidan.

Review of the entire commentary on Daniel shows that the authors took great care to avoid expressing a readily discernible position regarding which chronology they were adopting. The commentary contains no separate chronological background section, either in the introduction or in an appendix, and the numerous Babylonian and Persian kings referred to in the commentary are almost always referred to without BCE dates assigned to them.

But close reading of the commentaries' footnotes does seem to show that the commentary leans strongly toward adopting the conventional chronology. For example, in a footnote regarding Daniel 11:2 and its reference to four Persian kings, the commentary (p. 305) advises that many other Persian kings are known from nonbiblical sources and cites Abravanel's statement that the Sages only counted those kings whose reigns were of consequence for the Jews. (See similarly, p. 110.) In another footnote (p. 216), the commentary seems to adopt

## DIV. Miscellaneous Responses

### 1 Jehiel Heilprin (1769)

Jehiel Heilprin,<sup>362</sup> at the beginning of his entry to the year 3390, mentions the discrepancy without taking any position as to which chronology is correct. Then, in his entry to the year 3392, he presents his readers with two contradictory chronologies of the Persian period. In the beginning of the entry, he tells us that Koresh was followed by Cambyses and by twelve other Persian kings, whom he names and briefly describes.<sup>363</sup> Then, toward the end of the entry, he tells us that Koresh was followed by Ahashverosh. He proceeds to adopt the SO chronology from that point on in this entry, and in all subsequent entries.

### 2 Moses Auerbach (1949)

Moses Auerbach<sup>364</sup> accomplishes the feat of paying homage to the SO chronology while at the same time adopting the conventional chronology, and never explicitly telling his readers that there is a discrepancy between them.

He pays homage to the SO chronology by starting his description

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586 BCE as the year of the destruction of the First Temple and 515 BCE as the year of the rebuilding. In another footnote (p. 252), the commentary writes that it is almost certain (קרוב לוודאי) that the prophet Malachi lived in a period much later than Haggai and Zechariah.

362. Heilprin, *Seder ha-Dorot*, pp. 130–32. The text of this work is not completely established and the analysis above is based on the text in N. Maskil le-Eitan's edition (Warsaw, 1878). Several other editions were also examined, including the *editio princeps* (Karlsruhe, 1769), and each included the same contradictory passages as are found in the edition of Maskil le-Eitan, with slight variants in the text and in the order in which the passages are printed.

363. Heilprin's description of these fourteen Persian kings is based entirely on the description provided by Ganz (A-1).

364. Auerbach, *Toledot Am Yisrael*, vol. 1, pp. 19–35. 1949 is the year the second edition of this volume was published. I have not seen the first edition.

of the Second Temple period with the following carefully worded introductory statement<sup>365</sup>:

הבית השני האריך ימים יותר מן הראשון  
(לפי חז"ל 420 שנה)...

The Second Temple lasted longer than the First (according to the Sages, [it lasted] 420 years) . . .

After this statement, he consistently adopts the conventional chronology. He mentions almost all of the kings included in the conventional chronology: Koresh, Cambyses, Daryavesh, Ahashverosh,<sup>366</sup> Artahshasta, Daryavesh the son of Artahshasta, and Daryavesh III. He also states that approximately 60 years elapsed from Daryavesh the son of Artahshasta until Daryavesh III.<sup>367</sup> He never tells his readers that all this is inconsistent with the chronology of the Sages. Nor does he ever state how long the Second Temple period lasted or assign a BCE date to any event prior to the Greek period.

In connection with miscellaneous responses, the timeline recently published by the Orthodox Union in connection with the "Jerusalem 3000" celebration also deserves mention. As background, it must be understood that 1996 is only around the 3000th year from David's capture of Jerusalem, if one adopts the conventional chronology. (See Diagram.<sup>368</sup>) If one adopts

365. Ibid., p. 20.

366. Undoubtedly due to the conflict between the conventional and the SO chronologies, Auerbach appears unsure as to where to place Ahashverosh. In the text (ibid., p. 23), Ahashverosh is mentioned after Koresh, Cambyses, and Daryavesh, but exactly when he reigned is not stated. In a note (ibid., p. 130), he suggests that perhaps Ahashverosh is to be equated with Cambyses. The text (ibid., p. 33) also mentions a king כסרכסס, who is described as having reigned after Koresh and Daryavesh.

367. Auerbach, op. cit., p. 32.

368. According to H. Shanks (*Jerusalem: An Archaeological Biography*, p. 11), 1996 was chosen as the year for the Jerusalem 3000 celebration because someone told Teddy Kollek that David captured Jerusalem in 996 BCE and mayor Kollek and his staff made the erroneous assumption that 1996 was exactly 3000 years

the SO chronology (with its shortened Persian period and other minor deviations from conventional chronology), the 3000th year from David's capture of Jerusalem does not occur until the year 2134 CE.

The Orthodox Union went out of its way to publish a special timeline ("Jerusalem Trimillennium Torah Timeline") as part of its celebration of "Jerusalem 3000." But this timeline, in its main dating scheme, adopts the SO chronology.<sup>369</sup> The result is a timeline that pays homage to the notion of 1996 being the 3000th year of Jerusalem in the timeline's title, but that implicitly *rejects* this same notion in the timeline's main dating scheme. Specifically, among the dates in its main dating scheme, the timeline dates the capture of Jerusalem by David to 2892, and the present year, the year it describes as "Jerusalem Celebrates Trimillennium," as 5756. Simple math ( $2892 + 3000$ ) shows that 5756 is not anywhere near the 3000th year of Jerusalem on this scheme.

Notwithstanding the timeline's adoption of the SO chronology in its main dating scheme, the timeline, in an alternative scheme in a less visible print, also includes a recitation of some of the BCE dates that are implicit from conventional chronology, including: "539–330 BCE Persian Empire." These egregiously inconsistent chronologies<sup>370</sup> are all provided to the reader without any explanation whatsoever in the timeline, the Study Guide, or the Teacher's Source Outline (which were all published by the Orthodox Union with the timeline).

from 996 BCE. It was later pointed out to them that the year that was 3000 years before 1996 was 1005 BCE, not 996 BCE. But they were subsequently informed that many scholars dated David's capture of Jerusalem earlier than 996 BCE, and some dated it as early as 1005 BCE, so the celebration of the trimillennium in the year 1996 did have some basis, although any of the years from 1996 to 2006 had a basis to claim to be the trimillennium year. See Diagram, p. xvii.

369. The following are some of the dates it provides in its main dating scheme: 2928 for the building of the First Temple, 3338 for its destruction, 3390 for the return under Cyrus, 3408 for the building of the Second Temple, 3448 for Alexander's arrival in Jerusalem, and 3828 for the destruction of the Second Temple.

370. E.g., the Persian Empire is listed in one part of the timeline as having spanned the years 539 to 330 BCE (209 years), but in the timeline's main dating scheme, the period from Cyrus to Alexander is indicated to have spanned only the years 3390 to 3448 (58 years).

# *IV*



## *EVALUATION OF THE RESPONSES*



The fundamental question raised by the SO chronology is how to account for its wide divergence from the conventional chronology.

The responses in category A shed little useful light on this question. Most of them dismiss the conventional chronology without making any attempt to account for its origin and its wide divergence from the SO chronology. Of the ones that do make such an attempt, many make suggestions that reveal their lack of familiarity with the sources that support the conventional chronology.<sup>1</sup> More importantly, because (according to the view of this study) the conventional chronology is the correct one,<sup>2</sup> the proper approach to answering the above question is to focus on why the SO chronology has widely diverged from the historical truth, and not, as the responses in category A would have it, on why the conventional chronology has widely and erroneously diverged from the SO chronology.

The responses in category C respond to the question by denying its

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1. It seems that the majority of the responses in category A are not familiar with the precise sources on which the conventional chronology is based. For example, perhaps the most important sources on which the conventional chronology is based are the writings of Herodotus, Ctesias, Manetho, and Ptolemy (see App. B). Of the seventeen responses in category A, only four (Ibn Shalosh, Feder, Heifetz, and Aaronson) refer to any of these writings. (But no doubt some of the other responses in category A are familiar with some of these writings.) And of the seventeen responses in category A, only two (Heifetz and Aaronson) show that the authors were aware that the chronology constructed from the ancient Greek and Egyptian sources is confirmed by cuneiform inscriptions from the ancient Persian palaces. (Most of the relevant cuneiform inscriptions were not published until this century. On the evidence from these inscriptions, see App. B. Aaronson contends that these inscriptions are forgeries. This seems to be the view of Heifetz as well. On the contention of forgery, see App. B, n. 18.)

2. See App. B, and especially pp. 165–168.



legitimacy. They postulate that the text of the SO chronology has not been preserved accurately or is not being understood correctly.

But the textual emendations and reinterpretations postulated by the responses in category C do not meet strict scrutiny. None of the textual emendations has any support in any of the manuscripts of SO, and none of the reinterpretations are consistent with the plain sense of the text.<sup>3</sup>

More importantly, SO's picture of the Persian period is a clear and consistent one,<sup>4</sup> expressed in many passages.<sup>5</sup> Any response that suggests a textual emendation or reinterpretation of only *some* of SO's passages<sup>6</sup> is forced to postulate either: 1) that SO contains two conflicting chronologies,<sup>7</sup> or 2) that the original version and correct interpretation was lost early in the pre-Tannaitic or Tannaitic periods, before SO reached its final form.<sup>8</sup> Suggestions of the second type are entirely speculative. Suggestions of the first type have to account for the fact that the view that they hypothesize as contained in SO is not quoted or reflected anywhere else in Tannaitic or Amoraic literature. It is only the 420-year, 52-year, and 34-year traditions that are found in the balance of Tannaitic and Amoraic literature when the

3. Most of the textual emendations and reinterpretations raise other difficulties that make them unlikely as well. See the notes to the individual responses in category C.

4. For example, the statement in passage 2 that the Second Temple period spanned 420 years is consistent with the division of the Second Temple period in passage 5 into eras of 34 years, 180 years, 103 years, and 103 years. The statement in passage 4 that the Medeo-Persian period spanned 52 years is consistent with SO's assignment elsewhere (chaps. 28 and 29, and see App. A) of 1 year to the reign of Daryavesh of Madai, 3 years (מקושעו) to the reign of Koresh, 14 years to the reign of Ahashverosh, 1 year to the reign of Daryavesh prior to the rebuilding, and 34 years to the period of Persian dominion during the Second Temple period.

5. The five passages printed in App. A, and the many other passages in chaps. 28–30 that follow the scheme adopted in these passages.

6. I.e., all the responses in category C. (None of the responses in category C that suggest textual emendations suggest emendations of all five of the passages printed in App. A, and none of the responses in category C that suggest reinterpretations attempt to read their reinterpretations into all five of the passages printed in App. A. Nor can any of the reinterpretations be read into all five passages.)

7. See, e.g., responses C-3 and C-8.

8. See, e.g., responses C-1 and C-5.

lengths of the Second Temple period, Medeo-Persian period, and period of Persian dominion are stated.<sup>9</sup> And it is only the SO chronology (or something close to it) that is followed in the balance of the chronological statements of the ancient Sages regarding the Persian and Second Temple periods.<sup>10</sup>

The only category that contains responses that shed some useful light on the fundamental question raised by the SO chronology is category B. The responses in category B that address the question and attempt to account for the wide divergence between the SO chronology and the conventional chronology can, for the most part, be divided into three groups.

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9. Regarding the 420-year tradition, see App. A, n. 4; regarding the 52-year tradition, see Part III, n. 240; and regarding the 34-year tradition, see Avodah Zarah 9a.

Of course, those responses that suggest reinterpretations of the 420-year, 52-year, or 34-year traditions can still claim that their reinterpretations apply to the reiterations of these traditions outside SO. But those responses cannot deny that all the evidence indicates that the Amoraim understood the statements in SO according to their plain sense. See n. 10. The fact that the 420-year tradition is included in the Tosefta (Zevahim 13:3) alongside the tradition that the First Temple period spanned 410 years tends to confirm that the 420-year tradition is one regarding the length of an *entire* Temple period.

10. For example, the SO chronology is followed in: 1) the statement of Abaye at Nazir 32b, 2) the statement of R. Ashi at Arakhin 13a, 3) statements of various Amoraic Sages and anonymous statements at Rosh ha-Shanah 3b–4a, and 4) the statement of R. Aha b. Jacob at Avodah Zarah 10a. The SO chronology is also generally viewed as being implicit in many of the chronological statements at Avodah Zarah 9a–9b and Sanhedrin 97a–97b, and in the accepted Jewish count from creation.

For references to Jewish sources from the Amoraic period that follow something close to the SO chronology, see the additional note at the end of App. D.

The only Jewish source from the Tannaitic or Amoraic periods that expresses the view that the Persian period was a protracted one is Josephus. (See n. 15.) But the fact that Josephus expresses such a view is not a basis to claim that there must have been such a view held by some Sages. Indeed, that not one Amora responds to any of the recitations of the 420-year or 34-year traditions in the Talmud (or to any of the statements in the Talmud that seem to be following the SO chronology) with the expression of a view that the Persian period was a protracted one tends to show that no such view existed among the Amoraim.

The first group of responses<sup>11</sup> takes the approach that the author of the SO chronology: 1) had an accurate knowledge of the chronology of the Persian period, and 2) was caused by extrachronological considerations<sup>12</sup> to express the widely divergent chronology that he did.

But if the author of the SO chronology lived in the Tannaitic period, the period in which the SO chronology was most likely authored, there is little reason to believe that he would have had an accurate knowledge of the chronology of the Persian period. There is no evidence that any type of system of reckoning was used by the Jews during the Persian period that would have enabled an accurate record of the length of the Persian period to have been kept and passed down.<sup>13</sup> There is also no

11. Schwab (B-24), Kedar (B-37), and Hakohen (B-41); and perhaps Rapoport (B-4) and Ratner (B-10).

12. The term "extrachronological considerations" is used to refer to considerations or desires, *not* based on conventional chronological evidence, that would have caused the author of the SO chronology to express a chronology different from what he believed or suspected to be the true chronology. For examples of extrachronological considerations, see n. 31 and see the discussion of the third group of responses. ("Conventional chronological evidence" is used to mean historical or chronological data, including data supplied by the Bible, assuming that the author of the SO chronology would have viewed the particular data supplied by the Bible as reliable historical source material. Assumption can be made that the author of the SO chronology would have viewed the material regarding the Second Temple and Persian periods found in the book of Ezra-Nehemiah as reliable historical source material. This assumption cannot automatically be made in the case of the material regarding the Second Temple and Persian periods found in the book of Daniel, because practically all of this material is included in the book in the form of predictions (by angels, stated to Daniel). See, for example, Yoma 73b, where the Sages allow for the possibility that the decree of a prophet does not have to come true: גזירת נביא חזרה.)

13. For example, there is no meaningful evidence that the Jews were using a system of reckoning during the Persian period that started in the beginning of the Persian period (or earlier), continued through the reigns of the individual Persian kings, and ran through the entire Persian period.

In this context, two passages from rabbinic sources merit mention:

1. M. Gittin 8:5 discusses the cases of those who might have dated their bill of divorce according to a count from מלכות מדי (the kingdom of Medea) or בנין הבית (the building of the Temple). It might be speculated that the Mishna's

evidence that the Tannaim had the extrabiblical sources in front of them that would have given them the names of all, or even most, of the Persian kings.<sup>14</sup> Even Josephus, who claims to have been a historian and did utilize extrabiblical sources regarding the Persian period, does not seem to have known the names of all the Persian kings and misstates the length of the period.<sup>15</sup> Of course, it is possible that the author of the SO

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inclusion of these cases indicates that there was a time in which counts from the reign of the Medean king Daryavesh or the building of the Second Temple were used by the Jews. But more likely, the Mishna included these cases only because they had theoretical value; the Mishna's inclusion of these cases did not necessarily mean that there must have been a period in which these cases were actual ones.

2. The Jerusalem Talmud at Rosh ha-Shanah 56a–b (1:1) (with a parallel at Mekhilta on Exodus 19:1, ed. Friedmann, p. 61a) contains a passage that discusses the various systems of reckoning employed by the Jews in ancient times. The passage seems to claim that the Jews were reckoning according to the reigns of the individual Persian kings during the Persian period. If the ancient Sages believed that there was some broader system of reckoning in use by the Jews during the Persian period, one would have expected this to be reflected in this passage.

14. Note that extrabiblical sources regarding the Persian period would probably not even have provided the author of the SO chronology with the correct figure for the length of the period, or enabled him to calculate the correct figure. From what is known about these sources, it seems that all of them erred regarding the lengths of many of the kings' reigns and the sum total of the period, even though they viewed the period as a protracted one.

One exception is the Canon of the 2nd-century CE Alexandrian astronomer Ptolemy (see App. B). This source would have provided the author of the SO chronology with the correct chronology of the Persian period. It is possible that the author of the SO chronology (if this author was R. Yose or some other Tanna from around his time) could have obtained this source. (Ptolemy and R. Yose lived about the same time.) But it is doubtful that the author of the SO chronology would have viewed this non-Jewish source as reliable enough to warrant the effort needed to obtain it, and the same can be said with regard to any of the other non-Jewish sources regarding the chronology of the Persian period that were available to the author of the SO chronology, but not in front of him.

15. In his description of the Persian period, Josephus mentions only seven of the Persian kings. See Part II, n. 16. And when he records the length of the Second Temple period at *Jewish War*, VI para. 270, he overstates its length by approximately 32 to 50 years. Josephus writes that the Second Temple period, commencing from the rebuilding of the Temple by Haggai in the second year of

chronology had an accurate knowledge of the chronology of the Persian period<sup>16</sup> (notwithstanding the chronology that he expressed), but postu-

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Cyrus, spanned 639 years. If Josephus was indeed counting his 639 years from the second year of Cyrus (i.e., the second year of Cyrus' reign over the land of Israel: 538 BCE), then Josephus overestimates the length of the period he describes by 32 years. But because the only king mentioned in the Bible in connection with Haggai is Darius, it is possible that Josephus' reference to Cyrus was just a slip, and that Josephus was really counting his 639 years from the 2nd year of Darius (520 BCE). If this is the case, then Josephus overestimates the length of the Second Temple period by 50 years. Regarding Josephus' intent in this passage, see also his statement at *Against Apion*, I, para. 154.

Josephus also seems to overestimate the length of the Second Temple period in his statements at *Jewish War*, I, para. 70; *Jewish Antiquities*, XIII, para. 301, and XX, para. 234.

Josephus also erroneously places Ezra and Nehemiah in the reign of Xerxes, and erroneously identifies the Ahashverosh of the book of Esther with Artaxerxes I. See his *Jewish Antiquities*, XI, para. 120 ff., and para. 184 ff. It is now clear that the Ahashverosh of the book of Esther is to be identified with Xerxes. See App. B, n. 17, and see also App. C.

16. Perhaps the Jews did have a system of reckoning of the type mentioned in n. 13 (first paragraph), or perhaps extrabiblical sources were in front of the author of the SO chronology, which enabled him to know the names of all the Persian kings. It is also possible that the author of the SO chronology obtained an accurate, or approximately accurate, chronology of the Persian period from conversations with non-Jews of his time, or from Temple records (assuming that records from which an accurate chronology of the Persian period could be constructed were kept and were not lost or destroyed in persecutions prior to the time of the author).

In the unlikely event that the SO chronology of the Persian period was authored in the late 4th century BCE, as suggested by Rapoport (and perhaps implicit in Schwab), there is obviously a greater chance that the author would have had an accurate, or approximately accurate, knowledge of the chronology of the Persian period (notwithstanding the chronology that he expressed). But postulating that the SO chronology was authored so early raises the difficult question of how the author would have been able to express such a chronology in the face of the elder generation of Jews, who would have been aware that the period of Persian dominion spanned significantly longer than 34 years. See Part III, nn. 131 and 194. Also, regardless of the time that the SO chronology was authored, if the assumption is made that the author had an accurate knowledge

lating this is entirely conjectural.<sup>17</sup> (Aspect 2 of the approach of the first group of responses,<sup>18</sup> namely, that extrachronological considerations caused the author to express the widely divergent chronology that he did, will be discussed below in connection with the third group of responses.)

A second group of responses takes the approach that the author of the SO chronology had little or no extrabiblical knowledge of the chronology of the Persian period, and believes that a widely divergent chronology is essentially what should have been expected from him.<sup>19</sup> The responses in this group assume that the author of the SO chronology believed that the chronology he expressed was the true one.<sup>20</sup> Of course, the SO chronology does not fit precisely with the biblical data regarding the number of Persian kings and the lengths of their reigns, and some of these responses suggest specific interpretations or assumptions made by the author of the SO chronology, or traditions received by him, that help explain some of the precise details of the chronology expressed.<sup>21</sup>

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of the chronology of the Persian period, then explanation must be offered as to why he would have expressed a chronology that moved Ahashverosh to a period earlier than his true period (see Part III, n. 195).

17. On the other hand, a reasonable argument can be made that the author of the SO chronology may have been able to deduce that the Persian period spanned at least six generations. See the discussion of the second group of responses.

18. See p. 118.

19. E.g., Raphall (B-5), Zuckerman (B-8), Marcus (B-13), Bornstein (B-16), Ginsberg (B-19), Akavya (B-22), Schatz (B-32), Herr (B-34), Mantel (B-36), Tabori (B-38), and Guggenheimer (B-40).

20. Except for Bornstein, who suggests that an extrachronological consideration caused the author to make a slight adjustment in his chronology and add 3 years to the reign of Daryavesh=Artahshasta.

21. The interpretations, assumptions, and traditions that warrant closest scrutiny are: 1) the author had a tradition that the Persian king defeated by Alexander was named Daryavesh and equated this Daryavesh with the Daryavesh mentioned in the book of Ezra, in whose reign the Second Temple was built (Bornstein and Schatz); 2) the author interpreted Daniel 11:2 and/or Daniel 7:5 to predict that the Persian period would span the reigns of exactly three Persian kings (and believed that this prediction must have come true) (Tabori); 3) the author interpreted Daniel 9:24–27 to predict that the period from the beginning of the exilic period to the end of the Second Temple period would span 490 years (and believed that this prediction must have come true) and, given his traditions

Support for the view that the Jews of the late Second Temple period and thereafter may have had little or no extrabiblical knowledge of the chronology of the Persian period is perhaps found in the fact that Daniel

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of a 70-year exilic period and a 386-year period from the beginning of the Greek era to the destruction of the Second Temple, concluded that the period of Persian dominion must have spanned 34 years. (This is the import of many responses; see also n. 42.)

All of these suggestions present difficulties. Regarding the first suggestion, see Part III, n. 158. Regarding the second suggestion, see App. A, n. 2, and see Part III, n. 231.

Regarding the third suggestion, if the author of the SO chronology was motivated solely by considerations relating to plain sense interpretation, it is questionable whether he would have viewed the beginning of the exilic period and the end of the Second Temple period as the intended *terminii* of the 490 years of Daniel 9:24–27. Reasonable arguments can be made to support other *terminii* being the ones intended (see n. 43), and certainly the *terminii* intended are unclear. (If the author also had prior traditions regarding a 70-year exilic period and a 386-year Greco-Hasmonean-Roman period, he probably would have been especially hesitant to believe that the beginning of the exilic period and the end of the Second Temple period were the *terminii* intended. If these were the *terminii* intended, there would not be enough room for Daryavesh and Artahshasta to be separate kings.) It is also not certain that the author would have believed that the prediction at Daniel 9:24–27 must definitely have come true. If the only goal of the author of the SO chronology was the expression of chronological views that he believed to be true ones and if the author was motivated solely by considerations relating to plain sense interpretation, it can be argued that the author would have refrained from deriving any chronology from Daniel 9:24–27 altogether.

But the fact that both the book of Daniel and SO express chronologies with 490-year periods points strongly to the conclusion that the 490-year period of the latter was derived from the former. The fact that SO relates its 490-year period to Daniel 9:24–27 (see App. A, passage 2) points to this conclusion as well. The import of the statement of Abaye at Nazir 32b is also that the 490-year period of the SO chronology was derived from Daniel 9:24–27. Accordingly, this study takes the position that the author of the SO chronology derived the 490-year period in his chronology from Daniel 9:24–27. But it is difficult to accept that this derivation was the simple matter of the author looking at Daniel 9:24–27 and deciding that these verses unequivocally predicted that the period from the beginning of the exilic period to the end of the Second Temple period would span 490 years. See the discussion at pp. 128–137.

11:2 mentions only three or four Persian kings. Modern scholars believe that the author or final editor of chapters 7–12 of the book of Daniel lived in the 2nd-century BCE.<sup>22</sup> If their belief is accepted, the chronology of the Persian period expressed at Daniel 11:2 would be evidence that a 2nd-century BCE Jewish source knew of only three or four Persian kings.<sup>23</sup>

One problem with the approach of the second group of responses is that the author of the SO chronology may have been able to deduce from the description of the six successive generations of high priests at Nehemiah 12:10–11 that the Persian period spanned at least six generations.<sup>24</sup> If he made such a deduction, he would most probably have

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22. But note that according to a tradition recorded in the Talmud, the book of Daniel was authored or edited by the Men of the Great Assembly. See Bava Batra 15a.

23. It is also possible that the author or final editor of Daniel 11:2 knew of five Persian kings, and intended the "fourth" king he enumerated to be the fourth king aside from Koresh. See App. A, n. 2. (But it is also possible that the author or final editor of Daniel 11:2 only intended an enumeration of some of the Persian kings, e.g., the first few, or the mightiest, or the ones whose reigns were of consequence for the Jews.)

The suggestion that the SO chronology is close to the 2nd-century BCE chronology reflected in the 11th chapter of Daniel, and is therefore not so surprising, seems to have been first made by a non-Jewish scholar, C. Torrey. See his "Medes and Persians," *JAOS* 66, (1946), pp. 1–5. It is also implicit in the response of Ginsberg (B-19).

24. This argument is made by de Rossi (B-1). Surprisingly, it is not made in any of the other responses in category B (although the responses in the first group and many of the responses in the third group would probably agree with it).

The argument that the author of the SO chronology may have been able to deduce that the Persian period spanned at least six generations can be rebutted. The above verses nowhere indicate that the high priests described all served during the Persian period, and it can be argued that the author of the SO chronology viewed the last few of the high priests as having served in the Greek period. Even if the author had a tradition that the books of Ezra and Nehemiah were authored by Ezra or Nehemiah (see Bava Batra 15a and Sanhedrin 93b), this probably would not, in his mind, have precluded the inclusion of predictive material in the books. Of course, if the author had a tradition (similar to the one at Yoma 69a) that Simon the Just was the high priest in the transition between the Persian and Greek periods, this probably would have indicated to the author that the high priests described, none of whom are named Simon, all served in the



believed either: 1) that the Persian period was a protracted one or 2) that there was a conflict between the chronology implicit from these verses and the shorter chronology implicit from the verses regarding the Persian kings.<sup>25</sup> If he believed the former, then the SO chronology is certainly surprising. If he believed the latter, the SO chronology is also surprising. If the only goal of the author was the expression of chronological views that he believed to be true ones, the author should perhaps have refrained altogether from expressing an authoritative chronology of the Persian period.<sup>26</sup>

One other problem with the approach of the second group of responses is that a strong argument can be made that the author of the SO chronology could not have believed his equating of Daryavesh and Artahshasta to be true or at least must have had some hesitancy about believing it to be true.<sup>27</sup> Daryavesh and Artahshasta are mentioned

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Persian period. But the author could have viewed one of the high priests on this list as identical with Simon. It is also possible (but unlikely) that the author of the SO chronology did not notice these verses altogether.

It should also be mentioned that if the author had a tradition that Simon the Just was the high priest in the transition between the Persian and Greek periods, and also knew from Ben Sira (50:1) that the name of Simon's father was Johanan, he might have deduced that the Persian period spanned at least eight generations—the six generations of Nehemiah 12:10–11 together with the generations of Johanan and Simon.

25. I.e., Daniel 11:2, which suggests that the Persian period spanned the reigns of only three or four (or, less likely, five) Persian kings, and the balance of the books of Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, in which a total of only about half a decade of years of Persian rule are specifically enumerated. See App. A, n. 6.

26. Aside from the two alternatives mentioned in the text above, there is also a third alternative: the author would have believed that a Persian period spanning six or slightly more generations of high priests was not inconsistent with a short Persian period. If Jeshua (the first high priest listed) was of advanced years when the Persian period commenced, and he and each of his descendants had their male offspring at an early age, the Persian period could have been a short one, and perhaps as many as eight generations of high priests could have served during its span. See, e.g., the scenarios suggested by Malbim (DI-1), commentary on Nehemiah 12:10, and Y. Rabinowitz (DI-7), *Nehemiah* (ArtScroll Tanach Series), p. 194. See also App. B, n. 24.

27. But it cannot be denied that once the author of the SO chronology

separately at Ezra 6:14, clearly indicating that the two are separate kings.

Finally, the third group of responses<sup>28</sup> takes the approach that extrachronological considerations<sup>29</sup> caused the author to express the widely divergent chronology that he did. Unlike the first group of responses, the responses in this group do not claim that the author had an accurate knowledge of the chronology of the Persian period.<sup>30</sup>

But many of the specific extrachronological considerations suggested, both by the first group of responses and the third group of responses, seem unlikely to have influenced the chronology.<sup>31</sup> However, a few of the extrachronological considerations suggested cannot be so easily dismissed. These are: 1) a desire to express a chronology in which MS comes out to be exactly 1,000 years after the Exodus,<sup>32</sup> and 2) a desire

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decided to equate Daryavesh and Artahshasta, the author was willing to derive further historical details based on this equating of the two kings. The author states elsewhere in SO (chap. 29, p. 434) that Ezra came to the land of Israel in the year following the 6th year of Daryavesh. (According to Ezra 7:7, Ezra came to the land of Israel in the 7th year of Artahshasta.)

28. E.g., de Rossi (B-1), Krochmal (B-3), Rapoport (B-4) (unless he belongs in the first group), Loeb (B-9), Ratner (B-10) (unless he belongs in the first group), Jacobs (B-12), Biberfeld (B-17), Isaacson (B-30), and Breuer (B-31).

29. See n. 12.

30. Some of the responses included in this group seem to believe that the author knew that the Persian period was a protracted one. Others seem to believe only that the author knew that the Persian period spanned a slightly longer time than the time he assigned to it.

31. E.g.: 1) a desire to express a chronology in which the length of the Second Temple period was approximately the same as the length of the First Temple period (de Rossi), 2) a desire to express a chronology that would justify the count from creation that was already in use (Biberfeld), and 3) a desire to prevent people from being able to accurately predict the time of the coming of the Messiah (Schwab, Kedar, and Hakohen).

On the difficulty with the first suggestion, see Part III, n. 105; on the difficulty with the second suggestion, see Part III, n. 164; and on the difficulties with the third suggestion, see Part III, n. 194.

32. Rapoport and Jacobs. (Loeb and Bornstein also postulate that this desire influenced the chronology but postulate that it caused years to be added to the Persian period.)

to assign the shortest of all possible lengths of time that can be derived from the biblical text.<sup>33</sup>

Regarding the former, expressing a chronology in which MS comes out to be exactly 1,000 years after the Exodus does not seem to have been an important goal of the author of the SO chronology. There is no mention of this phenomenon in SO, and the phenomenon is only noticeable if several statements scattered throughout SO are added up and combined them a 6-year tradition that is not mentioned in SO.<sup>34</sup> If the assumption is made that the SO chronology of the Persian period was authored by the author of SO, it would seem unlikely that a desire to express a chronology in which MS comes out to be exactly 1,000 years after the Exodus was a consideration that played a major role for him.<sup>35</sup>

On the other hand, it seems unlikely that it is mere coincidence that

33. De Rossi and Krochmal.

34. See Part III, nn. 128 and 148. The suggestion that the desire to express a chronology in which MS comes out to be exactly 1,000 years after the Exodus caused the author of the SO chronology to reduce the length of the period of Persian dominion to 34 years assumes that the 6-year tradition was already in existence at the time that the length of the period of Persian dominion was being decided. Even though this 6-year tradition is not included in SO, this assumption is not an unreasonable one. The fact that a rabbinic chronological tradition is not included in SO does not mean that it did not exist before, or simultaneous with, the traditions included in SO. (For example, the tradition that the First Temple period spanned 410 years is not included in SO but seems to have existed before, or simultaneous with, a certain other tradition that is included in SO. See Part III, n. 18.) For a suggestion to explain the origin of this 6-year tradition, see n. 48.

35. Even with the alternative assumption that the SO chronology of the Persian period was authored prior to the composition of SO, there would still be reason to doubt that a desire to express a chronology in which MS comes out to be exactly 1,000 years after the Exodus was a consideration that played a major role for the author of the SO chronology of the Persian period. The author of SO probably would have lived close to the time of the author of the SO chronology of the Persian period and have had some understanding of the goals of the author of the chronology and the results of the chronology authored. Because describing the fact that MS comes out to be exactly 1,000 years after the Exodus in rabbinic chronology does not seem to have been of any importance to the author of SO, this is some indication that it probably was of little importance to the author of the SO chronology of the Persian period as well.

MS comes out to be exactly 1,000 years after the Exodus in the rabbinic chronological scheme, and a reasonable argument can be made that a desire to express a chronology in which MS comes out to be exactly 1,000 years after the Exodus may have had a minor influence on the author of the SO chronology. More specifically, if the chronology arrived at for other reasons came close to achieving this result, the author may have been willing to make a minor adjustment in his chronology to achieve precisely this result.<sup>36</sup>

Regarding the latter, it might explain the assignment of precisely three Persian kings to the Persian period<sup>37</sup> and the choice to ignore the import of the verses regarding the six generations of high priests.<sup>38</sup> But it would not explain the assignment of precisely 34 years to the period of Persian dominion, when (under the assumption that Daryavesh=Artahshasta) only 31 years of the period of Persian dominion are included

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36. For example, if the author had already assigned 34 years to the period of Persian dominion, he may have then chosen to assign precisely 6 years to the subsequent period so that MS would come out to be exactly 1,000 years after the Exodus. Or, if the author's initial assumption was that the Persian period spanned the reigns of only Koresh, Ahashverosh, and Daryavesh=Artahshasta, and hence, that the period of Persian dominion spanned only 31 years, the author may have decided to add precisely 3 years to the period of Persian dominion so that MS would come out to be exactly 1,000 years after the Exodus.

But this study does not present either of these suggestions as likely. Regarding the latter, this study does not accept that the author's initial assumption would have been that the Persian period spanned the reigns of only three Persian kings. Regarding the former, this study does not accept that the assignment of 34 years to the period of Persian dominion preceded the assignment of 6 years to the subsequent period. See n. 48.

37. Interpreting Daniel 11:2 to indicate that the Persian period spanned the reigns of only three Persian kings is the interpretation of this verse which assigns the shortest possible length of time to the Persian period. Also, if the author of the SO chronology was unsure as to whether Artahshasta was a throne name or a proper name, a desire to assign the shortest of all possible lengths of time could have been something that caused him to choose the former interpretation.

38. It should also be mentioned that many scholars have claimed that a desire to assign the shortest of all possible lengths of time helps explain elements of the SO chronology in periods other than the Persian period.

in the Bible.<sup>39</sup> It is also not entirely clear why the author would have had a desire to assign the shortest of all possible lengths of time that can be derived from the biblical text.<sup>40</sup>

The other extrachronological consideration suggested to have caused the widely divergent chronology is a desire to make the chronology stated fit with the 490-year period predicted<sup>41</sup> at Daniel 9:24–27. In this scenario, the author believed that the fact that a chronological prediction was made at Daniel 9:24–27 did not necessarily mean that the prediction must have come true. Nevertheless, the author desired to express a chronology in which the prediction appeared to come true.<sup>42</sup>

39. The last year of Daryavesh=Artahshasta mentioned in the Bible is his 32nd year (see App. A, n. 6) and the period of Persian dominion commenced in his 2nd year, when the work on the rebuilding commenced (see App. A, n. 11).

40. It is possible to understand this as arising from an underlying desire to fix a chronology for future generations that is least subject to attack. When an author of a chronology is faced with contradictions between verses or verses that are subject to different interpretations, the best way to construct a chronology least subject to attack may be to follow the verses or interpretations that result in the shortest chronology possible. The alternative may leave gaps in aspects of the chronology, leaving the chronology too vague for future generations. A desire to fix a firm chronology for future generations was almost certainly a prime consideration of the author of SO. A desire to assign the shortest of all possible lengths of time, if understood as a corollary of this desire, would then be the type of extrachronological consideration that might likely have influenced the chronology.

41. The author of the SO chronology almost certainly viewed these passages as a prediction. This is in contrast to the view of most modern scholars, who believe that the 7th through 12th chapters of the book of Daniel were authored or put into final form in the 2nd century BCE and that the intended *terminus ad quem* of the 490 years was some event that occurred *prior* to the time of the author of these chapters. In the view of these modern scholars, there was no prediction here at all, just a description of a 490-year period that had already terminated.

42. Many responses suggest that the author of the SO chronology had a desire to make the chronology stated fit with the 490-year period predicted at Daniel 9:24–27, and that a short period of Persian dominion was the result of the combination of this desire and the author's traditions regarding the lengths of the exilic and Greco-Hasmonean-Roman periods. But with regard to most of these responses, it is not clear whether they are based on the belief that: 1) the author had this desire because he believed that the prediction at Daniel 9:24–27 must have come true, or 2) the author had this desire because he was trying to

Once the author had such a desire, he may have believed that verses 9:24–27 most reasonably implied that the *terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem* of the 490 years were the beginning of the exilic period and the end of the Second Temple period, or he may have been influenced by other considerations to assign precisely these *terminii*.<sup>43</sup>

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express a chronology in which the prediction appeared to come true, even though he believed the prediction did not necessarily come true. In the latter instance, the author's desire would be an extrachronological consideration. In the former instance, it would not. See n. 12.

43. The *terminus a quo* of the 490 years is described as something that occurred 7 weeks (49 years) before the arising of a משיח, an appellation used in the Bible to describe Koresh (see Isaiah 45:1). This supports the view that the beginning of the exilic period was the *terminus a quo* intended. On the other hand, the fact that the 490 years are described as commencing "from the going forth of the word to restore and to build Jerusalem" (Daniel 9:25) seems to point to the proclamation of Koresh as the *terminus a quo* (see Ezra 1:2–3). The above phrase could also support the beginning of the exilic period as the *terminus a quo* if a prophecy could be found about the return, given by Jeremiah in the year of the destruction of the First Temple or in the following year. But none of Jeremiah's prophecies about the return are dated by the Bible to these years. (Note also that Daniel 9:2 also supports connecting Daniel 9:25 with a prophecy of Jeremiah's.) For many reasons, a strong argument can be made that the author was not sure what the intended *terminii* of the 490 years were, and that his desire to use Daniel's 490-year period in his chronology forced him to choose the *terminii* that presented the fewest difficulties for him.

Although the choice of the beginning of the exilic period as the *terminus a quo* resulted in the author having to express a chronology in which Daryavesh was equated with Artahshasta, this difficulty may have been preferable to him than the difficulties that would have arisen if either of the other leading candidates for the *terminus a quo* were chosen. The other leading candidates for the *terminus a quo* were: 1) the proclamation of Koresh, and 2) the building of the Second Temple. Choosing these might have forced the author to state a period of Persian dominion of approximately 86 or 104 years and might have presented a problem. If the author had no extrabiblical sources regarding the chronology of the Persian period before him, the author would not have been able to state the names of all the Persian kings who reigned during such an 86- or 104-year period. Creating a chronology with all of its elements certain, albeit some of them forced, may have been preferable to the author than creating a chronology that left some elements open and unclear for future generations.

Under the assumptions that the author was motivated by the extrachronological consideration of desiring to make the chronology stated fit with the 490-year period predicted at Daniel 9:24–27, and that he desired to assign precisely the *terminii* that he did, the chronology can be completely explained.<sup>44</sup> The author certainly had a firm tradition that the exilic period spanned 70 years<sup>45</sup> and probably had a firm tradition<sup>46</sup>

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With regard to the *terminus ad quem*, it is hard to make the case that the author would have believed that the end of the Second Temple period was precisely the *terminus ad quem* intended. Although Daniel 9:26 does predict a time when "the city and the sanctuary" (העיר והקודש) will be destroyed, which could perhaps be considered a prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Second Temple, the time these are predicted to occur is after 69 weeks of years, and not after 70 weeks of years. The *terminus ad quem* of the 70 weeks of years seems to be the end of some 7-year period involving a covenant (see Daniel 9:27). Such a 7-year period was probably unknown to the author. It seems reasonable to suggest that the end of the Second Temple period was assigned to be the *terminus ad quem* because of the author's desire to express a chronology that ran through the end of the Second Temple period and found support for itself in the Bible, combined with his desire to assign a pronounced and well-known *terminus* for the *terminus ad quem*.

It should be mentioned that the claim has been made that the end of the Second Temple period was approximately the *terminus ad quem* of the 70 weeks in the view of Josephus. See J. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, p. 396, and Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, X, para. 276. See also J. Braverman, *Jerome's Commentary on Daniel*, pp. 109–11. If this was Josephus' view, it could be argued that the author of the SO chronology was simply following an earlier Jewish tradition when he assigned his *terminus ad quem*. But the evidence that this was Josephus' view of the *terminus ad quem* is ambiguous.

44. The chronology can also be completely explained under other scenarios related to Daniel 9:24–27. See pp. 135–137.

45. See App. A, n. 3.

46. Because the Jews were counting according to MS at the time of the destruction, they must have known in what year the destruction occurred on the MS count, and it is reasonable to suggest that a tradition as to what year this was would have arisen and been passed down to the author of the SO chronology. If no such tradition would have been passed down to the author of the SO chronology, the author could have calculated what year this was by comparing the count from MS in use in his time with the count from the destruction, which was also in use (see SO, chapter 30, p. 440). Exactly what his conclusion would

that the destruction of the Second Temple occurred in the 381st year of MS, from which he would have deduced that the period from the beginning of MS until the destruction of the Second Temple spanned approximately 380 years.<sup>47</sup> Given these firm traditions, a strong desire to make the chronology stated fit with the 490-year period predicted at Daniel 9:24–27, and a choice of the beginning of the exilic period and the end of the Second Temple period as the *terminii* for this period would indeed have forced the author to reduce the length of the period from the building of the Second Temple to the beginning of MS to approximately 40 years. If the author also had a tradition or made a calculation that the length of time from the beginning of the Greek period until the commencement of MS was 6 years,<sup>48</sup> he would have been forced to

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have been depends on which method of counting according to MS he used (see nn. 47 and 49).

47. Various methods of counting according to MS were in use in the different communities in ancient times, and precisely which method was the one employed by the Jews in the land of Israel in the last centuries of the Second Temple period and in the Tannaitic period is the subject of much debate.

The two most widely held scenarios are that the Jews in the land of Israel in this era were counting according to a method that assumed that year 1 of MS commenced in the spring of 311 BCE or according to a method that assumed that year 1 of MS commenced in the fall of 312 BCE. According to the former scenario, the destruction of the Temple in the summer of 70 CE would have occurred in the 381st year of MS, approximately 380 years and 4 months after the commencement of MS. According to the latter scenario, the destruction of the Temple in the summer of 70 CE would have occurred in the 381st year of MS, approximately 380 years and 10 months after the commencement of MS.

48. This study accepts that the author had such a tradition or made such a calculation. Such a tradition is recorded in the Talmud (*Avodah Zarah* 10a) in the name of R. Yose. See Part III, n. 128. Although the tradition is not included in SO, it is not unreasonable to postulate that the tradition was already in existence at the time that a length was being assigned to the period of Persian dominion. See n. 34. In the view of this study, SO's assignment of precisely 34 years to the period of Persian dominion is so inexplicable that it can only be reasonably explained as being the result of the subtraction from 490 years of the combination of this 6-year tradition or calculation, and the author's tradition regarding the length of the exilic period (70 years), and tradition or calculation regarding the length of the period from MS to the destruction (approximately 380 years).



assign 34 years to the period of Persian dominion.<sup>49</sup>

Under the assumptions that the author was motivated by the extrachronological consideration of desiring to make the chronology

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Note that C. Milikowsky, *Seder Olam: A Rabbinic Chronography*, p. 1, hypothesizes that the passage in SO that assigns 34 years to the period of Persian dominion (App. A, passage 5), a passage concerned mainly with postbiblical chronology, was not a part of the original SO. Even if Milikowsky's hypothesis would be correct, this would have no effect on the above analysis because an assignment of precisely 34 years to the period of Persian dominion is implicit in SO's assignment of 52 years to the total of the Medean and Persian periods. See App. A, n. 7.

Regarding 6-year tradition, this study suggests the following scenario to explain its origin. The author of the tradition may have believed: 1) that Alexander reigned a total of 12 years, 2) that Alexander's conquests of Persia and Israel took place in the 6th year of his reign, and 3) that MS commenced immediately upon Alexander's death. There is strong evidence that the author had the first of these beliefs. SO itself (chap. 30, p. 439) contains a statement that Alexander reigned a total of 12 years (and see also 1 Maccabees 1:7). It is not far-fetched to suggest that the author had the second of these beliefs. Such a tradition is found in many ancient sources (see, e.g., the sources collected by de Rossi, in his *Me'or Einayim, Imrei Binah*, chap. 23, p. 249) and is a roughly accurate one (off by about only 1 year). The third of these beliefs (which is a grossly erroneous one) would not have been an unreasonable assumption for a historian, without sufficient sources, to make.

49. It was mentioned in n. 47 that, in one possible scenario, the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE would have occurred approximately 380 years and 10 months after the commencement of MS. If this was the tradition or calculation of the author of the SO chronology, we can explain the 34-year figure by suggesting that the author believed that one or both of the 70-year and 6-year traditions were not traditions regarding full and complete years.

It must also be mentioned that there are those who have suggested that Jews in the land of Israel in the last centuries of the Second Temple period or in the Tannaitic period were counting according to methods other than the ones specified in n. 47. E. Frank, for example (*Talmudic and Rabbinical Chronology*, pp. 30–32), suggests that the author of 1 Maccabees was counting according to a method that assumed that the fall of 312 BCE brought with it year 2 of MS. (Frank believes that the author of 2 Maccabees was counting according to the second scenario mentioned in n. 47.) According to the method of counting that Frank believes was employed by the author of 1 Maccabees, the destruction of

stated fit with the 490-year period predicted at Daniel 9:24–27, and that he desired to assign precisely the *terminii* that he did, it is understood how the author would have been willing to overlook: 1) the fact that his chronology forced the equating of Daryavesh and Artahshasta, 2) the evidence from the successive generations of high priests of the Persian period (which, in any event, did not squarely contradict his chronology<sup>50</sup>), and 3) any other evidence he may have had that the Persian period was a protracted one.<sup>51</sup> The fact that Daniel 11:2 could be inter-

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the Temple in the summer of 70 CE would have occurred in the 382nd year of MS. If this was the tradition or calculation of the author of the SO chronology, it becomes more difficult to explain how the author would have derived a 34-year period of Persian dominion by subtracting from 490 years the total of his 70-year tradition, his 6-year tradition, and his tradition or calculation as to the length of time between MS and the destruction (although it would still be possible to do so). Note finally that there is strong evidence from a comparison of the dates in First and Second Maccabees that more than one method of counting according to MS was in use among the Jews in the land of Israel in the last centuries of the Second Temple period.

50. See n. 26.

51. I have no reason to believe that the author of the SO chronology had before him evidence from extrabiblical sources that supported a protracted Persian period. But even if the author of the SO chronology had such evidence before him, if the author was motivated by the extrachronological consideration of desiring to make the chronology stated fit with the 490-year period predicted at Daniel 9:24–27 and believed that verses 9:24–27 most reasonably implied that the *terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem* of the 490 years were the beginning of the exilic period and the end of the Second Temple period, this extrachronological consideration would have overridden any desire on his part to state a chronology in reliance on such evidence. (See definition of “extrachronological considerations” at n. 12.) Moreover, if the author of the SO chronology had before him evidence from extrabiblical sources that supported a protracted Persian period, or had access to such evidence, he surely would have had some questions about its reliability.

If the author was motivated by the extrachronological consideration of desiring to make the chronology stated fit with the 490-year period predicted at Daniel 9:24–27 but was not sure what the intended *terminii* of the 490 years were, the author might still have desired to avoid choosing *terminii* that would result in a chronology with a protracted Persian period. If the evidence before him from extrabiblical sources was not sufficient to provide him with the names and exact

puted to support his chronology also enabled the author to maintain it.<sup>52</sup> Finally, the consideration that it was important to present one firm chronology for future generations to follow might have prevented the author from expressing any alternative chronology of the Persian period.<sup>53</sup>

Although the SO chronology can be completely explained under the above scenario, there are two main difficulties with it. The first is that it is not immediately clear why the fulfillment of the biblical prediction at Daniel 9:24–27 should have been so important to the author. The *terminii* of the 490 years of Daniel 9:24–27 are unclear and there was nothing that forced the author to use Daniel 9:24–27 in his chronology at all.

An answer to this difficulty is that it may have been important to the author to express a chronology that spanned from Adam to the end of the Second Temple period<sup>54</sup> and to find support in the Bible for the entire length of his chronology. These verses in the book of Daniel may have been the only verses in the Bible that could reasonably be interpreted to give an indication of the length of the entire Second Temple period. Once the author decided that it was important to use these verses in his chronology, he may have believed that the verses most reasonably implied that the *terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem* of the 490 years were the beginning of the exilic period and the end of the Second Temple period,

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lengths of reigns of all the Persian kings who might have reigned during a protracted Persian period (even assuming the author did not have questions about the reliability of this evidence), the author might have refrained from expressing a chronology that included such a protracted period. Creating a chronology with all of its elements certain, albeit some of them forced, may have been preferable to the author than creating a chronology that left some elements open and unclear for future generations. See n. 43.

52. Although Daniel 11:2 could have been consistent with a chronology of four or five Persian kings as well.

53. This point is made by de Rossi.

54. He may have felt that such a complete chronology was needed for future generations to build upon. Also, the practice in his time may have been to date events from the destruction of the Second Temple (see SO, chap. 30, p. 440) and for this reason it may also have been important to him to express a chronology that was complete up to that point. Admitting to a lack of knowledge of the length of any particular period from Adam to the destruction of the Second Temple was probably not an option for the author of SO. See similarly response C-11 (and n. 297 thereat).

or he may have been influenced by other considerations to assign precisely these *terminii*.<sup>55</sup>

The second difficulty is that it is probably unreasonable to postulate that the author of the SO chronology believed that the prediction at Daniel 9:24–27 did not necessarily have to come true. Most likely, the author of the SO chronology believed that the prediction at Daniel 9:24–27 must have come true.<sup>56</sup>

This study therefore suggests the following alternative scenarios in which the SO chronology can be completely explained,<sup>57</sup> this time under the assumption that the author of the SO chronology believed that the prediction at Daniel 9:24–27 must have come true. These scenarios are:

- The author believed that the prediction at Daniel 9:24–27 must have come true but was unsure how to understand the *terminii* of the 490 years. His chronology was an attempt at a plain-sense interpretation, without certainty whether his interpretation was the correct one. He was willing to express his interpretation and no other one because it was important to him to fix one chronology for future generations of Jews to rely upon, and not to allow for uncertainties in this area.

- The author believed that the prediction at Daniel 9:24–27 must have come true but was unsure how to understand the *terminii* of the 490 years. He decided to use these verses in his chronology because it was important to him to express a chronology that spanned from Adam to the end of the Second Temple period and to find support in the Bible for the entire length of his chronology. These verses in the book of Daniel were

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55. See n. 43.

56. Note that the prediction at Daniel 9:24–27 is made by the angel Gabriel.

57. These scenarios do not fit within any of the three groups in which most of the responses in category B have been divided. They do not fit within the third group of responses because, in these scenarios, the author's desire to express a chronology that fits with the prediction at Daniel 9:24–27 is not an extrachronological consideration. The author believes that the prediction at Daniel 9:24–27 must have come true. These scenarios do not fit within the second group of responses because, in these scenarios, the author has a significant amount of uncertainty about whether the chronology he has chosen to express is the correct one. These scenarios obviously do not fit within the first group of responses.

the only verses in the Bible that could reasonably be interpreted to give an indication of the length of the entire Second Temple period. Based on considerations not all related to plain-sense interpretation of Daniel 9:24–27,<sup>58</sup> the author assigned the beginning of the exilic period and the end of the Second Temple period to be the *terminii* of the 490 years.

- The author believed that the prediction at Daniel 9:24–27 must have come true and that the beginning of the exilic period and the end of the Second Temple period were the *terminii* of the 490 years. But the author was troubled about whether the chronology that resulted from the combination of this data with his traditions regarding the lengths of the exilic and Greco-Hasmonean-Roman periods could be a correct one, because this chronology would assign to the period of Persian dominion a length that was difficult to accept as correct. Nevertheless, the author was willing to express his chronology because it was important to him to fix one chronology for future generations of Jews to rely upon, and not to allow for uncertainties in this area.<sup>59</sup>

Under these scenarios, as under the scenario set forth previously, we

58. See n. 43.

59. Something like this scenario was suggested by de Rossi.

Note that the SO chronology can be completely explained by other scenarios as well. It is possible that the author of the SO chronology had a prior tradition that the 490 years of Daniel 9:24–27 ran from the beginning of the exilic period to the end of the Second Temple period, and that he was motivated by the extrachronological consideration of desiring to express a chronology loyal to this tradition, even though he believed or suspected that this tradition was not a correct one. (See, e.g., Ratner, and perhaps de Rossi and Isaacson.) But militating against this scenario is that both the 490-year and the 34-year elements of the SO chronology are recorded in SO in the name of R. Yose, which would seem to indicate that both of these elements of the chronology arose at the same time.

The SO chronology can alternatively be completely explained if assumption is made that its author expressed a chronology loyal to prior 490-year or 420-year traditions that were *not* derived from Daniel 9:24–27. But explaining the SO chronology by postulating prior 490-year or 420-year traditions just begs the question of where such traditions would have arisen. The fact that both the book of Daniel and SO express chronologies with 490-year periods points strongly to the conclusion that the 490-year period of the latter, and hence its 420-year period as well, were derived from the former. See n. 21.

can understand how the author would have been forced to reduce the length of the period of Persian dominion to precisely 34 years,<sup>60</sup> and how the author would have been willing to overlook: 1) the fact that his chronology forced the equating of Daryavesh and Artahshasta, 2) the evidence from the successive generations of high priests of the Persian period, and 3) any other evidence he may have had that the Persian period was a protracted one.<sup>61</sup>

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60. See pp. 130–131.

61. As stated in n. 51 I have no reason to believe that the author of the SO chronology had before him evidence from extrabiblical sources that supported a protracted Persian period. But even if the author of the SO chronology had such evidence before him (or access to such evidence):

- In the first and third of these scenarios, his beliefs under these scenarios and his probable questioning of the reliability of any extrabiblical sources to the contrary would likely have outweighed any desire on his part to follow the extrabiblical sources in the chronology he expressed.

- In the second of these scenarios, the author had reasons to assign the end of the Second Temple period to be the *terminus ad quem* of the 490 years (see n. 43, third para.), and probably had reasons to avoid choosing a *terminus a quo* that would result in a protracted Persian period. If the author had evidence before him from extrabiblical sources that supported a protracted Persian period, but this evidence was not sufficient to provide the author with the names and exact lengths of reigns of all the Persian kings who might have reigned during such a protracted period, the author might have refrained from choosing a *terminus a quo* that would result in such a protracted period. Creating a chronology with all of its elements certain, albeit some of them forced, may have been preferable to the author than creating a chronology that left some elements open and unclear for future generations. See n. 43 (second para.). The author also probably would have questioned the reliability of any extrabiblical sources.

Also, under all three scenarios, the author would have believed that the prediction at Daniel 11:2 must also have come true. This would have forced the author to reject any chronology inconsistent with Daniel 11:2 and its scenario of only a few Persian kings. Finally, the consideration that it was important to present one firm chronology for future generations to follow might have prevented the author from expressing any alternative chronology of the Persian period.



# V



## *SOME OBSERVATIONS REGARDING THE RABBINIC RESPONSES*





Focusing on the responses of the rabbinic figures, the following observations may be made:

## *Observation 1:*

The responses of the rabbinic figures are not confined to the adoption of the SO chronology. The following rabbinic figures have adopted the conventional chronology<sup>1</sup>: Solomon Judah Rapoport (B-4),<sup>2</sup> Morris Raphall (B-5), Hayyim Hirschensohn (C-5), Heymann Kottek (DIII-1), Jonas Bondi (C-7), Simon Glazer (DIII-2), Jacob Gutkovski (C-8), Philip Biberfeld (B-17), Hayyim Shvilly (B-26 and C-10), Kalman Kahana (DIII-3),<sup>3</sup> Joseph Hertz (DIII-4), Isaac Halevy (DIII-5),<sup>4</sup> Moses

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1. These rabbinic figures are listed in the order of the year of publication of their response. Note that a criteria has not been set forth for deciding which individuals are rabbinic figures and which individuals are not, and some latitude has been retained in this regard. The fact that an individual once received Orthodox rabbinic ordination was not sufficient to have the individual automatically considered a rabbinic figure. Note that some of the individuals included here as rabbinic figures may not have been rabbinic figures at the time of their response; nevertheless, they are included here because they later became rabbinic figures.

2. It is in his *Erekh Millin* (1852) that Rapoport discusses the discrepancy and adopts the conventional chronology. In earlier published material, Rapoport follows the SO chronology without discussing the discrepancy. See Part III, n. 132.

3. But subsequently, Kahana came to support the SO chronology. See Part III, n. 340, second para.

4. Even though evidence is provided that Halevy adopts the conventional chronology, there are instances in the *Dorot ha-Rishonim* regarding the late Second Temple and subsequent periods in which Halevy uses the dates from creation that

Auerbach (DIV-2), Gilbert Klaperman (DIII-6), Simon Schwab (B-24),<sup>5</sup> Issachar Jacobson (B-25), Shelomoh Danziger (DIII-7), Meir Herskovics (DIII-8), Jay Braverman (B-35), Abraham Bloch (DIII-9), Adin Steinsaltz (C-13), Berel Wein (B-39),<sup>6</sup> Abraham Rosenfeld (DIII-10), Samuel Hakohen (B-41),<sup>7</sup> Irving Greenberg (DIII-11), Shlomo Riskin (DIII-12), Emanuel Rackman (DIII-13), Louis Bernstein (DIII-14), and Haskel Lookstein (DIII-15).<sup>8</sup>

## Observation 2:

Of the rabbinic figures who have adopted the conventional chronology and discussed the discrepancy, there are only four instances where the rabbinic figure has not either: 1) suggested a textual emendation or reinterpretation of one or more of the five passages in SO in which the

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are derived from the SO chronology. See Part III, n. 343. The view of Halevy is thus not entirely clear.

5. But in his most recent response, Schwab retracts his adoption of the conventional chronology. See Part III, n. 191.

6. But in his most recent response, Wein chooses to follow the SO chronology. See Addenda.

7. Aside from the response of Samuel Hakohen included as response B-41, Samuel Hakohen also coauthored the *Da'at Mikra* edition of the book of Daniel. Regarding the response expressed in this work, see Part III, n. 361.

8. One can also find Orthodox scholars whose works are accepted by large portions of Orthodoxy who have adopted the conventional chronology: e.g., Ahron Marcus (B-13) and Ze'ev Jawitz (C-3). Also, both the Soncino and the Mossad ha-Rav Kook (*Da'at Mikra*) editions of the Bible consistently adopt the conventional chronology (end of DIII).

With regard to the responses in category DIII (Orthodox rabbis who adopt the conventional chronology without mentioning the SO chronology), it was mentioned earlier (Part III, n. 337) that the individuals who gave some of these responses may not have been aware of the SO chronology and the discrepancy it posed. Caution must be used in conclusions drawn about the responses in this category.

main elements of the chronology are expressed,<sup>9</sup> 2) expressly or implicitly denied that the author of the SO chronology believed in the historical truth of his chronology,<sup>10</sup> or 3) referred with approval to a response that expresses such a denial.<sup>11</sup>

The four rabbinic figures who did none of the above are: Morris Raphall, Philip Biberfeld (1948 response<sup>12</sup>), Hayyim Shvilly (1964 response), and Jay Braverman.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Observation 3:***

The majority of the rabbinic figures in category A do not seem to have been familiar with the precise sources upon which the conventional chronology is based.<sup>14</sup> More significantly, none of these figures seems to

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9. As did Hirschensohn, Bondi, Gutkovski, Shvilly (1935 response), and Steinsaltz.

10. As did Rapoport, Biberfeld (1935 response), Schwab, and Hakohen.

11. As did Jacobson and Wein. The term "with approval" is used loosely here because Wein did not state that he "approves" of the response of Schwab, even though the approach to understanding the SO chronology suggested by Schwab is the only approach that Wein mentions in his 1984 response. (Note that in his 1995 response, Wein chose to follow the SO chronology. See Add.)

12. See Part III, n. 165. But it is possible to argue that even in his 1948 response Biberfeld was of the view that the author of the SO chronology did not believe in the historical truth of his chronology, a view that Biberfeld seems to have espoused in his 1935 response.

13. But it is possible to argue that Braverman was of the view that the author of the SO chronology did not believe in the historical truth of his chronology.

14. It cannot be said for certain with what sources each of the rabbinic figures in category A was familiar. But from the arguments that each makes, a sense of the figure's familiarity with the nonrabbinic sources is obtained.

It is significant that almost none of the responses of the rabbinic figures in category A refer to the writings of Herodotus, Ctesias, Manetho, or Ptolemy, which are perhaps the main sources on which the conventional chronology is based (see App. B). The only responses in category A that refer to any of these writings are the responses of: C. Heifetz (A-15) and B. Aaronson (A-16),

have been aware that the chronology constructed from the ancient Greek and Egyptian sources has now been confirmed by cuneiform inscriptions from the ancient Persian palaces.<sup>15</sup>

It does not seem unreasonable to suggest that the responses of some of the rabbinic figures in category A might have been different had they been aware of these inscriptions.<sup>16</sup>

## Observation 4:

Of the responses in category A<sup>17</sup> that are detailed enough to provide the names of the Persian kings, the majority believe that the Persian

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whom we have not considered to be rabbinic figures, and D. Ibn Shalosh (A-12) and I.S. Feder (A-14), who each refer to the writings of Herodotus. (But certainly some of the other rabbinic and nonrabbinic figures in category A were familiar with some of these writings.)

Observation 3 focuses only on category A because the sources with which the rabbinic figures in this category were familiar is of most interest. (It is also of interest what sources the rabbinic figures in category DII were familiar with, but this is more difficult to discern.)

The majority of the rabbinic figures in Part II also do not seem to have been familiar with the precise sources on which the conventional chronology is based.

15. On the evidence from these inscriptions, see App. B. Note that most of the relevant cuneiform inscriptions were not published until this century.

Ibn Shalosh is the only rabbinic figure in category A who refers to cuneiform inscriptions from the Persian palaces. But the only such cuneiform inscriptions that he refers to are inscriptions of Darius, the son of Hystaspes (Darius I), and of "Khshayarsha," the son of Darius. See his *Ayyelet ha-Shahar*, p. 102.

Heifetz and Aaronson are the only individuals in category A who show that they are aware of the cuneiform inscriptions from the Persian palaces authored by the later Achaemenid kings. (Aaronson contends that these inscriptions are forgeries. This seems to be the view of Heifetz as well. On the contention of forgery, see App. B, n. 18.)

16. But the fact that Heifetz and Aaronson are aware of these inscriptions and nevertheless discount them militates against this argument.

17. Category A is composed largely of the responses of rabbinic figures.

period spanned the reigns of *more than* three Persian kings, despite<sup>18</sup> the view expressed by SO to the contrary.<sup>19</sup>

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Observation 4 is also true with respect to the responses in category DII, a category also composed largely of the responses of rabbinic figures.

18. It is probably fair to assume that almost all of the individuals who gave the responses in categories A and DII were aware of the view expressed by SO that the Persian period spanned the reigns of exactly three Persian kings.

19. An explanation of this phenomenon is as follows: First, the view that the Persian period spanned the reigns of more than three Persian kings is supported by the plain sense of the Bible (see, e.g., Ezra 6:14). Second, such a view has much precedent in the Rishonim (See App. D; even Rashi, the most accepted biblical commentator, mentions a king not included in the Bible.) Third, although SO's 420-year and 34-year traditions are included in and adopted by the Talmud (see Part I, n. 13), the Talmud does not include any tradition that the Persian period spanned the reigns of only three Persian kings. Fourth, viewing the Persian period as spanning the reigns of more than three Persian kings does not inherently conflict with the 52-year, 34-year, and 420-year traditions, even though one must often rely on difficult assumptions to reconcile such a view with these traditions.

It is noteworthy that none of the responses in categories A and DII that view the Persian period as spanning the reigns of more than three Persian kings mention the passages in SO (passages 1 and 3 of App. A) that contradict this view. Compare the response of the Abravanel. See Part II.



# VI



## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION





This study has collected the Jewish responses to the discrepancy that predate Azariah de Rossi and the responses from the time of de Rossi to date.<sup>1</sup> Most of the responses from the time of de Rossi to date have been categorized into one of three categories: a) Category A: SO chronology is correct: conventional chronology is in error, b) Category B: Conventional chronology is correct: SO chronology is in error, and c) Category C: Both the conventional chronology and the SO chronology are correct.<sup>2</sup>

With respect to the fundamental question of how to account for the wide divergence between the SO chronology and the conventional chronology, it has been shown that neither the responses in category A nor the responses in category C shed useful light on this question.<sup>3</sup>

Regarding the responses in category B, it has been shown that one group of responses in this category takes the approach that the author of the SO chronology: 1) had an accurate knowledge of the chronology of the Persian period, and 2) was caused by extrachronological considerations to express the widely divergent chronology that he did.<sup>4</sup> But there is little reason to believe that the author of the SO chronology had an accurate knowledge of the chronology of the Persian period.<sup>5</sup>

A second group of responses in category B takes the approach that the author of the SO chronology had little or no extrabiblical knowledge of the chronology of the Persian period and believes that a widely divergent chronology is essentially what should have been expected from him.<sup>6</sup> The responses in this group assume that the author of the SO

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1. See Parts II and III.

2. See Part III.

3. See Part IV, pp. 115–117.

4. See Part IV, p. 118.

5. See Part IV, pp. 118–121.

6. See Part IV, p. 121.

chronology believed that the chronology he expressed was the true one.

Possible support was noted for the approach of the second group of responses in that the 11th chapter of Daniel mentions only three or four Persian kings. If the view of modern scholars that the author or final editor of this chapter lived in the 2nd century BCE is adopted, the chronology of the Persian period expressed in this chapter would be evidence that a 2nd-century BCE Jewish source knew of only three or four Persian kings.<sup>7</sup> It was pointed out, however, that the author of the SO chronology may have been able to deduce from the description of the successive generations of high priests at Nehemiah 12:10–11 that the Persian period spanned at least six generations.<sup>8</sup>

A third group of responses in category B takes the approach that extrachronological considerations caused the author to express the widely divergent chronology that he did, without claiming that the author had an accurate knowledge of the chronology of the Persian period.<sup>9</sup> Some of the extrachronological considerations suggested, which deserve close scrutiny, are: 1) a desire to express a chronology in which MS comes out to be exactly 1,000 years after the Exodus, and 2) a desire to assign the shortest of all possible lengths of time that can be derived from the biblical text.<sup>10</sup>

Most importantly, this study has shown that the SO chronology can be completely explained under scenarios that assume that the author of the SO chronology had a desire to make the chronology stated fit with the 490-year period predicted at Daniel 9:24–27.<sup>11</sup> Four such scenarios have been suggested. In the first scenario,<sup>12</sup> this desire is an extrachronological consideration. The author believed that the fact that a chronological prediction was made at Daniel 9:24–27 did not necessarily mean that the prediction must have come true. Nevertheless, the author desired to express a chronology in which the prediction appeared to come true. In the three other scenarios,<sup>13</sup> this desire is not an extrachronological

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7. See Part IV, pp. 122–123. But see also App. A, n. 2, third para.

8. See Part IV, pp. 123–124.

9. See Part IV, p. 125.

10. See Part IV, pp. 125–128.

11. See Part IV, pp. 128–137.

12. See Part IV, pp. 128–129.

13. See Part IV, pp. 135–137.

consideration. The author believed that the prediction at Daniel 9:24–27 must have come true. But the author still had a significant amount of uncertainty about whether the chronology he was deriving from Daniel 9:24–27 was the correct one. Nevertheless, the author was willing to express his chronology.

The SO chronology can be completely explained under these scenarios if assumption is made that the author of the SO chronology also had: 1) a tradition that the exilic period spanned 70 years, 2) a tradition or his own calculation that the period from the beginning of MS until the destruction of the Second Temple spanned approximately 380 years, and 3) a tradition or his own calculation that the length of time from the beginning of the Greek period until the commencement of MS was 6 years. The author of the SO chronology almost certainly had items 1 and 2.<sup>14</sup> Regarding item 3, it is very likely that the author had such a tradition or made his own calculation to this effect.<sup>15</sup>

Under these scenarios, the author would have been willing to overlook the evidence for a protracted Persian period from the successive generations of high priests at Nehemiah 12:10–11 and any other evidence he may have had that the Persian period was a protracted one.<sup>16</sup>

If the SO chronology can be completely explained under one of the four scenarios suggested, future inquiries intended to determine precisely what extrabiblical sources regarding the chronology of the Persian period were available to the author of the SO chronology are not necessary. Such inquiries are not likely to shed light on the chronology.<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, future inquiries that would be necessary and would shed light on the chronology would be: 1) inquiries regarding precisely which

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14. See Part IV, pp. 130–131.

15. See Part IV, n. 48.

16. See Part IV, pp. 132–134 and 137.

17. It should be mentioned that to date the Dead Sea Scrolls have shed no light on the question of what extrabiblical sources regarding the chronology of the Persian period were available to Jewish authors from the late Second Temple period. The only passage in the Dead Sea scrolls arguably relevant to this question is the 390-years passage of the Damascus Document (see Part III, n. 174). But the *terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem* of the 390 years are ambiguous, and most likely, the 390-year passage does not reflect a chronological assumption made by its author but simply a borrowing of a figure from Ezekiel 4:5.

method of counting according to MS was used by the Tannaitic Sages, and 2) inquiries regarding the origin of the tradition recorded in the name of R. Yose at Avodah Zarah 10a that the length of time from the beginning of the Greek period until the commencement of MS was 6 years.

Regarding the former, how well these four scenarios work depends in part on what method of counting according to MS was employed by the author of the SO chronology.<sup>18</sup> The scenarios work best under the assumption that the author was counting according to a method that assumed that year 1 of MS commenced in the spring of 311 BCE. The scenarios work, but not as well, under the assumption that the author was counting according to a method that assumed that year 1 of MS commenced in the fall of 312 BCE. The scenarios become more difficult in the unlikely event that the author was counting according to a method that assumed that year 1 of MS commenced in the spring or summer of 312 BCE and that the fall of 312 BCE brought with it year 2 of MS.

Regarding the latter, even though this tradition is not included in SO,<sup>19</sup> this study accepts that this tradition was already in existence at the time that the length of the period of Persian dominion was being decided.<sup>20</sup> This study offers a suggestion to explain its origin<sup>21</sup> and the author welcomes any other suggestions.

Finally, regarding the responses of rabbinic figures, certain observations are made in this study,<sup>22</sup> the most important being: 1) many rabbinic figures have adopted the conventional chronology, and 2) the majority of the rabbinic figures who have rejected the conventional chronology do not seem to be familiar with the precise sources on which the conventional chronology is based and with the cuneiform inscriptions from the ancient Persian palaces which confirm it.

18. See Part IV, nn. 47 and 49.

19. This tradition is not included in any of the manuscripts collected by Milikowsky. But it is possible that manuscripts of SO might be discovered in the future (perhaps among the unidentified Genizah fragments?) that would contain this tradition.

20. See Part IV, n. 48.

21. See Part IV, n. 48.

22. See Part V.

## Appendix A

### *The SO Chronology*

SO describes the Persian and Second Temple periods in its 28th to 30th chapters. The passages from these chapters that express the main elements of its chronology are gathered together here. For each passage, the text as published by C. Milikowsky is presented,<sup>1</sup> followed by a translation adapted from Milikowsky's translation.

#### Passage 1

ואני בשנת אחת לדריוש המדי עמדתי למחזיק ולמען לו יעתה אמת אניד לך  
הנה עוד שלשה מלכים לפרס זה כורש ואחשורוש ודריוש שבנה את הבית ומה  
ת"ל והרביעי רביעי למדי.

"In the first year of Daryavesh of Madai I stood up to confirm and strengthen him. And now I will show you the truth. Behold, three more kings shall arise in Persia (and the fourth shall be far richer . . .)" (Daniel 11:1–2)—this is Koresh, Ahashverosh, and Daryavesh who built the

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1. Milikowsky, *Seder Olam: A Rabbinic Chronography*. Under the text, Milikowsky had noted the variants he found in 13 manuscripts of SO and in the two earliest printed editions (Mantua, 1513 and Constantinople, 1516). Almost all the variants noted by Milikowsky are irrelevant for the purposes of this study.

It is important to point out that Milikowsky did not note variants in which the variant differed only in that it expressed a number by using letters of the Hebrew alphabet instead of words, or vice versa. Thus, for example, the fact that Milikowsky prints *חמשים ושנים* in the text of passage 4 and does not note any variants that read *ל"ב* does not mean that there were no such variants.

Temple. And why does Scripture say "and the fourth"? (He is the) fourth from (the one of) Madai.<sup>2</sup>

## Passage 2

ר' יוסי א' שבועים שבעים משחרב בית המקדש הראשון ועד שחרב הבית האחרון  
שבעים לחורבנו ארבע מאות ועשרים לבנינו.

Rabbi Yose says: "Seventy weeks of years" (Daniel 9:24) from when the First Temple was destroyed until the Second Temple was destroyed, 70 years<sup>3</sup> in its destroyed state and 420 years in its built state.<sup>4</sup>

2. SO, chap. 28, pp. 426 (Hebrew) and 539 (English). As seen from this passage and passage 3, SO interprets Daniel 11:2 to indicate that the entire Persian period spanned the reigns of only three Persian kings. According to SO's interpretation, the fourth king referred to at Daniel 11:2 does not mean the fourth of the Persian kings, but the fourth of the *Medeo*-Persian kings.

SO's interpretation is not the only possible interpretation of this verse. Daniel 11:2 can also be interpreted to be referring to four *Persian* kings. If so, the speaker would seem to be expressing the view that the Persian period would span the reigns of four, or perhaps five, Persian kings. Four, if he is counting Koresh as his first Persian king. Five, if he is counting only the kings who reigned after Koresh, in whose reign the statement at Daniel 11:2 is described as having been made (see Daniel 10:1).

Daniel 11:2 can also be interpreted in a manner consistent with the conventional chronology. One can postulate that Daniel 11:2 only intended an enumeration of some of the Persian kings, e.g., the first few, or the mightiest, or the ones whose reigns were of consequence for the Jews. See, e.g., *Sefer Daniyyel (Da'at Mikra)*, p. 305 and n. 227. In such interpretations, a gap in time almost always must be postulated between the Persian kings referred to at Daniel 11:2 and the "mighty king"—most likely, Alexander the Great—referred to at Daniel 11:3–4.

3. In many places the Bible describes the exilic period as spanning 70 years. See Jeremiah 25:11–12 and 29:10, Zechariah 1:12 and 7:5, and Daniel 9:2.

4. SO, chap. 28, pp. 427 (Hebrew) and 539 (English). Part IV discusses the subject of whether the plain sense of the *terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem* of the "seventy weeks of years" are the *terminii* that SO assigns to them and also the other considerations that may have motivated SO to assign precisely these *terminii*.

The tradition that the Second Temple period spanned 420 years is found in many places in the Talmud. See: Yoma 9a, Arakhin 12b, Avodah Zarah 9a, and J.

### Passage 3

ושבי יהודאי בנין ומצלחין וג' דריוש הוא ארתחשסתא וכל המלכות כולה  
ניקראת ארתחשסתא ואי אחא מוצא מלכים לפרס אלא שלשה ולמדי אחד.

"And the elders of the Jews built and prospered (. . . and they built and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the decree of Koresh, and Daryavesh, and Artahshasta king of Persia)" (Ezra 6:14). Daryavesh is Artahshasta; the entire (institution of) kingship was called Artahshasta. And you find for Persia only three kings, and for Media one.<sup>5</sup>

Megillah 72d (1:12). See also Nazir 32b. The 420-year tradition is also found in the Tosefta (Zevahim 13:3).

5. SO, chap. 30, pp. 436 (Hebrew) and 544 (English). The import of passage 3 is that the Artahshasta of Ezra 6:14 and of all the subsequent chapters in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah is identical with the Daryavesh in whose reign the Temple was rebuilt. This identification is particularly inconsistent with Ezra 6:14, the verse on which this passage is commenting.

But as explained in Part IV (pp. 130–131 and 135–137, and n. 48), SO may have been forced to assign only 34 years to the period of Persian dominion. Once SO was forced to assign only 34 years to the period of Persian dominion, SO would also have been forced to equate Daryavesh with Artahshasta. This is so because it is clear from the Bible that Artahshasta reigned at least 32 years (see Nehemiah 5:14 and 13:6). If these 32 years were separate years from the 6 years mentioned in the Bible of the reign of Daryavesh (see Ezra 6:15), then the period of Persian dominion could not have spanned only 34 years.

Note that although passage 3 states an identification of Daryavesh and Artahshasta, SO probably does not view this identification to apply to the Artahshasta of Ezra 4:7–23. For a variety of reasons, it is likely that SO identifies the Artahshasta of Ezra 4:7–23 with Ahashverosh, although this is not stated in SO.

Milikowsky notes the following variant on passage 3: ואין אחא מוצא לפרס: מלכים אלא שנים כורש ודריוש ושנים דריוש ואחשורוש. This variant does not necessarily reflect a chronology different from the SO chronology. It may simply reflect a view, based perhaps on Daniel 9:1, that Ahashverosh was of Medean lineage.

Milikowsky also notes the following variant: הוא כורש הוא דריוש הוא ארתחשסתא. Such a statement is found at Rosh ha-Shanah 3b and this variant may just be



## Passage 4

ומלכות מדי ופרס חמשים ושנים שנה.

The kingdom of Media and Persia (lasted) 52 years.<sup>6</sup>

## Passage 5

ר' יוסי או' מלכות פרס בפני הבית שלשים וד' שנה מלכות יון מאה ושמונים  
מלכות בית חשמונאי מאה ושלוש מלכות הירודוס מאה ושלוש.

Rabbi Yose says: The kingdom of Persia, during the time of the Temple, (existed) 34 years; the kingdom of Greece, 180; the kingdom of the House of the Hasmoneans, 103; the kingdom of Herod, 103.<sup>7</sup>

an erroneous one that arose under the influence of the statement at Rosh ha-Shanah 3b.

6. SO, chap. 30, pp. 436–37 (Hebrew) and 544 (English). All of the manuscripts and early printed editions collected by Milikowsky also specify *חמשים ושנים* (or its equivalent, see n. 1) except: 1) the Mantua edition, which specifies *חמשים ומאהים* and 2) one Genizah fragment, which specifies י"ב. The reading found in the Mantua edition made its way into many later printed editions.

The Bible does not state that the Medeo-Persian period spanned 52 years. Nor is 52 the sum of the last years mentioned of the individual Medean and Persian kings. The last year mentioned of Daryavesh of Madai is his first year (Daniel 9:1 and 11:1); of Koresh, is his third year (Daniel 10:1); of Ahashverosh, is his 12th year (Esther 3:7); of Daryavesh, is his 6th year (Ezra 6:15); and of Artahshasta, is his 32nd year (Nehemiah 5:14 and 13:6). (The Bible also seems to mention a later Daryavesh at Nehemiah 12:22 [see App. B, n. 24], without indicating how long he reigned.) Even with the assumption that SO makes, that Daryavesh=Artahshasta, the sum of the last years mentioned (1+3+12+32) does not equal 52. (Note that the SO chronology undoubtedly identifies the Daryavesh of Nehemiah 12:22 with Daryavesh=Artahshasta, although this identification is not stated nor this verse mentioned.)

7. SO, chap. 30, pp. 440 (Hebrew) and 546–47 (English). This passage is found in the Talmud at Avodah Zarah 9a. Milikowsky, op. cit., p. 1, hypothesizes that this passage, concerned mainly with *postbiblical* chronology, was not a part of the original SO. Even if Milikowsky's hypothesis would be correct, this has little

In other passages, SO gives us further details. We are told that Daryavesh of Madai reigned 1 year,<sup>8</sup> Koresh reigned less than 3 complete years,<sup>9</sup> and Ahashverosh reigned 14 years.<sup>10</sup> In SO's view, the second year of Daryavesh=Artahshasta is approximately the 71st year from the exile.<sup>11</sup>

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impact on any of the conclusions in this study because an assignment of precisely 34 years to the period of Persian dominion seems to be implicit in SO's assignment of 52 years to the total of the Medean and Persian periods (see below).

The Bible does not state that the period of Persian dominion during the Second Temple period spanned 34 years. Nor can such a 34-year time span be derived from the Bible under the assumptions that Daryavesh=Artahshasta and that the period of Persian dominion during the Second Temple period spanned no later kings. The Temple was rebuilt in the reign of Daryavesh. The last year mentioned of this king, under the assumption that he is identical with the Artahshasta described subsequently in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, would have been only his 32nd year (see note immediately above). Also, the rebuilding of the Temple did not even begin until Daryavesh's second year (see n. 11).

The 34-year figure is explained in Part IV. See pp. 130–131 (and pp. 135–137), and n. 48. (Once the 34-year figure is explained, the 52-year figure in passage 4 is also explained. The 52 years are simply the total of the 34 years of the period of Persian dominion and the approximately 18 years that SO allows for the period from Daryavesh of Madai and the return under Koresh until the rebuilding. See SO, chap. 29, p. 433. Note that the 3 years of Koresh are stated to be incomplete. See n. 9.)

8. SO, chap. 28, p. 425. The only year of Daryavesh of Madai mentioned in the Bible is his first year. See Daniel 9:1 and 11:1.

9. SO, chap. 29, p. 431: שלש שנים מקומטות (3 years that were not complete). The last year of Koresh mentioned in the Bible is his third year. See Daniel 10:1. (Both the Bible and SO probably only intend to count the years of Koresh's reign from when he began to rule over the land of Israel.) Note that Rava, at Megillah 11b, surprisingly views the total of the years of Daryavesh of Madai and Koresh as 5, before adjustment for incomplete years. For more on this view of Rava's, see the additional note at the end of App. D.

10. SO, chap. 29, p. 433. The last year of Ahashverosh mentioned in the Bible is only his 12th year (Esther 3:7). (The reference is to Nissan of his 12th year, the time when he cast lots to destroy the Jews the following Adar.) Rava, at Megillah 11b, also assigns 14 years to the reign of Ahashverosh.

11. SO does not state this explicitly and it is not clear, for a variety of reasons, whether the second year of Daryavesh is the 71st or the 70th year from

the exile. What SO does state (chap. 29, p. 433) is that the Jews spent 52 years in exile, followed by 3 years under Koresh, 14 years under Ahashverosh, and 2 under Daryavesh, before the rebuilding commenced. It makes this statement in the context of references to two biblical verses that specify a 70-year exilic period. A chronology almost exactly the same as this is expressed by Rava at Megillah 11b.

Because passage 2 tells us that the total of the 70 years of exile and the 420 years of the Second Temple period are 490, the 71st year from the exile must also be the first of the 420 years of the Second Temple period. It is therefore clear that the SO chronology starts the count of its 420 years from approximately the second year of Daryavesh, when the rebuilding commenced (Ezra 4:24; Haggai 1:14–15), and not from the 6th year of Daryavesh, when the rebuilding was completed (Ezra 6:15). Because the first of these 420 years is also the 1st year of the 34-year period of Persian dominion during the Second Temple period, it is also clear that the SO chronology starts the count of its 34-year period of Persian dominion from approximately the second year of Daryavesh as well.

Note that the length of the reign of Daryavesh=Artahshasta is never explicitly stated, but can be calculated. SO tells us that the period of Persian dominion during the Second Temple period spanned 34 years and counts these 34 years from the second year of this Daryavesh=Artahshasta. This implies that Daryavesh=Artahshasta must have reigned approximately 35 years. This conclusion can also be arrived at by subtracting, from the 52-year total of the Medeo-Persian period, the years assigned to Daryavesh of Madai (1), Koresh (3), and Ahashverosh (14), and adjusting for the fact that the 3 years assigned to Koresh are stated to be incomplete.

The well-known tradition that this Daryavesh=Artahshasta was the son of Ahashverosh and Esther is not found in SO (or the Talmud). This tradition is found in Leviticus Rabbah (13:5) and Esther Rabbah (8:3), recorded in the name of R. Judah b. R. Simon. From the context in Esther Rabbah, it seems that this is only a minority view. See Esther Rabbah 8:3: רבנן דהכא אמרין הפילה עוברא משעה שהפילה: שוב לא ילדה (the Rabbis of Palestine say that she had a miscarriage and, from the time she had a miscarriage, she never bore again), and M. Zlotowitz, *The Megillah* (ArtScroll Tanach Series), p. 75 (commentary on Esther 4:4).

The tradition that Daryavesh=Artahshasta was the son of Ahashverosh and Esther does not relate well with the SO chronology. The SO chronology views the reign of Daryavesh=Artahshasta as commencing immediately after the 14th year of Ahashverosh. Yet Esther was not taken to Ahashverosh until his seventh year (Esther 2:16). Even if Daryavesh was conceived as early as this year, he still would have been only a child in the early years of his reign, a time when he is

There is one other passage in SO that expresses something close to an overview of the Second Temple period:

וחדע וחשכיל מן מוצא דבר להשיב גלות להשיב ולבנות  
ירושלם עד משיח נגיד שבועים שבעה אילו שעשו בגולה  
ועלו. ושבועים ששים ושנים אלו שעשו בארץ. ושבוע  
אחד מקצתו בארץ ומקצתו בחוצה לארץ.

"Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks" (Daniel 9:25)—these are (the years) that they spent in Exile and (then) they went up (to the land of Israel). "And sixty-two weeks" (ibid.)—these are (the years) that they spent in the land. And 1 week—part of it in the land and part of it outside the land.<sup>12</sup>

Most probably, the meaning of this passage is that, from the destruction of the First Temple until the destruction of the Second

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described in the Bible (Ezra, chaps. 5–6) as the reigning and authoritative king. (Interestingly, at Esther Rabbah 8:3, R. Judah b. R. Simon also expresses the view that Esther had been using a piece of gauze (מִרְדָּ) to prevent conception. He does not state exactly when and for how long he believes Esther was using this.)

Of course, R. Judah b. R. Simon may not have intended his view to fit with the SO chronology and may not have viewed Daryavesh as the king who reigned immediately after the 14th year of Ahashverosh. But many later Jewish sources, who do view Daryavesh as the king who reigned immediately after the 14th year of Ahashverosh, also adopt the view that Daryavesh was the son of Ahashverosh and Esther, and do not seem to be bothered by the difficulty that this poses with regard to the age of Daryavesh.

12. SO, end of chap. 28, pp. 428–29 (Hebrew) and 540 (English). Note that in many editions of SO, this passage, recorded anonymously, is printed slightly earlier in chap. 28, immediately preceding passage 2. If the earlier location would be correct, a claim might be made that the passage reflects an anonymous rabbinic exegesis on Daniel 9:24–27, an exegesis which R. Yose disagreed with. Something like this was suggested by J. Braverman. See his *Jerome's Commentary On Daniel*, pp. 107–08. But Milikowsky has pointed out (in correspondence to us) that close evaluation of the manuscript evidence suggests that the later location is the correct one.

Temple, the Jews spent 7 and a fraction weeks of years (i.e., 52 years) outside the land,<sup>13</sup> and 62 and a fraction weeks of years (i.e., 438 years) in the land (commencing from the return under Koresh, approximately 18 years before the rebuilding). (Most likely, the "one week" in this passage is the week that is *between* the 7 weeks and the 62 weeks, and is not the "one week" of Daniel 9:27.<sup>14</sup>)

The following are some of the dates from creation that can be approximated from a summing up of some of the main chronological elements expressed in SO<sup>15</sup>:

<i>Date from Creation</i>	<i>Event</i>
2448	Exodus from Egypt
2928	Building of First Temple
3338	Destruction of First Temple
3390	Commencement of Medeo-Persian Period
3408	Building of Second Temple
3442	End of Persian Period
3828	Destruction of Second Temple

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13. See SO, chap. 29, p. 433: וחמשים ושנים שנה שעשו בגולה ועלו (52 years that they spent in Exile and then they went up).

14. Milikowsky has argued convincingly (in correspondence to us) that Tannaim would never have referred to the several years immediately after the destruction of the Second Temple, years in which hundreds of thousands, or perhaps millions, of Jews remained in the land of Israel, as years that were outside the land.

15. None of these dates are expressed in SO. Note also that when relating these dates to the count from creation presently in use, it is possible that a 1 to 2 year adjustment is necessary. See, e.g., E. Frank, *Talmudic and Rabbinical Chronology*, pp. 20–21.

## *Appendix B*

### *The Conventional Chronology*

The conventional chronology views the period of Persian rule over the ancient Middle East (e.g., Babylonia, Egypt, and Israel) as spanning the years 539 to 332 BCE and the reigns of the following Persian kings<sup>1</sup>:

Cyrus 539<sup>2</sup> to 530  
Cambyses 530 to 522  
Darius I 522 to 486  
Xerxes 486 to 465  
Artaxerxes I 465 to 424  
Darius II 423 to 404  
Artaxerxes II 404 to 358  
Artaxerxes III 358 to 338  
Arses 338 to 336  
Darius III 336 to 332<sup>3</sup>

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1. The above list only includes kings whose reigns spanned 1 year or more. The conventional chronology also views the Persian period as spanning the reigns of additional kings: Bardiya, Xerxes II, and Secydianus. Bardiya (also referred to as Smerdis or Gaumata) reigned for several months in 522 BCE after Cambyses. Bardiya was killed by a group led by Darius I. Xerxes II was a son of Artaxerxes I. He reigned for 45 days immediately after his father's death. He was killed by his brother Secydianus who reigned for several months before his brother Ochus killed him. (Ochus then took the name Darius and is the Darius II mentioned above. See n. 5.)

2. Cyrus' reign over Persia commenced well before this, in 559 BCE.

3. The kings listed above from Darius I through Arses are successive generations of fathers and sons. But some of these sons had brief struggles with siblings before their reign was accepted. Cyrus and Cambyses were father and

The purpose of this appendix is to provide a brief overview of the major sources<sup>4</sup> on which this conventional chronology is based.

One group of sources on which the conventional chronology is based are the narrative works of Greek historians from the Persian period. The most important of these narrative works are the *Histories* of Herodotus, the *Peloponnesian War* of Thucydides, and the *Persica* of Ctesias. The *Histories* of Herodotus (c. 485–425) provides an extensive description of the reigns of Cyrus, Cyrus' son Cambyses, Darius, and Darius' son Xerxes. The work also includes brief references to Xerxes' son Artaxerxes, in whose reign Herodotus was writing. The *Peloponnesian War* of Thucydides (c. 460–400) includes references to the earlier kings Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius, and Xerxes, and describes the dealings of Artaxerxes and his son Darius<sup>5</sup> with Athens and Sparta. The

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son, but Darius I was not the son of Cambyses. (Darius I was the son of Hystaspes, a distant relative of Cambyses.) With regard to Darius III, although he was not Arses' son, he was a descendant of Darius II. The kings from Cyrus to Darius III are sometimes referred to collectively as the Achaemenid (or Achaemenian) kings. Achaemenes was the name of a common ancestor of Cyrus and Hystaspes.

Note that there are disagreements among modern scholars ranging from 1 to 2 years with regard to some of the dates listed above.

For details on the history of the period from Cyrus to Darius III, see, e.g., *The Cambridge Ancient History*, ed. 2, vols. 4–6, and A. Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire*. Also noteworthy is E. Yamauchi's *Persia and the Bible*, which contains a wealth of detail about Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius I, Xerxes, and Artaxerxes I.

4. The conventional chronology of the Persian period is in some sense based on a wide variety of sources, because a wide variety of sources help to fine tune it. This appendix is limited to a description of those sources that helped historians construct their basic outline of the period and only the most important of these are described.

5. The practice of distinguishing between the different Persian kings by using the descriptions "I," "II," and "III" (or their equivalents) was not yet in use in the time of Thucydides. But Thucydides, and Ctesias after him, clearly distinguished between the different Persian kings who bore the same name but reigned at different times (and had different fathers).

It should also be pointed out that "Darius" and "Artaxerxes" were not the given names of Darius II, Artaxerxes II, Artaxerxes III, and Darius III. These were the names adopted by these kings as their throne names. The narrative sources

*Persica*<sup>6</sup> of Ctesias (c. 430–380) describes the reigns of the earlier kings Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius, Xerxes, Artaxerxes, and Darius, the son of Artaxerxes, and continues through the reign of Artaxerxes, the son of Darius. Ctesias was a physician at the court of this Artaxerxes.<sup>7</sup>

The conventional chronology also relies, to a lesser extent, on narrative works of historians from later periods. For example, its main source of information regarding the reigns of Artaxerxes III and Arses is the *Bibliotheca Historica* of Diodorus (1st century BCE). The *Lives* of Plutarch (1st century CE) also provides much information about the various Persian kings.<sup>8</sup>

Although the ancient historians agree on the basic outline of the Persian period, they are usually not in agreement with regard to the

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tell us that Darius the son of Artaxerxes was originally named Ochus, that his son Artaxerxes was originally named Arsaces, that Artaxerxes the son of Arsaces–Artaxerxes was originally named Ochus, and that the Darius defeated by Alexander was originally named Codomannos. See, e.g., Ctesias, *Persica*, in J. Freese, ed., *The Library of Photius*, vol. 1, pp. 105 and 107, and Diodorus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, book XV, chap. 93.

6. The original work has perished and our knowledge of it is from summaries and quotations preserved in later writers. Knowledge of Ctesias' description of the Persian period comes mostly from the Byzantine patriarch Photius (ninth century CE), whose *Bibliotheca* contains a detailed summary of it.

7. One other important Greek historian from the Persian period is Xenophon (c. 430–354). But it is difficult to construct an outline of any significant portion of the Persian period from Xenophon's works. Xenophon's *Anabasis* describes a failed attempt by a younger brother of Artaxerxes son of Darius (Artaxerxes II) to seize the throne. (This attempt was supported by 10,000 Greeks, including Xenophon himself.) Aside from its references to Artaxerxes, son of Darius, the work also includes references to the earlier kings Cyrus and Xerxes. Xenophon's *Hellenica* is a history of Greece that contains only a few scattered references to some of the Persian kings. Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* is a biography of Cyrus that is regarded by most modern scholars as fictitious.

8. Plutarch's *Lives* includes a biography of Artaxerxes II. Plutarch clearly distinguishes between this Artaxerxes and the earlier Artaxerxes. Plutarch writes that the first Artaxerxes was surnamed "the Long-handed" and was the son of king Xerxes, while the second Artaxerxes was surnamed "the Mindful" and was the grandson of the former and the son of king Darius.



exact number of years that each of the Persian kings reigned.<sup>9</sup> The main source on which the conventional chronology relies to fix the exact number of years that each of the Persian kings reigned is a table authored by the Egyptian astronomer Ptolemy (2nd century CE).<sup>10</sup> In this table, Ptolemy provides the name and length of reign of each king who reigned over Egypt from the Assyrio-Babylonian period until his own time.<sup>11</sup> For the Persian period, Ptolemy provides the following names and lengths of reign: Cyrus, 9 years; Cambyses, 8 years; Darius I, 36 years; Xerxes, 21 years; Artaxerxes I, 41 years; Darius II, 19 years; Artaxerxes II, 46 years; Ochus,<sup>12</sup> 21 years; Arogus,<sup>13</sup> 2 years; and Darius III, 4 years.<sup>14</sup>

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9. For example, Herodotus (*Histories*, III, para. 66) assigns to Cambyses a reign of 7 years and 5 months, whereas Ctesias (op. cit., p. 96) assigns to Cambyses a reign of 18 years. Similarly, Herodotus (*Histories*, VII, para. 4) assigns to Darius I a reign of 36 years, whereas Ctesias (op. cit., p. 98) assigns to Darius I a reign of 31 years.

It should be pointed out that the Greek historians are also not in agreement on multitudes of historical details and much of the information furnished by them is viewed as extremely unreliable. Nevertheless, it is assumed that they would have had no reason to fabricate the basic outline of the Persian period (i.e., the names and order of the Persian kings and the approximate lengths of the kings' reigns), and we agree with this assumption.

10. This table is commonly referred to as the "Canon of Ptolemy." A useful reprint of it is found at F.K. Ginzel, *Handbuch der mathematischen und technischen Chronologie*, vol. 1, p. 139.

11. But Ptolemy omits from his list the kings who reigned less than 1 year. The months that these kings reigned seem to be included in the years of the preceding or the following king. The reason usually suggested to explain this pattern of omission is that Ptolemy's concern was not history but astronomy. His interest was in detailing the amount of years that elapsed in the periods he described, and not in listing the name of every single king who reigned during these periods.

12. This is Artaxerxes III. See n. 5.

13. He is assumed to be the same as the king "Arses," who is described in the narrative sources as having reigned at this time.

14. The wide variety of inscriptions and documents discovered from the Persian period serve as a check on the lengths of reigns assigned by Ptolemy. For example, Ptolemy assigns 9 years to the reign of Cyrus, and inscriptions or documents that date to the ninth year of Cyrus have been found, but none that date to any higher year. Ptolemy assigns 8 years to the reign of Cambyses, and

The names and order of reigns of the Persian kings constructed from the narrative works of the Greek historians is independently verified by another source from the Persian period: Old Persian<sup>15</sup> cuneiform inscriptions from the ancient Persian palaces. In the 19th century, Old Persian cuneiform inscriptions, which had survived for centuries in the ruins of the ancient Persian palaces, were finally deciphered. The chronology of the Persian kings expressed in these inscriptions<sup>16</sup> agrees exactly with the chronology of the Persian kings constructed from the narrative works of the Greek historians. For example, an Old Persian inscription found in four separate places on the walls of the Persian palace at Persepolis reads as follows:

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inscriptions or documents that date to the eighth year of Cambyses have been found, but none that date to any higher year. Ptolemy assigns 21 years to the reign of Xerxes, and inscriptions or documents that date to the 21st year of Xerxes have been found, but none that date to any higher year. For detailed material on this topic, see R.A. Parker and W.H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.–A.D. 75*, pp. 14–19.

The writings of the Egyptian historian Manetho (third century BCE) include a listing of the Persian kings from Cambyses to Darius II and a statement of the lengths of their reigns, and most of the dates specified by Ptolemy for these kings are in agreement with the lengths of reigns specified by Manetho. For the material from Manetho, see F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente Der Griechischen Historiker*, Dritter Teil, vol. C, no. 609, pp. 50–51. (The material from Manetho has been preserved only in summaries by later writers.)

For more detailed material regarding the dating of events in the ancient world and the formation of the conventional chronology, see, e.g., E. Bickerman, *Chronology of the Ancient World*, rev. ed., pp. 80–91, and R.A. Parker and W.H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.–A.D. 75*.

Note that the dates of the Persian kings listed on the first page of Appendix B can be derived (approximately) by combining the data contained in the Canon of Ptolemy with the chronological detail that Alexander wrought control over the ancient Middle East and defeated the last Persian king (Darius) in the year 332 BCE.

15. Old Persian is the name assigned by scholars to this language written in cuneiform script, which seems to have been in use only in the Achaemenid period.

16. The inscriptions discovered as of 1953 are all collected and translated into English by R. Kent, in his *Old Persian: Grammar, Texts, Lexicon*. For references to additional inscriptions, see J.M. Cook, *The Persian Empire*, p. 241, n. 9.

Saith Artaxerxes the King . . . I am the son (of) Artaxerxes the King, (of) Artaxerxes (who was) the son (of) Darius the King, (of) Darius (who was) the son (of) Artaxerxes the King, (of) Artaxerxes (who was) the son (of) Xerxes the King, (of) Xerxes (who was) the son (of) Darius the King, (of) Darius (who was) the son of Hystaspes by name . . .<sup>17</sup>

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17. Kent, *ibid.*, p. 156. Even though Kent uses the familiar Greek-based names for the kings in his translations (i.e., the names as recorded in the Greek historians and transliterated into English), all the Old Persian inscriptions record the names of the Persian kings in their (original) Persian forms. These Persian forms of the kings' names were not known to the scholarly world before the decipherment of these Old Persian inscriptions.

With regard to most of the Persian kings, the discovery of the name of the king in its Persian form did not provide historians with great new insights. For example, the Persian form of Cyrus was "Kurush" (expressed in cuneiform script); the Persian form of Darius was "Darayavaush" (expressed in cuneiform script); and the Persian form of Artaxerxes was "Artakhshāça" (expressed in cuneiform script). But with regard to one of the kings, Xerxes, the discovery of the name of the king in its Persian form was invaluable. It contributed greatly toward enabling historians to conclude that Xerxes is identical with the Ahashverosh of the book of Esther.

It was discovered that the Persian form of Xerxes' name was "Khshayarsha" (expressed in cuneiform script). References to the Persian king חֲשִׁירֶשׁ (variant: חֲשִׁיארֶשׁ) were thereafter found in Aramaic documents from the fifth century BCE. See A. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the 5th Century B.C.*, nn. 2, 5, and 64. It is easily seen that the name Khshayarsha/חֲשִׁירֶשׁ is very close to the name אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ. Indeed, in terms of the consonantal sounds included in the names ("kh," "sh," "r," and "sh"), the names are exactly the same. Regarding the slight differences between the forms of the name, it must be noted that: 1) Hebrew frequently adds an initial *aleph* to foreign words and names beginning with two consonants, 2) the Elamite and Akkadian forms of Khshayarsha's name also include an initial vowel sound (Elamite: "Ikshersha," and Akkadian: "Ahshiarshu"), 3) the Hebrew *vav* originally was pronounced like English "w," and 4) although the usual spelling of Ahashverosh in the book of Esther includes two *vavs*, there are several instances in the book (verses 3:12, 8:7, 8:10, 10:1, and in some editions, 2:21) in which the name is spelled with only the first *vav* or with no *vavs*.

That this identification of Xerxes with Ahashverosh is a correct one is also seen from Ezra 4:5–7, in which reference is made to Ahashverosh between

references to Daryavesh (Darius I) and Artahshasta (Artaxerxes I). (On the proper understanding of Ezra 4:5–7, n. 19.)

How the Greeks came to refer to Khshayarsha as "Xerxes" is easily explained. The Greek language did not have a letter to represent the "sh" sound, so they chose to represent the "sh" sound by their "ks" sound (ξ), a close alternative. Thus the consonantal sounds, "sh," "r," and "sh" became "ks," "r," and "ks." (Regarding the initial "kh" sound, the Greeks may have omitted this sound entirely in their pronunciation, because of the awkwardness of the "khsh" combination.) The name was then turned into a name in proper Greek form by the addition of the suffix "es." The result was "Kserkses" (Ξερξης), which we write in English today as "Xerxes."

One rabbinic authority who has adopted the identification of Ahashverosh with Xerxes and made many of the above arguments is S. Danziger. See his "Who Was the Real Akhashverosh?" *Jewish Observer*, Feb. 1973, pp. 12–15. For other rabbinic authorities who have adopted the identification of Ahashverosh with Xerxes, see App. C.

Some rabbinic authorities claim that Ahashverosh is to be identified with the king known to the Greeks as Cambyses. They make this claim because SO places the reign of Ahashverosh in between the reigns of Koresh and Daryavesh, precisely the period when Cambyses reigned. But we now know from the Old Persian cuneiform inscriptions that the Persian form of Cambyses' name was "Kabujiya" (expressed in cuneiform script), and we now know from documents from Elephantine that the Aramaic form of his name was כבוי (see Cowley, op. cit., nn. 30 and 32). Clearly, Cambyses/Kabujiya/כבוי is one Persian king and Xerxes/Khshayarsha/אחשורוש/חשיורש is another. Also, it is clear from both Herodotus and the Persian cuneiform inscriptions that הדר (Esther 1:1) did not become part of the Persian Empire until sometime in the reign of Darius I. See *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 2d. ed., vol. 4, pp. 66 and 89, and Herodotus, *Histories*, IV, para. 44. (Also, Cambyses did not reign a sufficient number of years to be Ahashverosh. According to the book of Esther, Ahashverosh reigned at least 12 to 13 years. See Esther 3:7 and App. A, n. 10.)

Finally, there are some passages in rabbinic sources that perhaps place Ahashverosh in his correct historical position (immediately after Daryavesh). See: 1) Genesis Rabbah 44:15, 2) Pirkei De-Rabbi Eliezer, chap. 49 (view of R. Tanhum), and 3) Pseudo-Saadia, commentary on Daniel 8:3. (All of these passages are discussed in App. D.) But if the correct position of Ahashverosh is reflected in these passages, this is most likely not the result of some tradition regarding the correct time period of the reign of Ahashverosh that somehow made its way into these passages. Rather, any different position of Ahashverosh

This inscription, presumably authored (ordered to be inscribed) by Artaxerxes III, confirms the chronology of all the Persian kings from Darius I to Artaxerxes III. Similar inscriptions exist for Artaxerxes II, Darius II, Artaxerxes I, and Xerxes. These inscriptions should unequivocally lay to rest any claim that the Persian period was a short one and that the Greek historians somehow artificially created a long line of Persian kings and a protracted Persian period.<sup>18</sup>

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reflected in these passages probably arises solely from a belief that Ahashverosh must be the last king described at Daniel 11:2 ("and the fourth shall be far richer than all of them") because of his great wealth as depicted in the book of Esther.

18. Of course, it is theoretically possible that the author of these inscriptions was an individual living towards the end of or subsequent to the Achaemenid period, who had read the works of the Greek historians and had the version of the Persian period depicted in these works carved onto the walls of the Persian palaces in Old Persian cuneiform. But the large number of these inscriptions, and the fact that inscriptions that are identical in large parts are found in Persian palaces at three separate locations: Persepolis, Susa, and Hamadan, locations that are hundreds of miles from one another, point to the conclusion that these are inscriptions that were authored under Persian governmental direction. That the Old Persian language and the above Persian palaces do not seem to have been in use subsequent to the Achaemenid period points to the further conclusion that it was under the direction of the *Achaemenid* Persian kings that these inscriptions were authored.

Accepting that these inscriptions were authored under Persian governmental direction and date to the Achaemenid period (even if they were not authored by the particular Persian king that they are ascribed to), it is difficult to believe that the chronology expressed in them would have been derived from the works of Greek historians. Presumably, statements regarding Achaemenid Persian kings expressed in inscriptions authored under Achaemenid governmental direction would be based on the Achaemenid government's own records and traditions and not on the works of foreign historians. And if inscriptions describing a protracted Achaemenid period had somehow been carved onto the Persian palaces even though the Achaemenid period was only a short one, palace officials would presumably not have let such erroneous inscriptions survive.

It is true that some scholars of Old Persian cuneiform have suggested that some Old Persian cuneiform inscriptions are forgeries. See, e.g., the discussion by Kent, in "The Present Status of Old Persian Studies," *JAOS* 56, (1936), pp. 215–16. But it is important to distinguish between the two types of suggestions of forgery made by these scholars: suggestions of forgery committed *subsequent* to the

The chronology of the Persian kings constructed from the narrative works of the Greek historians is also confirmed, for the early part of the Persian period, by the book of Ezra-Nehemiah, a source that also presumably dates to the Persian period. The book of Ezra-Nehemiah clearly describes at least four separate Persian kings and it seems from Ezra 4:5–7 that the author of the book viewed these four kings as reigning in the order of Koresh, Daryavesh, Ahashverosh, and Artahshasta.<sup>19</sup> This is exactly the order of these kings according to the conventional chronology.<sup>20</sup>

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Achaemenid period and suggestions of forgery committed *during* the Achaemenid period. Suggestions of forgery committed *subsequent* to the Achaemenid period have not been made with regard to inscriptions found on the Achaemenid palace walls or columns, and are typically made only with regard to inscriptions found on loose tablets and tiles, i.e., inscriptions that are of questionable origin. Suggestions of forgery committed *during* the Achaemenid period (i.e., that an inscription was not authored by the Persian king that it is ascribed to but was authored later in the Achaemenid period), even if they could theoretically be made regarding the above inscription of Artaxerxes III or the similar inscriptions of the earlier Persian kings, do not detract from the corroborative value of the inscriptions.

A different approach to attacking the corroborative value of the Old Persian cuneiform inscriptions might be to claim that the scholars have not interpreted these inscriptions correctly. It is certainly true that knowledge of the conventional chronology influenced the scholars in deciphering and interpreting these inscriptions. Nevertheless, I do not believe that there is merit to such an approach.

19. This is the interpretation of the book adopted by most modern scholars. See, e.g., *Ezra ve-Nehemiah (Da'at Mikra)*, p. 27. (But there are modern scholars who interpret the book differently and conclude that the author of the book did not have an accurate knowledge of the chronology of the Persian kings.) This interpretation of the book assumes that the Ahashverosh and Artahshasta material included at Ezra 4:6–23 was included parenthetically, and that the narrative that ran from the beginning of the book until Ezra 4:5 picks up again with the discussion of the reign of Daryavesh at Ezra 4:24. According to this interpretation, the material regarding Ahashverosh and Artahshasta was included following verse 4:5 because the author or final editor of the book decided to supplement the mention of activities in the reigns of Koresh through Daryavesh against the work on the Temple with mention of similar activities in the reigns of later kings. This interpretation of the book only became evident in modern times, when the identification of Ahashverosh with Xerxes became clear.

20. Koresh is identical with Cyrus (Old Persian form: Kurush), Daryavesh is identical with Darius I (Old Persian form: Darayavaush), Ahashverosh is

The book of Ezra-Nehemiah provides strong evidence that the Persian period could not have spanned as short a time as the SO chronology assigns to it. The evidence is in the description of the succession of high priests<sup>21</sup> of the Persian period<sup>22</sup> at Nehemiah 12:10–11.<sup>23</sup> These verses describe this succession as follows:

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identical with Xerxes (Old Persian form: Khshayarsha), and Artahshasta is identical with Artaxerxes (Old Persian form: Artakhshata).

The book of Ezra-Nehemiah does not mention Cambyses or Bardiya. But there is nothing in the book inconsistent with these kings having reigned between the reigns of Koresh and Daryavesh. The reigns of these kings are perhaps even implied at Ezra 4:5: כָּל יְמֵי כּוֹרֶשׁ . . . וְעַד מַלְכוּת דָּרְיָוֶשׁ מֶלֶךְ פָּרְסָא ("and they hired counsellors against them . . . all the days of Koresh king of Persia, and until the reign of Daryavesh king of Persia").

Aside from its references to Cyrus, Darius I, Xerxes, and Artaxerxes (most likely Artaxerxes I), the book of Ezra-Nehemiah also seems to refer to one of the later Dariuses at the end of the book (Nehemiah 12:22). Some scholars believe that the דָּרְיָוֶשׁ referred to here is Darius III, but the view of most modern scholars is that the reference is to Darius II. See n. 24.

It has been argued that the Artahshasta mentioned in the book of Ezra-Nehemiah in connection with the activities of Nehemiah is a different (perhaps earlier or later) Artahshasta than the one mentioned in connection with the activities of Ezra. But there is no sufficient reason to adopt such an approach.

Note also that there is nothing in the book of Ezra-Nehemiah that indicates that the book intends to span the entire Persian period or that it intends to record the name of every Persian king who reigned during the Persian period.

21. Verses 10 and 11 do not state that the names listed there are those of the high priests and that each of the individuals listed there actually served as high priest. That this is the case is evident from the balance of the book of Ezra-Nehemiah (see, e.g., Nehemiah 12:12, 12:22, 12:26, and 13:28).

22. Because the book of Ezra-Nehemiah does not otherwise describe events of the Greek period and is viewed by most scholars as having been completed sometime in the Persian period, it is reasonable to presume that this list does not include any high priest whose service only began in the Greek period. Such a presumption is even more necessary for those who adopt the view (based on Yoma 69a) that the high priest in the transition between the Persian and Greek periods was named Simon (the Just).

23. See also Nehemiah 12:22. This study agrees with the usual assumption that the יִיְהוֹנָן of Nehemiah 12:11 is identical with the יִיְהוֹנָן of Nehemiah 12:22 and

וישוע הוליד את יויקים ויוקים הוליד את אלישיב ואלישיב את יירע.  
ויירע הוליד את יונתן ויונתן הוליד את ידוע.

And Jeshua begot Joiakim, and Joiakim begot Eliashib, and  
Eliashib begot Joiada. And Joiada begot Jonathan, and  
Jonathan begot Jaddua.

Even with the assumption that this description represents the succession of high priests for the entire Persian period (and not just the succession of high priests for a portion of the period), it requires a series of unusual assumptions for there to have been room for all of these generations of high priests to have served in a period of Persian dominion of only 34 years.<sup>24</sup> That the Persian period could not have spanned as short a time

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the יהושע of Nehemiah 12:23. (It is not uncommon for biblical genealogies to skip generations and list someone as the son of his grandfather.)

24. Assumption must be made, for example, that Jeshua was approximately 90 years old at the beginning of the 34-year period, and that the average age at which each of his descendants had their first male child was approximately 18. (That Jeshua was still serving as high priest at the beginning of the 34-year period is seen from Haggai 1:1. It is uniformly agreed that Jeshua is the same as the יהושע referred to here.) Under such assumptions, Jaddua would have been born 10 years into the period of Persian dominion and would have been 20 years old by year 30 of the period. (Note that there is some evidence that priests must have reached the age of 20 before they would have been permitted to serve in the Temple. See Ezra 3:8 and Hullin 24b.) Under the above assumptions, the lives of most of these high priests would probably have overlapped. Therefore, an additional assumption is required to explain why the high priesthood would have continually passed from father to son when, for most of these sons, the father would probably still have been alive at the time of the son's inauguration as high priest. The assumption usually made is that some of these high priests became ritually disqualified after serving only a few years. Jewish law provides many separate grounds on which a high priest or priest can become ritually disqualified.

Note that the assumptions become more difficult if (based on Yoma 69a) the high priest in the 34th-year of the period of Persian dominion was Simon the Just who, according to Ben Sira 50:1, was the son of a man named Johanan.

When faced with Nehemiah 12:10–11, those who adopt the conventional chronology can simply take the approach that the Darius mentioned at Nehemiah 12:22 is Darius II and that the succession of high priests described at



as the SO chronology assigns to it also seems to be implicit from the listing of the successive generations of descendants of Zerubbabel at I Chronicles 3:19–24.<sup>25</sup> There is only one verse in the Bible, 11:2 of Daniel, that unequivocally supports the SO chronology or a chronology close to it.<sup>26</sup>

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Nehemiah 12:10–11 and 12:22 is only the succession of high priests up until his time. This seems to be the view of most modern scholars.

Some who adopt the conventional chronology take the approach that the succession of high priests described at Nehemiah 12:10–11 is the succession of high priests for the entire Persian period, and that the Darius of Nehemiah 12:22 is Darius III. But six generations is ordinarily too small a number of generations to span a period of 2 centuries. Also, an Aramaic document from Elephantine published in this century shows that the high priest in the 17th year of Darius II (407 BCE) was named יהוחנן, which is presumably the equivalent of יוחנן, and thus tends to show that the יוחנן/יוחנן and Jaddua of Nehemiah 12:11 and 12:22 probably date to the late 5th century BCE and/or the early 4th century BCE and not to the time of Alexander. For the text of this document, see Cowley, *op. cit.*, no. 30. It is clear that this document, dated to the 17th year of the reign of a Darius, cannot date to the reign of Darius III because Darius III only reigned approximately 4 years. It is theoretically possible that the document could date to the reign of Darius I, but the document's references to יהוחנן as the high priest and סנאבלט as the governor of Samaria are two of the many considerations that make this suggestion extremely unlikely.

25. I Chronicles 3:19–24 records Shemaiah, the son of Shekhaniah, and Hattush as descendants of Zerubbabel, who lived many generations after him. In the book of Ezra-Nehemiah (see Ezra 8:2 and Nehemiah 3:29), these same individuals seem to be contemporaries of Ezra and Nehemiah. From a combination of the two sources (and assuming that the individuals referred to in the book of Ezra-Nehemiah are the same as the individuals referred to in I Chronicles), it would seem that the period of Ezra and Nehemiah was many generations after the period of Zerubbabel.

26. The plain sense of this verse clearly implies that the Persian period would span the reigns of only a few Persian kings (perhaps as few as three, or as many as five; see App. A, n. 2). However, it is the view of practically all modern scholars that the 7th to 12th chapters of the book of Daniel were not authored or put into final form until the 2nd century BCE. If this view is adopted, the picture of the Persian period found at Daniel 11:2 should not be given much weight because the 2nd-century BCE author of Daniel 11:2 may have known only the few Persian kings mentioned in the book of Ezra-Nehemiah. If the view is adopted that the

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statements at Daniel 11:2 were made in the reign of Koresh, as stated at Daniel 10:1, they were made only as predictions and not as statements of past historical fact.

It is possible to interpret Daniel 11:2 in a manner consistent with the conventional chronology. See the interpretations suggested at App. A, n. 2, third para. But such interpretations are not following the plain sense of the verse.

Outside of Daniel 11:2, there are scattered verses that could support an argument that the Persian period was a short one: e.g., Ezra 2:2's listing of an individual named Nehemiah as among those who returned with Zerubbabel, and Ezra 7:1's description of Ezra as the son of Seraiah. (Seraiah was the name of the high priest in the time of Zedekiah.) But all of the arguments from such verses can be easily rebutted. For example, regarding Ezra 7:1, it is clear from a comparison of I Chronicles 5:29–40 and Ezra 7:1–5 that the latter is only an abbreviated genealogy, and it is certainly possible that by "son" of Seraiah, we are to understand only "descendant" of Seraiah.



## Appendix C

### *Additional Note on the Identification of Ahashverosh with Xerxes*

Appendix B, n. 17 discusses the evidence for the identification of Ahashverosh with Xerxes. We believe that this identification cannot reasonably be disputed. Nevertheless, this identification does raise two problems, one with regard to verses 5–6 of the second chapter of the book of Esther, and the other with regard to the material found in the Greek historians regarding the wife of Xerxes.

According to the plain sense of Esther 2:5–6, there was an exile from Jerusalem at the time of king Jeconiah, and Mordechai was exiled in this exile. But if Mordechai was alive at the time of this exile (597 BCE), he would have been over 110 years old by the beginning of the reign of Xerxes (486 to 465 BCE), and over 120 years old when he became prime minister in Xerxes' 12th year.<sup>1</sup>

Several ways have been suggested to avoid this difficulty. One way is to interpret the *אֲשֶׁר הִגְלָה* (who was exiled) of Esther 2:6 as referring not to Mordechai, but to Kish.<sup>2</sup> Kish is the last individual mentioned at Esther 2:5, and according to the plain meaning of the verse, is Mordechai's great-grandfather. Another way, keeping the *אֲשֶׁר הִגְלָה* as referring to Mordechai, is to interpret the teaching of verses 2:5–6 to be only that

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1. The question could also be raised as to how young and beautiful Esther could have been if she was first cousin (בת דוד, Esther 2:7) to such an aged individual.

2. See, e.g., *The Five Megilloth* (Soncino), p. 203, and *Hamesh Megillot (Da'at Mikra)*, introduction to Esther, p. 6, and commentary on Esther, p. 14, (commentary on 2:6).

Mordechai came from a *family* that had been exiled with Jeconiah, i.e., that Mordechai lived in captivity because of the exile.<sup>3</sup>

It should be pointed out that מרדכי is not a Hebrew name, and many scholars have suggested that it derives from the name of the Babylonian god, Marduk. Mordechai's own name thus seems to provide some evidence that Mordechai was not born in Israel and exiled at the time of Jeconiah, but born later, in captivity.<sup>4</sup>

The other problem raised by the identification of Ahashverosh with Xerxes is that, according to the Greek historians, the name of Xerxes' wife was Amestris (Αμηστρις). Amestris is described as the daughter of a Persian military commander named Otanes (Herodotus, *Histories*, VII, para. 61), and not as a Jewess, daughter of Avihail. She is also described as having outlived Xerxes, and having been active in royal affairs even in the reign of Xerxes' son Artaxerxes (Ctesias, *Persica*, in J. Freese, ed., *The Library of Photius*, vol. 1, pp. 102–04).

Three approaches can be suggested to reconcile the material regarding Amestris found in the Greek historians with the material found in the book of Esther:

- One approach is to postulate that Amestris is Vashti.<sup>5</sup> The scholars who adopt this approach note that the Bible does not state that Vashti was executed after her affront to Ahashverosh in the third year of his reign. The Bible only indicates that Vashti would no longer be permitted to appear before the king and that מלכותה (her royal estate) would be given to another (Esther 1:19–21).<sup>6</sup>

3. See, e.g., *The Five Megilloth* (Soncino), p. 203. See also *Hamesh Megillot* (*Da'at Mikra*), commentary on Esther, p. 14, (commentary on 2:6).

4. See, e.g., *The Five Megilloth*, (Soncino), p. 203.

5. See, e.g., the scholars referred to by E. Yamauchi, in his *Persia and the Bible*, pp. 230–32.

6. But in the references to Amestris in the Greek historians, there is nothing to indicate any loss of status by her during Xerxes' reign. For example, Herodotus (*Histories*, IX, paras. 109–12) tells a story that he describes as taking place around the time Xerxes returned from his failed military expedition against Greece (which, in the view of all scholars, would have been at least several years after the third year of Xerxes' reign, see n. 8), in which Amestris is depicted as still being close to Xerxes and still having authority over Xerxes' guards. (Herodotus writes that Xerxes had fallen in love with a certain woman while at Sardis, after

- A second approach is to postulate that Amestris is Esther<sup>7</sup> and that the Greek historians simply erred regarding her ancestry.<sup>8</sup> The Greek historians committed hundreds of errors on historical details, and this would be just another such error.

- A third approach is to postulate that Esther was never the official queen, but was one of Xerxes' many wives of a lower level (and, for a time, his favorite from among this level).<sup>9</sup> It is likely that Xerxes maintained a

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his retreat from Athens, and later transferred his affections to this woman's daughter. Thereafter, Amestris wove for Xerxes a beautiful robe which Xerxes accepted but then gave to the daughter. When Amestris found this out, she sent for Xerxes' guards and had the mother horribly mutilated.)

Of course, there is nothing that necessitates giving credence to these stories repeated (or invented) by Herodotus, and certainly not to all their details.

7. See, e.g., *Trei Asar (Da'at Mikra)*, vol. 2, app., p. 3.

8. Note that the import of the book of Esther is that Esther did not disclose her true ancestry to Ahashverosh for several years. Any false impression in the mind of the public with regard to her ancestry may never have been corrected. Also, it may have been in the interest of the Persian government to maintain a false ancestry for her, and not to publicize that she was a Jewess.

Of course, Esther would not want to be identified for posterity with the cruel and vengeful Amestris (assuming we give credence to the tales found about Amestris in the Greek historians). Herodotus tells us that Amestris once ordered a woman to be horribly mutilated and her bodily parts thrown to the dogs (see n. 6). He also tells us that Amestris buried 14 sons of notable Persians alive (*Histories*, VII, para. 114). Ctesias tells of Amestris' decapitating 50 Greeks and impaling their leader (Ctesias, op. cit., p. 102).

Note also that implicit in the story described in n. 6 above seems to be that Amestris was Xerxes' wife at the time he fell in love with this other woman while he was at Sardis. Modern scholars date the period Xerxes spent at Sardis (after his retreat from Athens) to be approximately the winter of 480 BCE through the end of the summer, or fall, of 479 BCE. Yet Esther was not taken to Xerxes/Ahashverosh until Dec. 479–Jan. 478 BCE (Esther 2:16). If we would give full credence to the story described in n. 6, Amestris could not be Esther. (In calculating Ahashverosh's 7th year to have commenced in the spring of 479 BCE, and Tevet of his 7th year to have fallen Dec. 479–Jan. 478 BCE, the assumption is made that the dates stated in the book of Esther follow the system of reckoning employed by the Persians. See Part I, n. 11.)

9. See, e.g., P. Korngryn, מִיב וְסִפּוּרֵי הַיְדּוּדוֹת, in *Sefer Zayydel*, p. 226. See also *Hamesh Megillot (Da'at Mikra)*, introduction to Esther, p. 6.

harem of wives along with his official queen,<sup>10</sup> and there is some support in the book of Esther for the view that Esther may have been only one of many wives competing for Xerxes' attention. See, e.g., Esther 2:19 (maidens continue to be brought to the palace after Esther was chosen) and 4:11 (Esther not called to the king for 30 days).<sup>11</sup>

Of course, all of these approaches present difficulties.<sup>12</sup> It must also be pointed out that, to date, the name of Xerxes' wife has only been preserved in Greek sources, and it is very possible that these Greek sources do not properly record her name. Should Persian cuneiform texts be discovered that refer by name to the wife of Khshayarsha (Xerxes), this would shed much light on this issue.

The identification of Ahashverosh with Xerxes is adopted by hundreds of scholars. But it is interesting to record rabbinic figures who have adopted this identification.<sup>13</sup> The following are some of these rabbinic figures:

10. Herodotus writes that "every Persian marries many lawful wives, and keeps still more concubines" (*Histories*, I, para. 135). Plutarch records that Artaxerxes II is said to have had 360 concubines. Other sources refer to the loss of 329 concubines by Darius III when he fled from Alexander.

11. On the other hand, the overwhelming impression from the book of Esther is that Esther was the official queen of Ahashverosh from the time she was chosen in the 7th year of his reign through the balance of the years described in the book. See, e.g., Esther 2:17 (וישם כתר מלכות בראשה וימליכה), and the repeated references to Esther as אסתר המלכה (Esther the queen) or המלכה (the queen) in chapters 5, 7, 8, and 9, which date to the 12th and 13th years of the reign of Ahashverosh. That Esther was the official queen is also perhaps implied by Ahashverosh's repeated offer to her of half of his kingdom. See Esther 5:3, 5:6, and 7:2.

12. See notes 6, 8, and 11. On the other hand, the name Αμειστρις (Amestris) does bear some phonetic resemblance to the names אסתר and ושתי.

13. Any rabbinic figure who adopts the identification of Ahashverosh with Xerxes and agrees with the time period of the reign of Xerxes set forth in the conventional chronology (the period immediately after the reign of the Daryavesh in whose reign the Second Temple was built) is viewing the background to the book of Esther in a manner entirely different than this background was viewed by the Tannaim and Amoraim. Classical rabbinic sources (i.e., SO, the Babylonian Talmud, the Jerusalem Talmud, and Esther Rabbah) consistently view the story of the book of Esther as taking place *before* the building of the Second Temple, and interpret numerous aspects of the story in this light.

- Joseph Zechariah Stern (*Be'ur Hadash Maharizash Al Megillat Rut, Eikhab, Kobolet, Ester*, p. 61) (1876)
- Jonas Bondi (C-7) ("Die Perserkönige der Bibel nach Rabbi Jose," *JJLG* 17, 1925, pp. 326–30)
- Simon Glazer (DIII-2) (*History of Israel*, vol. 2, pp. 223 and 267) (1930)
- Jacob Gutkovski (C-8) (*Korot Am Olam*, p. 42) (1932)
- Isaac Halevy (DIII-5) (*Dorot ha-Rishonim: Tekufat ha-Mikra*, p. 262) (1939)
- Meir Herskovics (DIII-8) (זהותו של המן והתמודדותו נגד יהודה וירושלים, *Or ha-Mizrah* 22, 1972–73, pp. 236–39)
- Shelomoh Danziger (DIII-7) ("Who Was the Real Akhashverosh?" *Jewish Observer*, Feb. 1973, pp. 12–15)
- Samuel Hakohen (B-41) (האם היה נחמיה מבית דויד?, *Simai* 90, 1981–82, p. 6, n. 18, and *Mavo le-Sifrei Shivat Tziyyon ba-Mikra*, pp. 73 and 77, 1988)
- Adin Steinsaltz (C-13) (*Talmud Bavli*, vol. 14, Ta'anit-Megillah, p. 50, commentary on Megillah 12a, *ba-Hayyim*, and p. 47, commentary on Megillah 11a, *ba-Hayyim*) (1983)
- Shlomo Riskin (DIII-12) ("And now, a toast to those great anti-Semites," *Jerusalem Post*, International edition, week ending Feb. 23, 1991, p. 23)<sup>14</sup>

The only Jewish sources from prior to modern times (19th to 20th centuries) located by this study that viewed, or seem likely to have viewed, the story of Esther as having taken place after the building of the Second Temple are: 1) the Septuagint (which identified Ahashverosh with Artaxerxes), 2) Josephus (who followed the view of the Septuagint), 3) one view in *Pirkei De-Rabbi Eliezer* (see App. D, 1, view of R. Tanhum, and see also App. D, n. 11, second para.), and 4) Josippon (see Part II, and especially n. 15). See also perhaps the additional note at the end of App. D, passage 1, and the statement of Pseudo-Saadia (App. D, 10) in his commentary on Daniel 8:3 (which is inconsistent with the view he expressed earlier in the commentary).

14. Avigdor Miller (DII-4) (1971) also adopts the identification of Ahashverosh with Xerxes (*Torah Nation*, pp. 40 and 42). But unlike the figures listed above, Miller rejects the conventional chronology and views the Persian period to have been a short one. Miller thereby creates for himself a difficult dilemma with regard to where to place the reign of Ahashverosh/Xerxes. See the discussion of Miller's response in Part III.

Also, Hersh Goldwurm (A-13) (1982), in his *History of the Jewish People: The*



It is also significant that the identification of Ahashverosh with Xerxes is followed in the Soncino Bible commentaries and in the *Da'at Mikra* (Mossad ha-Rav Kook) Bible commentaries.<sup>15</sup>

The SO chronology places the reign of Ahashverosh immediately before the reign of the Daryavesh in whose reign the Second Temple was built. But the true time frame of the reign of Ahashverosh (under the assumption that Ahashverosh is Xerxes) is immediately after the reign of this Daryavesh. Most likely, what caused the author of the SO chronology to state the chronology that he did was the fact that the book of Ezra, after its reference to Ahashverosh (Ezra 4:6),<sup>16</sup> includes a description of events that took place in the reign of this Daryavesh (Ezra 4:24–6:13).<sup>17</sup>

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*Second Temple Era* (ArtScroll History Series), is willing to include a statement that "according to some historians, King Xerxes was Ahasuerus" (ibid., p. 45), without stating any disagreement with this view. But like Miller, Goldwurm rejects the conventional chronology. (In his discussion of Xerxes, ibid., pp. 44–46, Goldwurm does not provide a precise date for Xerxes' reign.)

15. Soncino: *The Five Megilloth*, p. 195, and *Daniel. Ezra. Nehemiah*, p. 132.

*Da'at Mikra: Hamesh Megillot*, introduction to Esther, p. 5, and commentary on Esther, p. 14; *Ezra ve-Nehemiah*, introduction, p. 10, and app. pp. 3 and 12–13; and *Trei Asar*, vol. 2, app. pp. 2–3.

16. Most likely, the author of the SO chronology also identified the Artahshasta of Ezra 4:7–23 with Ahashverosh.

17. But it is now understood that the Ahashverosh and Artahshasta material at Ezra 4:6–23 was only included parenthetically. The author or final editor of the book of Ezra decided to supplement the mention of activities in the reigns of Koresh and Daryavesh against the work on the Temple with mention of similar activities in the reigns of later kings. See App. B, n. 19. This key to understanding the fourth chapter of the book of Ezra only became evident in modern times, when the identification of Ahashverosh with Xerxes became clear.

## *Appendix D*

### *Early Jewish Authors Who Adopt Chronologies of the Persian and Second Temple Periods That Differ from the SO Chronology*

Many Jewish authors from the periods of the Geonim and Rishonim adopt chronologies of the Persian or Second Temple periods that differ from the SO chronology. In this appendix, are listed those opinions from the periods of the Geonim and Rishonim that either: 1) view the Persian period as spanning the reigns of more kings than just Koresh, Ahashverosh, and Daryavesh; 2) view the order, or the lengths of the reigns, of Koresh,<sup>1</sup> Ahashverosh, and Daryavesh differently from the order and lengths stated or implied in SO<sup>2</sup>; or 3) view the Second Temple period as spanning more than 420 years.<sup>3</sup>

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1. But early Jewish authors who adopt a chronology different from the SO chronology are not included in this appendix if the only difference between their chronology and the SO chronology is that they adopt the view of Rava concerning the lengths of the reigns of Daryavesh of Madai and Koresh. On this view of Rava, and regarding Jewish authors from the Amoraic period who adopt chronologies of the Persian and Second Temple periods that differ from the SO chronology, see the additional note at the end of this appendix.

2. SO states the length of the reign of Koresh to have been 3 years, and the length of the reign of Ahashverosh to have been 14 years. See App. A. SO does not state the length of the reign of Daryavesh. From other data in SO, it can be calculated that SO must have viewed Daryavesh's reign (over the land of Israel) as spanning approximately 35 years. See App. A, n. 11.

3. There are also Jewish authors whose statements about the high priests

Many of the authors included in this appendix<sup>4</sup> are referred to by many of the responses included in the body of this study, particularly the responses included in categories B and C of Part III, who refer to them to show that these early Jewish authors never considered themselves bound by the SO chronology.<sup>5</sup>

It must be pointed out that some of the authors included in this appendix may not have had access to SO, so their different chronology may not in any sense reflect a willingness on their part to disagree with SO.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, presumably all of the early Jewish authors included in this appendix had access to the Talmud, and most of the elements of the SO chronology are expressed in the Talmud.<sup>7</sup>

of the Persian period or the Men of the Great Assembly seem to indicate that they viewed the Persian period as spanning longer than the time assigned to it by SO. These authors are not included here. (For a reference to two such authors, see de Rossi, *Me'or Einayim, Imrei Binah*, chap. 36, p. 308.)

4. Particularly, Zerahiah b. Isaac Ha-Levi (13).

5. In this appendix, we have included all the early Jewish authors referred to by the responses in this study, and additional ones as well. But we have not included Karaite authors. For references to Karaite authors whose chronologies of the Persian period differ from the SO chronology, see N. Wieder, *The Judean Scrolls and Karaism*, p. 262 and A. Mondschein, *R. Abraham Ibn Ezra: ha-Peirush ha-Katzar le-Sefer Daniyyel*, p. 143.

6. It is also possible that some of those included in this appendix may have believed that SO, or the Talmud, needed to be reinterpreted in a manner consistent with their views.

7. The view that the Persian period commenced with the reign of Koresh and continued with the reign of Ahashverosh is expressed at Megillah 11b. The view that the reign of Ahashverosh was followed by the reign of Daryavesh is implicit from Megillah 11b (last two lines) and its citation of Ezra 4:24. See, e.g., Rashi, loc. cit., ד"ה שנים מקושעות היו and ד"ה בארץ. (Daryavesh's name is not mentioned at Megillah 11b but his name is mentioned at the end of verse 4:24; only the first part of this verse is printed in the Talmud.) The view that the Artahshasta mentioned after this Daryavesh is identical with him (and was also called Koresh) is expressed at Rosh ha-Shanah 3b. The view that the Second Temple period spanned 420 years is expressed in many places in the Talmud. See App. A, n. 4. The view that the period of Persian dominion spanned 34 years is expressed at Avodah Zarah 9a.

The early Jewish authors included in this appendix usually state their

With few exceptions, the chronologies adopted by the early Jewish authors included in this appendix seem to be based solely on biblical material and/or material found in Josippon.<sup>8</sup>

## 1 Pirkei De-Rabbi Eliezer (8th century?)

Pirkei De-Rabbi Eliezer<sup>9</sup> contains a statement by a R. Yonatan that the last Persian king, Artahshasta, reigned 32 years,<sup>10</sup> and a statement by a R. Tanhum that the fourth king referred to at Daniel 11:2 was Ahashverosh.<sup>11</sup>

## 2 Midrash Eser Galuyot (9th to 10th centuries?)

The author of Midrash Eser Galuyot<sup>12</sup> views the reign of Daryavesh as spanning 33 years.

chronologies without mentioning the different chronology of SO or the Talmud. If an early Jewish author states that he is aware of the different chronology of SO or the Talmud and not following it, or believes that SO or the Talmud needs to be reinterpreted, this is noted.

8. The only exceptions being Josippon and the author of a Hebrew version of *The Gestes of Alexander*, who were clearly basing their works on nonrabbinic sources, and Abraham Ibn Ezra, who relies in part on ספרי מלכי פרס (see nn. 33 and 34). The other early Jewish authors included in this appendix interpret the biblical material differently from the author of the SO chronology and/or, in reliance on Josippon, allow for the inclusion of Cambyses.

9. Pirkei De-Rabbi Eliezer, chap. 49.

10. Many editions of Pirkei De-Rabbi Eliezer contain an erroneous reading here and attribute to R. Yonatan the view that Artahshasta reigned 12 years.

11. If R. Tanhum was counting Daryavesh of Madai as the first of the four kings referred to, then R. Tanhum's view of the order of the Persian kings would appear to be the same as a view that seems to be expressed in Genesis Rabbah. See nn. 59 and 60.

R. Tanhum's statement is also found in a Midrash printed by S. Buber. See *Aggadat Esther*, p. 11.

12. Midrash Eser Galuyot, in L. Grünhut, *Sefer ha-Likkutim*, vol. 3, p. 18. This source refers to Daryavesh as Koresh. There also exists a variant of this source, which views the reign of Daryavesh as spanning 34 years.

### 3 Seder Malkhei Romi (10th century)

The author of *Seder Malkhei Romi*<sup>13</sup> writes that the Persian period spanned the reigns of the following Persian kings (according to the chronology of the Sages): Koresh (together with the years of Daryavesh of Madai, 5 years), Ahashverosh (14 years), Artahshasta (32 years), and Daryavesh (1 year).

### 4 Josippon (10th century)

In his discussion of the Persian period,<sup>14</sup> Josippon refers to the following Persian kings: Koresh, Cambyses, Ahashverosh, and Daryavesh ha-Sheni. Elsewhere,<sup>15</sup> Josippon refers to Daryavesh, Artahshasta, and שרשן (Xerxes). If each of these are separate Persian kings in the mind of Josippon, then Josippon views the Persian period as spanning the reigns of at least seven Persian kings.

### 5 Hebrew Version of The Gestes of Alexander (10th to 11th centuries?)

In addition to referring to Koresh and to the Daryavesh defeated by Alexander, a Hebrew version of *The Gestes of Alexander*<sup>16</sup> also refers to קסירקסוס (=Xerxes).<sup>17</sup>

13. *Seder Malkhei Romi*, in *Mediaeval Jewish Chronicles*, vol. 1, p. 185. This chronicle was also included earlier in Part II of this study.

14. Josippon, vol. 1, pp. 48–54. Josippon was also included earlier in Part II of this study.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 263 and 279–80.

16. There are many Hebrew versions of this medieval romance. We are referring to the version printed by D. Flusser, in his *Sefer Yosippon*, vol. 1, pp. 461–91 (מעשה אלכסנדרוס).

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 468 and 483. Although it is now clear that Ahashverosh is to be identified with Xerxes (see App. B, n. 17), the medieval author of a Hebrew version of *The Gestes of Alexander* almost certainly would not have identified the two, and would have viewed קסירקסוס as a different king from any of the kings mentioned in the bible.

## 6 Seder Olam Zuta Fragment (10th to 11th centuries?)

The author of the Seder Olam Zuta fragment published by A. Neubauer<sup>18</sup> views the Persian period as spanning the reigns of the following Persian kings: Koresh (3 years), Ahashverosh (14 years), Artahshasta (33 years), and Daryavesh ha-Parsi (2 years).<sup>19</sup>

## 7 Midrash Lekah Tov (11th century)

The author of Midrash Lekah Tov<sup>20</sup> views the reign of Daryavesh as spanning 32 years.

## 8 Moses ben Samuel ha-Kohen Gikatilla (11th century)

Moses ben Samuel ha-Kohen Gikatilla<sup>21</sup> views the Persian period as spanning the reigns of the following Persian kings: Koresh, Ahashverosh, Artahshasta, Daryavesh, and Artahshasta.

## 9 Rashi (11th century)

Rashi,<sup>22</sup> commenting on Daniel 11:2, first records the view of SO that the Persian period spanned the reigns of only three Persian kings and

The Hebrew version of *The Gestis of Alexander* printed by I.J. Kazis does not contain these references to Xerxes. The other Hebrew versions were not consulted for this study.

18. Fragment G1, in *Mediaeval Jewish Chronicles*, vol. 1, p. 195. This fragment is not to be confused with the work commonly known as Seder Olam Zuta, which expresses no such view.

19. Isaiah di Trani, *Commentary on Ezra*, p. 248 (commentary on Ezra 6:14), refers to an almost identical view in the name of Seder Olam Zuta (the only difference being 32 years, instead of 33 years, for the years of Artahshasta). Isaiah states that the view of this Seder Olam Zuta cannot be accepted because it disagrees with the view of the Talmud and SO.

20. Midrash Lekah Tov to Esther, in S. Buber, ed., *Sifrei de-Aggadata Al Megillat Ester*, p. 88.

21. Referred to in Ibn Ezra, commentary on Daniel 11:2.

22. Rashi, commentary on Daniel 11:2.

that the verse's reference to a fourth king counts Daryavesh of Madai as the first king. He then adds:

אבל בספר יוסף בן גוריון כתוב שהיה לו בן  
לכורש שמלך תחתיו לפני מלוך אחשורוש ושמ  
במבישה.

But in the book of Joseph son of Gorion it is written that Koresh had a son who reigned after him, before the reign of Ahashverosh, and that this king's name was Bambysah [=Cambyses].<sup>23</sup>

## 10 Pseudo-Saadia's Commentary on Daniel (11th to 12th centuries?)

The author of the commentary on Daniel erroneously ascribed in rabbinic Bibles to Saadia Gaon<sup>24</sup> views the Persian period as spanning

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23. Rashi is included in this appendix even though he does not necessarily adopt this alternate chronology. Elsewhere in his commentaries, Rashi always follows the SO chronology and never again mentions this Cambyses. See, e.g., Rashi, commentary on Haggai 1:1.

Compare with Rashi's commentary on Daniel 11:2 the following comments of a medieval Jewish chronicler (in *Mediaeval Jewish Chronicles*, vol. 1, p. 166):

שלשה מלכים עמדו לפרס ואחד למדי.  
דריוש הראשון הוא המדי. ואחריו כורש  
ואחשורוש ודריוש האחרון . . . וא' ע' פ'  
שכתוב בספר יוסיפון שהיה לו בן לכורש  
ושמו כמבישה מכל מקום כך היא משנה  
שלימה בסדר עולם.

24. Pseudo-Saadia, commentary on Daniel 11:1–2. H.J. Mathews' interpretation of this commentary is followed here. See Mathews, *op. cit.* (note immediately below), p. xii, n. 1. S. Schwab (B-24) erroneously attributed this commentary to Saadia Gaon and interpreted the commentary slightly differently. (See also Pseudo-Saadia, commentary on Daniel 7:5, which seems to support Schwab's interpretation.) Note also that Pseudo-Saadia, in his commen-

the reigns of the following Persian kings: Koresh ha-Rishon, Ahashverosh, Artahshasta, Daryavesh=Koresh, and Koresh ha-Gadol.

## 11 Commentary on Ezra by Unknown Author (11th to 12th centuries?)

The author of the commentary on Ezra first published by H.J. Mathews<sup>25</sup> views the Persian period as spanning the reigns of at least the following Persian kings: Koresh (3 years), Ahashverosh (14 years), Artahshasta (32 years), and Koresh=Daryavesh.<sup>26</sup>

The author of this commentary clearly states that his view of the Persian period is different from the Talmudic one<sup>27</sup>:

מצינו בתלמוד הוא כורש הוא דריוש הוא  
ארתחשסתא . . . אבל בדעתי כי כורש ודריוש  
וארתחשסתא שלשה מלכים היו . . .

We find in the Talmud: "Koresh is the same as Daryavesh who is the same as Artahshasta" . . . But in my view: Koresh, Daryavesh, and Artahshasta were three (separate) kings . . .

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tary on Daniel 8:3, seems to express a different view of the Persian period altogether. There he writes that Ahashverosh was the last Persian king.

25. Mathews, *Commentary on Ezra And Nehemiah By Rabbi Saadiah*. (Mathews' edition of this commentary was published in 1882. The commentary was published again by H. Berger in 1895 under the title: פירוש על עזרא ונחמיה לר' בנימין (ב"ר יהודה).) Mathews presents strong arguments that the author of this commentary was the author of the commentary on Daniel erroneously ascribed in rabbinic Bibles to Saadiah Gaon (10 above).

26. Mathews, op. cit., p. 10 (commentary on Ezra 4:5). Elsewhere (p. 3, commentary on Ezra 1:1), the author of this commentary refers to a Koresh ha-Aharon. If the author of this commentary viewed this Koresh ha-Aharon as an additional Persian king, then the chronology of the Persian period expressed by him would be the same as the one expressed by Pseudo-Saadiah (10 above). This is one of the many factors that leads Mathews to believe that the authors of the two commentaries are the same.

27. Ibid., p. 18 (commentary on Ezra 6:15).



## 12 Abraham Ibn Ezra (12th century)

Abraham Ibn Ezra<sup>28</sup> views the Persian period as spanning the reigns of the following Persian kings: Koresh, Ahashverosh-Artahshasta,<sup>29</sup>

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28. Ibn Ezra, commentary on Daniel 9:25; shorter commentary on Daniel, pp. 8-10; *Safah Berurah*, pp. 8-9; and shorter commentary on Zechariah 9:9 (Mondschein, pp. 207-08). This view also seems to be expressed by Ibn Ezra in his commentary on Daniel 11:2: אחר כורש היו שלשה (there were three after Koresh). But there seems to be an omission in the printed editions of this commentary, which makes the view presented illogical and unclear. (The phrase והשני דריש שהוא רביעי לכורש in the original commentary.) Manuscripts of this commentary were not examined for this study, but the view that there is an omission in the printed editions of Ibn Ezra here has already been suggested by I. Sharim, *Hadar Ezer*, p. 136b (1865) and D.H. Ibn Shalosh, *Ayyelet ha-Shahar*, p. 132 (1979). This omission in the printed editions has served to mislead many about Ibn Ezra's view of the Persian period. Two rabbinic authorities who were misled and caused to misstate Ibn Ezra's view due to the omission are S. Schwab (B-24) and J. Meidan (DI-2).

In referring to Ibn Ezra's shorter commentary on Daniel, reference is being made to the commentary of Ibn Ezra on Daniel published by H.J. Mathews. In referring to Ibn Ezra's shorter commentary on Exodus, reference is being made to the commentary of Ibn Ezra on Exodus published by I.S. Reggio. In referring to Ibn Ezra's shorter commentary to Zechariah, reference is being made to the commentary of Ibn Ezra to Zechariah scheduled to be published by U. Simon. (A. Mondschein, in his *R. Abraham Ibn Ezra: ha-Peirush ha-Katzar le-Sefer Daniyyel*, has included excerpts from the commentary to Zechariah to be published by Simon, and it is only through Mondschein's work that the commentary has been available to us.) All other references to Ibn Ezra's commentaries in these notes are to his standard (longer) commentaries, the ones printed in rabbinic Bibles. Note finally that the commentary on Ezra and Nehemiah ascribed to Ibn Ezra in rabbinic Bibles was not authored by him. See M. Friedlaender, *Essays on the Writings of Abraham Ibn Ezra*, vol. IV, p. 142.

29. The description "Ahashverosh-Artahshasta" is used here and by the view of Levi b. Gershom to indicate that these authors view the Artahshasta referred to at Ezra 4:7-23 (after the reference to Ahashverosh at Ezra 4:6) to be Ahashverosh. This is probably the view of the author of SO, although this is not stated in SO. This contrasts with the view of many others included in this appendix, who view the Artahshasta of Ezra 4:7-23 to be a separate Persian king who reigned between Ahashverosh and the Daryavesh in whose reign the Temple was rebuilt.

Daryavesh, and Artahshasta=Daryavesh.<sup>30</sup>

Ibn Ezra explicitly mentions SO and tells his readers that he is not following its chronology<sup>31</sup>:

ואמר בעל סדר עולם כי כורש הוא ארתחשטא  
הוא דריוש . . . כל איש דעת יבין שג' מלכים היו . . .

The author of Seder Olam stated that Koresh is the same as Artahshasta who is the same as Daryavesh . . . Any person with sense will understand that these were three (separate) kings . . .

Ibn Ezra views the entire Second Temple period as spanning 471 years. He does not state this explicitly but that this is his view can be derived from the interpretation of the "seventy weeks" of Daniel 9:24–27 that he provides.<sup>32</sup>

It is noteworthy that Ibn Ezra refers many times in his commentaries to ספרי מלכי פרס (the books concerning the Persian kings),<sup>33</sup> which seems to have been a nonrabbinic source<sup>34</sup> and probably included a description of many of the Persian kings not mentioned in the Bible. Although Ibn Ezra adopts some data from this source,<sup>35</sup> he never mentions any Persian

30. The description "Artahshasta=Daryavesh" is used here and by the view of Levi b. Gershom to indicate that these authors believe that the Artahshasta mentioned in connection with Ezra and Nehemiah was the last Persian king and must have also been called Daryavesh, because the king defeated by Alexander was known to them to have been called Daryavesh.

31. Ibn Ezra, *Safah Berurah*, p. 8a. (Note that Ibn Ezra's text of SO seems to be close to or the same as the variant of SO mentioned above at App. A, n. 5.) See also his: 1) shorter commentary on Daniel, p. 8; 2) commentary on Daniel 11:2; and 3) shorter commentary on Exodus, p. 8 (commentary on Exodus 2:10).

32. See his commentary on Daniel 9:25.

33. Or ספרי פרס ומדי, or ספר מלכי פרס. See: 1) commentary on Daniel 6:1, 7:14, 9:25, and 11:2; 2) shorter commentary on Daniel, p. 5; 3) commentary on Esther 1:14 and 7:8; and 4) commentary on Isaiah 2:2.

34. The precise identity of this source is unknown. Interesting is Ibn Ezra's remark (commentary on Daniel 7:14) that he read this source 40 years earlier and by now had forgotten certain details from it.

35. For example, in his commentary on Daniel 9:25, he relies on this source for the data that the Daryavesh in whose reign the Temple was rebuilt

kings other than ones mentioned in the Bible (or whom he believes are mentioned in the Bible<sup>36</sup>) and his chronology of the Persian period does not allow for any others.<sup>37</sup>

### 13 Zerahiah ben Isaac ha-Levi Gerondi (Ba'al ha-Ma'or) (12th century)

Zerahiah ben Isaac ha-Levi Gerondi<sup>38</sup> first gives an explanation of the discussion at Rosh ha-Shanah 3b and follows the SO chronology. He then continues:

זה הוא העולה בידינו לפי מדרש רבותינו  
ולפי דקדוקיהם אבל הפי' הנכון לפי הפשט  
זה שכחוב ומשעם כורש ודריוש וארתחשטא  
מלך פרס שלשה מלכים היו . . .

That is what we arrive at according to the Midrash of our Rabbis and according to their deductions. But the correct interpretation, according to the plain sense, is that where it is written [Ezra 6:14]: "according to the decree of Koresh, and

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reigned exactly 12 years. (But in his *Safah Berurah*, p. 8b, he states that this Daryavesh reigned at least 22 years.)

36. Ibn Ezra believes that the Daryavesh defeated by Alexander was mentioned in the Bible under the name Artahshasta.

37. Ibn Ezra believes that Daniel 11:2 supports the conclusion that the Persian period spanned the reigns of exactly four Persian kings. See shorter commentary on Zechariah 9:9, and commentary on Daniel 11:2 (אחר כורש היו) (שלשה) (see n. 28).

Noteworthy is Ibn Ezra's reference (commentary on Daniel 2:39) to a *שבוש גדול* (large confusion) with respect to the number of Persian kings. It might be argued that this is a reference to the discrepancy between the view of the Persian period found in the nonrabbinic sources and the view of the Persian period found in the rabbinic sources. More likely, however, his reference to a *שבוש גדול* is just a reference to the diversity of *rabbinic* views regarding the chronology of the Persian kings or to the confusion regarding the chronology of the Persian kings caused by the biblical verses.

38. Zerahiah b. Isaac ha-Levi Gerondi, *Ha-Ma'or ha-Katan*, Rosh ha-Shanah, chap. 1, p. 1a.

Daryavesh, and Artahshasta king of Persia," these were three (separate) kings . . .

Zerahiah views the Persian period as spanning the reigns of the following Persian kings: Koresh, Ahashverosh,<sup>39</sup> Artahshasta, Daryavesh, and Artahshasta.

## 14 Abraham ben David ha-Levi Ibn Daud (12th century)

Abraham ben David HaLevi Ibn Daud<sup>40</sup> states that Koresh reigned 3 years, Ahashverosh reigned 16 years, and Daryavesh=Artahshasta reigned 32 years.

He also seems to adopt the view that the Second Temple period spanned 427 years.<sup>41</sup>

## 15 David Kimhi (Radak) (13th century)

David Kimhi<sup>42</sup> views the Artahshasta mentioned after Daryavesh as a separate king.

39. Zerahiah does not mention Ahashverosh in his discussion and assumption is made that when he refers to Artahshasta ha-Rishon he does not intend a reference to Ahashverosh by another name. Assumption is also made that he viewed this Artahshasta ha-Rishon to have reigned immediately after Ahashverosh and not immediately before him. The former is more likely, given the fact that Zerahiah's postulated existence of this Artahshasta is almost certainly based on Ezra 4:7–23, which follows the reference to Ahashverosh at Ezra 4:6. Indeed, every medieval Jewish author who believes that the period between Koresh and Daryavesh spanned the reigns of both an Ahashverosh and an Artahshasta and expresses a view on the order of these kings' reigns views Ahashverosh as having reigned before Artahshasta. Compare the view of Elijah of Vilna (see n. 58).

40. Abraham b. David ha-Levi Ibn Daud, *Sefer ha-Kabbalah*, pp. 9–10 (Hebrew pagination).

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 8 and 9 (Hebrew pagination). See also *ibid.*, p. 12, n. 166, p. 14, n. 192, and discussion at pp. 196–97 (English pagination).

42. David Kimhi, commentary on Haggai 2:21. But just a few words later, Kimhi adopts the tradition that the period of Persian dominion spanned only 34 years.

## 16 Samuel ben Nissim Masnut (13th century)

Samuel ben Nissim Masnut,<sup>43</sup> commenting on Daniel 11:2, does exactly the same thing as Rashi. He first records the traditional view that the Persian period spanned the reigns of three Persian kings and that the reference to a fourth king is based on a count of Daryavesh of Madai as the first king. He then adds:

אבל יוסף בן גוריון אומר שהיה לו לכרש  
בן שמלך תחתיו והיה שמו כמבישה והוא  
הרביעי.

But Joseph son of Gorion states that Koresh had a son who reigned after him whose name was Kambysah, and he is the fourth king.

## 17 Tanhum ben Joseph Yerushalmi (13th century)

Tanhum ben Joseph Yerushalmi<sup>44</sup> views the Persian period as spanning the reigns of the following Persian kings: Koresh, Artahshasta=Ahashverosh, Daryavesh, and Artahshasta.

He mentions the Talmudic statement that equates Koresh, Daryavesh, and Artahshasta and suggests that this statement meant only that the last Artahshasta was also called Koresh and Daryavesh.<sup>45</sup>

## 18 Solomon ben Abraham Adret (Rashba) (13th century)

Solomon ben Abraham Adret<sup>46</sup> states that there was a king named Artahshasta who reigned after Ahashverosh and who ordered the work on

43. Samuel b. Nissim Masnut, *Midrash Daniyyel u'Midrash Ezra*, p. 91.

44. Tanhum b. Joseph Yerushalmi, commentary on Daniel 1:21, in *Daniyyel Im Targum u'Peirush Rabenu Sa'adyah Ben Yosef Fiyyumi*, ed. Kafah, pp. 24–30.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

46. Solomon b. Abraham Adret, commentary on Rosh ha-Shanah 3b.

the rebuilding to cease. This Artahshasta reigned prior to the Daryavesh=Artahshasta in whose reign the Temple was rebuilt.

## 19 Yom Tov ben Abraham Ishbili (Ritva) (14th century)

Yom Tov ben Abraham Ishbili<sup>47</sup> states that there was a king named Artahshasta who ordered the work on the rebuilding to cease. This Artahshasta reigned prior to the Daryavesh=Artahshasta in whose reign the Temple was rebuilt. Ishbili does not state whether this Artahshasta came before or after Ahashverosh.<sup>48</sup>

He also suggests that the Artahshasta of the time of Nehemiah may have been a third Artahshasta, later than the first Artahshasta and the Daryavesh=Artahshasta in whose reign the Temple was rebuilt. But he concludes that it is not necessary to adopt this view.

## 20 Levi ben Gershom (Ralbag) (14th century)

In his commentaries on Daniel and Ezra,<sup>49</sup> Levi ben Gershom views the Persian period as spanning the reigns of four Persian kings: Koresh, Ahashverosh=Artahshasta, Daryavesh, and Artahshasta=Daryavesh. He does not mention SO or the Talmud in the passages in which he expresses this view. But it is clear from a reading of these passages that he was aware of SO's interpretation of Daniel 11:2 and of SO's (or the Talmud's) view, which equated the Daryavesh in whose reign the Temple was rebuilt with the Artahshasta of the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, and that he rejected these views.

In his commentary on Esther,<sup>50</sup> Levi ben Gershom views the Persian period as spanning the reign of three Persian kings: Koresh, who reigned

47. Yom Tov b. Abraham Ishbili, commentary on Rosh ha-Shanah 3b.

48. Most likely, Ritva is of the same view as Rashba that this Artahshasta came after Ahashverosh. See n. 39. (It is theoretically possible that, by his reference to this Artahshasta, Ritva intends a reference to Ahashverosh by another name. But it is more likely that Ritva is just expressing the same view as Rashba.)

49. Levi b. Gershom, commentary on Daniel, pp. 353b and 359a, and commentary on Ezra, p. 131 (commentary on Ezra 4:7).

50. Levi b. Gershom, commentary on Esther (introduction).

at least 3 years, Ahashverosh=Artahshasta, who reigned at least 32 years, and Daryavesh ha-Parsi.

In his commentary on Daniel,<sup>51</sup> Levi ben Gershon views the Second Temple period as spanning  $437\frac{1}{2}$  years.

## 21 Isaac ben Joseph Israeli (14th century)

Isaac ben Joseph Israeli<sup>52</sup> states that Koresh reigned 3 years, Ahashverosh reigned 17 years, and Daryavesh=Artahshasta reigned 32 years.

## 22 Isaac Abravanel (15th century)

Isaac Abravanel<sup>53</sup> views the Persian period as spanning the reigns of the following Persian kings: Koresh, Cambyses, Ahashverosh, Daryavesh, and perhaps an Artahshasta. He views the Medeo-Persian period as spanning 54 years. He tells us that his view of the Persian period seems inconsistent with SO. But he reinterprets SO and suggests that SO was only counting those kings whose reigns were of consequence for the Jews.

In his commentary on Daniel, where the above views are expressed, Abravanel does adopt the view that the length of the Second Temple period was 420 years.<sup>54</sup> But in his commentary on the Haggadah, he adopts the view that the length of the Second Temple period was 428 years.<sup>55</sup>

Also of interest is a view expressed in several sources that Ahashverosh was the son of Daryavesh of Madai.<sup>56</sup> It is possible that some of

51. Levi b. Gershom, commentary on Daniel, p. 362b.

52. Israeli, *Sefer Yesod Olam*, fourth treatise, chap. 18, p. 33.

53. Abravanel, *Ma'yenei ha-Yeshu'ah*. See Part II, n. 24, for the detailed references. Abravanel was also included earlier in Part II of the study.

54. But he divides these 420 years differently than they are divided in SO. See Part II, n. 40.

55. Abravanel, *Zevah Pesah*, p. 76.

56. See, e.g., Midrash Aba Goryon, in *Sifrei de-Aggadata Al Megillat Ester*, p. 4. Note that Targum Sheni to Esther 1:1, as printed in standard rabbinic Bibles, also includes a statement that Ahashverosh is the son of Daryavesh of Madai:

the sources that expressed this view also believed that Ahashverosh was the king who succeeded Daryavesh of Madai.

It is also worth mentioning that the difficulty that the verses regarding the Persian kings presented for medieval Jews was so well known that it was the subject of a polemical poem<sup>57</sup>:

ערך כורש ודריש וארתחששתא ואחשורוש  
איך מלכו בסדרם חדרוש  
וכמה מלכו עם שבעים שני הגלות חדרוש  
לתעורה ותורה.

Finally, in the period from the 16th century to modern times, there were many rabbinic authorities (and obviously, thousands of Jewish scholars) who adopted chronologies of the Persian and Second Temple periods that differed from the SO chronology. Aside from the rabbinic authorities included in categories B, C, and DIII of Part III, and many of the rabbinic authorities included in categories A and DII, other rabbinic authorities who viewed the Persian period as spanning the reigns of more than three Persian kings included Elijah of Vilna and Zevi Hirsch Chajes.<sup>58</sup>

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הוא אחשורוש בר כורש מלכא פרסאה בר דריש מלכא מדא. But the printed text of Targum Sheni here is corrupt. The true reading is: הוא אחשורוש בר כורש מלכא פרסאה בר דריש מלכא מדא. See H. Ginsberg, *Studies in Daniel*, p. 72, n. 56 and J. Meidan, "פרס ומדי", *Megadim* 14, (1991), p. 70, n. 17.

57. Mondschein, R. *Abraham Ibn Ezra: ha-Peirush ha-Katzar le-Sefer Daniyyel*, p. 140, quoting the author of *She'elot Attikot*.

58. Elijah of Vilna, *Kol Eliyyahu*, commentary on Rosh ha-Shanah 3b, views the Persian period as spanning the reigns of the following Persian kings: Koresh, Artahshasta, Ahashverosh, Daryavesh, and Artahshasta. He suggests that the seventh year of Artahshasta was only 1 year after the sixth year of Daryavesh because the kings were from the same dynasty, and in such a case, it was the practice to refer to the years of a successor king as if they were a continuation of the years of the prior king. Zevi Hirsch Chajes, *Kol Sifrei Maharatz Chajes*, vol. 1, p. 325, writes that the Talmudic equating of Koresh, Daryavesh, and Artahshasta was only meant homiletically, and points to many other homiletic equatings of separate individuals by the Talmud.



## Additional Note

A search of the Amoraic period for Jewish views that either: 1) view the Persian period as spanning the reigns of more kings than just Koresh, Ahashverosh, and Daryavesh; 2) view the order or the lengths of the reigns of Koresh, Ahashverosh, and Daryavesh differently from the order and lengths stated or implied in SO; or 3) view the Second Temple period as spanning more than 420 years, reveals several passages that perhaps reflect such views:

1. An anonymous passage at Genesis Rabbah 44:15 lists the three Persian kings in the order of Koresh, Daryavesh, and Ahashverosh.<sup>59</sup> The author of this passage may have believed that this was the order in which these kings reigned.<sup>60</sup>

2. R. Huna, at Esther Rabbah 1:5, records explanations in the name of R. Aha and the Rabbis for why Ahashverosh's reign did not encompass the whole world. All the explanations given cite verses that refer only to Koresh. It is possible that these explanations reflect rabbinic views that equate Koresh with Ahashverosh.<sup>61</sup>

59. ועז משולשת זו מדי שמעמדת שלשה כורש ודריוש ואחשורוש ("And a goat threefold" [Genesis 15:9]. This alludes to Medea, which produced three: Koresh, Daryavesh, and Ahashverosh.) The critical edition of Genesis Rabbah edited by J. Theodor and H. Albeck does not mention any variants here, so this seems to have been the reading in all manuscripts. This passage is also found in Midrash ha-Gadol to Genesis, p. 254.

60. But it is also possible that the author of this passage may have been in agreement with the SO chronology and may have had some reason to list the kings in the order that he did.

Regarding a view similar to the view reflected in Genesis Rabbah, see n. 11.

61. But alternative explanations for the passage's citation of verses that refer to Koresh are possible.

Esther Rabbah 1:5 has another unusual aspect. It contains a reference to an aspect of the reign of Koresh prior to a reference to a similar aspect of the reign of Daryavesh of Madai. This could be a reflection of a rabbinic view that the reign of Koresh was the earlier of the two. But alternative explanations for the passage's unusual order are possible.

3. R. Levi and the Rabbis, at Esther Rabbah 1:3, equate Ahashverosh with an Artahshasta.<sup>62</sup> It is possible that R. Levi and the Rabbis identify Ahashverosh with the Artahshasta of the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.<sup>63</sup>

4. Rava,<sup>64</sup> at Megillah 11b, views the total of the years of Daryavesh of Madai and Koresh as five.<sup>65</sup> He also seems to maintain that a 1-year adjustment for incomplete years was necessary for the total of the years of these kings.<sup>66</sup> If so, his chronology would seem to differ by 1 year from the SO chronology.<sup>67</sup>

5. The Talmud, at Rosh ha-Shanah 3b, records the following statement:

62. But there is some dispute as to the proper text of this passage.

63. But it is more likely that R. Levi and the Rabbis only intended to identify Ahashverosh with the Artahshasta of Ezra 4:7–23, who is described as having decreed a cessation of certain work of rebuilding and who, in light of Ezra 4:24, can be viewed as having reigned prior to Daryavesh. Statements that connect Ahashverosh with the cessation of the rebuilding are found nearby at Esther Rabbah 1:1. See also Esther Rabbah 7:2 (statement of R. Levi). Most likely, the author of the SO chronology also identified Ahashverosh with the Artahshasta of Ezra 4:7–23, although such an identification is not stated in SO.

64. Although this view is expressed by Rava (and placed in the mouth of Ahashverosh), it seems that the Talmud agrees with it. See Megillah 11b: **וְהָאֵלֶּיךָ שָׂפִיר חָשִׁיב**.

65. Such a view is very surprising. There is no indication anywhere in the Bible that the reign of Daryavesh of Madai continued to a second year or that the reign of Koresh continued to a fourth year.

66. This is how most scholars and rabbinic authorities understand Rava's view. But at least one rabbinic authority (Isaiah di Trani, commentary on Megillah 11b, **מִדְּדוּרָא חֲנִינָא**, in *Tosafot Rid*, p. 46a) believes that Rava did not intend any adjustment for incomplete years to apply to the reigns of Daryavesh of Madai and Koresh.

67. SO seems to view the total of the years of these kings as four (1+3) before adjustment for incomplete years, and seems to view a 1-year adjustment for incomplete years as necessary. See SO, chap. 28, p. 425, and chap. 29, pp. 431 and 433. Many scholars and rabbinic authorities have attempted to deal with this discrepancy between the views of SO and Rava. Elijah of Vilna, for example, suggests an emendation in the text of SO. See Elijah's commentary on SO, in SO, ed. Leiner, p. 86 (commentary on chap. 29).

תנא הוא כורש הוא ארתחשטא כורש שמלך כשר  
היה ארתחשטא על שם מלכותו ומה שמו דריוש שמו.

A Tanna<sup>68</sup> recited: Koresh is the same as Daryavesh who is the same as Artahshasta. (He was referred to as) Koresh because he was a proper king. (He was referred to as) Artahshasta because that was the name of his kingship. But what was his name? Daryavesh was his name.

It is possible that the author of this statement equated Koresh with Daryavesh=Artahshasta.<sup>69</sup>

6. A Jewish tradition referred to by Jerome<sup>70</sup> interprets the "seventy weeks" of Daniel 9:24–27 as commencing with the first year of Daryavesh of Madai and ending with Hadrian's crushing of the Jewish revolt. This tradition may reflect a view that the Second Temple period spanned other than precisely 420 years.

68. The term Tanna here almost certainly does not mean a Tanna from the Tannaitic period. It means an individual from the Amoraic period whose job it was to recite rabbinic statements from memory.

69. But two other interpretations of this statement are possible: 1) the author of the statement was stating only an interpretation of Ezra 6:14, and stating only that the Koresh of Ezra 6:14 was the same as Daryavesh=Artahshasta; or 2) the author of the statement believed that Daryavesh=Artahshasta was sometimes referred to by the *Sages* as Koresh. See Rashi, ad. loc., ד"ה הוא כורש, and see the statement of R. Abahu at Rosh ha-Shanah 3b.

There is one other statement in the Talmud that perhaps reflects the view that the Koresh who gave the initial permission to rebuild the Temple is the same as Daryavesh=Artahshasta, and supports such an interpretation of the *הוא כורש הוא ארתחשטא* passage. The Talmud at Rosh ha-Shanah 4a, in one of its attempts to find a source for the idea that there was a change in attitude by Daryavesh=Artahshasta during the course of his reign, cites a passage from the decree of initial permission by Koresh. But it is not necessary to interpret the citation to this decree as an indication that the author of this statement equated the author of this decree with Daryavesh=Artahshasta. Other interpretations of the citation are possible. See Tosafot, ad. loc., ד"ה וידבק די אע.

70. See J. Braverman, *Jerome's Commentary On Daniel*, pp. 103–05.

## Appendix E

### Note on a Passage in Nahmanides

Nahmanides, in his *Sefer ha-Ge'ulah* strongly affirms the tradition that the Second Temple period spanned 420 years, without referring to any alternative view.<sup>1</sup> Yet, the *editio princeps* of the *Vikku'ah ha-Ramban*<sup>2</sup> (the work that comprises Nahmanides' debate with the apostate Pablo Christiani) attributes to Nahmanides the following statement:

ובבית שיני לא היה מלך ליהודה רק זרובבל בן שאלחיאל  
ועמדו אחרי כן ש"ע שנה עד שמלכו בני חשמונאי הכהנים  
המה ועבדיהם . . .

In the Second Temple, there was no king from Judah except Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel. Afterwards, 370 years passed until the reigns of the sons of Hashmonai, the priests, them and their servants . . .

It has been suggested<sup>3</sup> that this statement is a recitation by Nahmanides of the view that the Second Temple period was a protracted one and that

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1. Nahmanides, *Sefer ha-Ge'ulah Sha'ar ha-Shelishi*, in *Kitvei Rabeinu Moshe ben Nahman*, vol. 1, p. 281. Although Nahmanides does not refer to any alternative view of the length of the Second Temple period here, it seems from his attempt to emphasize the accuracy of the view of the Sages (e.g., *הם היו בבית ההוא ויורו עמידתו*, and *וחרבנו*) that he may have been aware of and responding to an alternative view.

Note that Abravanel, *Ma'yenei ha-Yeshu'ah*, p. 384, refers to a short treatise (מאמר קצר) by Nahmanides on the subject of the Persian kings, but this treatise is not extant.

2. Ed. J. Wagenseil (Altdorf, 1681) (with Latin translation).

3. By J. Meidan. See his "מבוא למאמרו של ח' הפץ על מלכות פרס ומד", *Megadim* 14, (1991), p. 73, n. 60. Meidan did not make this suggestion based on a citation

Nahmanides expressed this view because he was calculating according to the chronology of his opponent.<sup>4</sup>

But the apostate with whom Nahmanides was debating seems to himself have been of the view that the Second Temple period spanned only 420 years.<sup>5</sup> Thus there would have been no reason for Nahmanides to have even temporarily catered to the view that the Second Temple

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to the *editio princeps* but made it based on a citation to the edition of J. Eisenstein, who in his *Otzar Vikkubim*, p. 87, had printed the following:

ובבית שני לא היה מלך מיהודה רק זרובבל בן שאלתיאל  
ובניו ימים מספר ועמדו אח"כ שלוש מאות ושמונים שנה  
עד שמלכו בני חשמונאי הכהנים המה ועבדיהם . . .

However, Eisenstein did not have his own manuscript and was relying on M. Steinschneider's edition (see *Otzar Vikkubim*, p. 25), and Steinschneider's edition (Stettin, 1860) includes the word *החרבן* between *עד* and *שמלכו* (see n. 7). Meidan also cited to the text printed by H. Chavel in his *Peirush ha-Ramban Al ha-Torah* (see n. 8), without realizing that Chavel had printed the *editio princeps*.

4. Precisely how many years the period from the end of the rule of Zerubbabel until the beginning of Hasmonean rule spanned was not relevant to the point Nahmanides was making.

5. Nahmanides attributes to the apostate the following statement:

ושבועים שבעים הם של שנים והוא ח"כ שנה שעמד  
בית שני עם ע' שנה של גלות בבל וקדש קדשים  
הוא ישר.

See *Vikkuah ha-Ramban*, in *Kitvei Rabeinu Moshe ben Nahman*, vol. 1, p. 312, para. 56.

Nahmanides also writes that, according to the chronology of the apostate, Jesus arrived (בא) after more than 60 weeks of years (=420 years) (לאחר ששים) (ibid., p. 313, para. 59). This statement makes sense on the assumption that the apostate believed that the period from the destruction of the First Temple to the destruction of the Second Temple spanned approximately 490 years, because Nahmanides had stated earlier (ibid., p. 306, para. 22) that, according to the chronology of the apostate, Jesus was born 73 years before the destruction of the Second Temple. (The word *ויותר* in the above passage may or may not be problematic, depending on what Nahmanides meant by בא.) Note that the above five words (and the word *אבל*, which precedes them) are not found in the *editio princeps*.

We also have evidence that other medieval Christians adopted the view that the Second Temple period spanned 420 years. See Part II, n. 33.

period was a protracted one. Also, the two other early printed editions<sup>6</sup> of the *Vikku'ah ha-Ramban* both contain the word החרבן between עד and שמלכו. Read with the addition of this word, the statement bears no relation to the view that the Second Temple period was a protracted one; rather, it bears a close relation to the SO chronology.<sup>7</sup> It is therefore likely that the *editio princeps* simply reflects an erroneous reading.<sup>8</sup>

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6. Constantinople, 1710 (printed in a collection entitled מלחמת חובב); and Stettin, 1860 (ed. Steinschneider, from a manuscript).

7. Aside from containing the additional word החרבן, both the 1710 edition (p. 2) and the 1860 edition (p. 7) also state a slightly different amount of years and a slightly different starting point, for the period counted:

ובבית שני לא מלך מיהודה רק זרובבל ובניו ימים  
במספר. ועמדו אחרי כן ש'פ שנה עד החרבן שמלכו . . .

In the Second Temple, there was no king from Judah except  
Zerubbabel and his sons, (who reigned) a short time. Afterwards, 380  
years passed until the destruction (during which period) reigned . . .

According to the SO chronology, as supplemented by the Talmud (Avodah Zarah 10a), it was exactly 386 years from the end of the Persian period to the destruction of the Second Temple and exactly 380 years from the beginning of MS to the destruction of the Second Temple.

8. Neither of the editors of the two most authoritative editions of the *Vikku'ah ha-Ramban*, in their citations to variants, even mention the *editio princeps*' omission of the word החרבן. Steinschneider (*Vikku'ah ha-Ramban*, p. 7) mentions the *editio princeps*' variant, with respect to the number of years, and a certain other manuscript that does not give an amount of years at all. Chavel (*Kitvei Rabienu Moshe ben Nahman*, vol. 1, p. 304, para. 12) prints Steinschneider's text and makes no mention of any variants. But note that Chavel, in his *Peirush ha-Ramban Al ha-Torah*, vol. 1, add., p. 559 (regarding Nahmanides' commentary on Genesis 49:10), prints the text of the *editio princeps*.

It was noted above (n. 3) that Eisenstein's edition had omitted the word החרבן, even though the edition that Eisenstein relied upon contained this word. It is not known if Eisenstein purposely chose to omit this word or whether his omission was an error. If the latter, this would provide further evidence of how easy it might have been for this word to have been erroneously omitted in the course of textual transmission.



## Appendix F

### Note on the Responses of Non-Jewish Scholars

In the modern period, the responses of non-Jewish scholars to the discrepancy fall almost uniformly into category B.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the non-Jewish scholars in the modern period usually refer to the SO chronology only briefly, making either no attempt to account for the chronology, or little attempt other than stating that the chronology was the result of the author's insufficient knowledge of the Persian period or was derived from the "seventy weeks" of Daniel 9:24–27.<sup>2</sup>

Many non-Jewish scholars who refer to the SO chronology do so in the

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1. I know of no non-Jewish scholars in the modern period who postulate textual emendations or reinterpretations of the kind that would merit inclusion in category C.

It is worth mentioning that according to B. Ratner, *Seder Olam Rabbah*, vol. 2, p. 137, n. 15, the 16th-century translations of SO (Paris, 1578, Latin translation only; and Basel, 1580, Latin translation with Hebrew text) authored by the non-Jew G. Genebrardo followed the 250-year version of passage 4. (I have not seen these editions.) But this does not seem to have been the result of a decision by Genebrardo to adopt a particular version of passage 4. Rather, Genebrardo was following the text of the *editio princeps* throughout. See Milikowsky, *Seder Olam: A Rabbinic Chronography*, pp. 83–84 and n. 244.

There are a few non-Jewish scholars in the modern period who do not fall into category B because they do not adopt the conventional chronology. One example is Martin Anstey. Anstey believes that the conventional chronology overstates the length of the Persian period by 82 years and mentions SO as one witness for a shorter Persian period. See his *The Romance of Bible Chronology*, vol. 1, pp. 19–25.

2. One Gentile scholar who does discuss the SO chronology extensively is Charles Torrey. See his "Medes and Persians," *JAOS* 66, (1946), pp. 3–6.



context of their discussion of the Damascus Document of the Dead Sea Scrolls, or of chapters 9 and 11 of the book of Daniel, which chapters (as well as all chapters commencing with chapter 7) they believe were authored or put into final form in the 2nd century BCE. Usually, they argue that the chronology of the Persian and Second Temple periods implied in the 390-years passage of the Damascus Document,<sup>3</sup> or in verses 9:24–27 or 11:2 of the book of Daniel, underestimates or overestimates the true chronology<sup>4</sup> and then cite the SO chronology as an example of an unrelated erroneous Jewish chronology from around the late Second Temple period.<sup>5</sup> At least one non-Jewish scholar<sup>6</sup> believes that the SO chronology is based on the same assumptions as the chronology expressed in the Damascus Document, and a few non-Jewish scholars<sup>7</sup> believe that the SO chronology is based on the same, or almost the same, assumptions as the chronology expressed in chapter 11 of the book of Daniel (which chapter they believe was authored or put into final form not long before the SO chronology).<sup>8</sup>

There are references by non-Jews, in the eras prior to the modern period, to the fact that the Jewish chronology of the Persian and Second Temple periods differed from the widespread one. See, e.g., the commen-

3. See Part III, n. 174.

4. With regard to verse 11:2 of the book of Daniel, the claim is that the verse underestimates the length of the Persian period. With regard to the 390-years passage of the Damascus Document and verses 9:24–27 of the book of Daniel, the claim that these passages underestimate the length of the Persian period and the claim that these passages overestimate the length of the Persian period have both been made.

5. See, e.g., Godfrey Driver, *The Judean Scrolls*, pp. 311–13; Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, pp. 158–59; and Derek Beattie, *First Steps in Biblical Criticism*, pp. 79–80. Some of these scholars also cite to the erroneous chronology of the Second Temple period found in Josephus (1st century CE) (see Part IV, n. 15) and in the Jewish Hellenist Demetrius (Alexandria, 3rd century BCE).

6. Gustav Hölscher, "Zur Frage nach Alter und Herkunft der sog. Damaskusschrift," *ZNW* 28 (1929), p. 42.

7. E.g., Torrey, *op. cit.*, pp. 1–15.

8. Note also that one non-Jewish scholar, Roger Beckwith, claims that a chronology close to and related to the SO chronology is reflected in the *Assumption of Moses*, a work that may date as early as the end of the 1st century BCE. See his "Daniel 9 and The Date of Messiah's Coming in Essene, Hellenistic, Pharisaic, Zealot, and Early Christian Computation," *RQ* 10, (1981), pp. 523 and 529–30.

taries on Daniel of Jerome (4th century)<sup>9</sup> and John Calvin (16th century).<sup>10</sup> In the eras prior to the modern period, there were also non-Jews who adopted the view that the Second Temple period spanned 420 years.<sup>11</sup> These non-Jews adopted this view because they believed it was mandated by Daniel 9:24–27.

Note that any non-Jew who wishes to maintain that all the historical statements included in the Bible are accurate is faced with a discrepancy similar to the one that is the topic of this study. Daniel 11:2 implies that the Persian period spanned the reigns of only a few Persian kings, while the conventional chronology is to the contrary. This discrepancy is much discussed in the literature of the non-Jews. The response of those who believe in the historical accuracy of all the statements included in the Bible is that Daniel 11:2 did not intend an enumeration of all the Persian kings. The response of those who do not have this belief, e.g., most modern scholars, is usually that chapters 7–12 of the book of Daniel were authored or put into final form in the 2nd century BCE, at a time when the true chronology of the Persian period was forgotten.<sup>12</sup>

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9. Commentary on Daniel 9:24–27 (ed. Braverman, pp. 103–05). Note that the Jewish chronology to which Jerome referred is only close to, and not the same as, the one expressed in SO. See the additional note at the end of App. D.

10. Commentary on Daniel 9:24 and 11:2 (ed. Myers, vol. 2, pp. 196–99 and p. 269).

One notable historical figure from a later period (early 18th century) who refers to SO and its different chronology is Isaac Newton. See his *The Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended*, pp. 356–58.

11. See, e.g., the two Christians referred to by Abravanel (see Part II, n. 33) and the view of Pablo Christiani included in Nahmanides (see App. E, n. 5).

12. As part of the debate about the proper interpretation of Daniel 11:2, and without reference to the SO chronology, there is much discussion of the issue of the extent of knowledge that the Jews of the late Second Temple period had concerning the Persian period. As part of the debates about the proper interpretation of Daniel 9:24–27 and the 390-years passage of the Damascus Document, there is also much discussion of this issue, again without reference to the SO chronology. See, e.g., A. Bevan, *The Book of Daniel*, pp. 148–49; C. Bouteflower, *In and Around the Book of Daniel*, pp. 176–77; E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, vol. 3.1, pp. 248–49; and G.F. Moore, "The Covenanters of Damascus: A Hitherto Unknown Jewish Sect," *HTR* 4, (1911), p. 334.



# Addenda

## Category A

### 1 Berel Wein (1995)

In the preface to his book on the classical era, Wein briefly discusses the discrepancy and advises that he has decided to follow the SO chronology in this book.<sup>1</sup> He writes that he has "nothing new to add to the debate" regarding the discrepancy. But "it is the combination of [his] faith in the collective memory of the Jewish people and the convenience of following such a dating system" that has led him to adopt this system in his book. He adds that those who reject the Talmudic chronology usually end up rejecting the entire Talmudic-oriented view of Jewish history, and he implies that he would not wish to adopt any chronological view that would place him in that camp. He also observes that "even if particular historical problems or errors of fact or calendar would be found in the traditional view of the story of the Jews, this in no way should impugn the great general thrust and truths this view of the history provides." In his preface, he refers his readers to the response of H. Goldwurm (A-13) for a short review of the problem and possible solutions.<sup>2</sup>

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1. B. Wein, *Echoes of Glory*, pp. x–xi. Note that Wein was categorized in Part III as response B-39, based on his response in taped lectures in 1984.

2. But it can be sensed from his preface that Wein is far from certain whether the chronological scheme he has chosen to follow in his book is the correct one. And in a note regarding the Persian kings in the text of his book (p. 2, n. 2, "for an attempt to decipher the mystery of the Persian emperors"), he refers his readers to: 1) the response of S. Danziger (DIII-7) (who had adopted the conventional chronology and argued for the identification of Ahashverosh with Xerxes), and 2) my response in a letter to the editor in the fall 1991 issue

In the text of his work,<sup>3</sup> he describes the Persian period as spanning the reigns of Cyrus, Ahashverosh, and Darius, and he dates the building of the Second Temple to the year 350 BCE. He also follows the suggestion made by H. Rabinovitz (A-11) that there was a regent named Artahshasta who controlled most of the power at court while Darius was young.<sup>4</sup>

## Category B

### 2 Abraham Firkovich (1872)<sup>5</sup>

Firkovich suggests that R. Yose shortened the Persian period as part of an effort to state a chronology in which Simon the Just lived close to the time of Ezra and the Great Assembly.<sup>6</sup> He believes that R. Yose's goal was to strengthen the appearance of an authentic chain of transmission of the oral law.

### 3 Salo Baron (1937)<sup>7</sup>

Baron writes that "the later rabbis so completely forgot the significant developments during that crucial period [=the Persian period] that they reduced its duration from more than two centuries to thirty-four years."

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of Jewish Action (vol. 51, no. 4) (in which I had argued for the adoption of the conventional chronology and against the suggestions of C. Heifetz and B. Aaronson, A-15 and A-16). (Wein refers his readers to the responses of Danziger and myself without describing the contents of these responses).

3. Wein, *op. cit.*, pp. 2–16.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 7, n. 17, and see Part III, n. 60.

5. Firkovich, *Avnei Zikaron*, introduction.

6. See Avot 1:1–2.

7. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, vol. 1, p. 151.

## Category C

### 4 Joseph Zechariah Stern (1876)<sup>8</sup>

Stern suggests that Daniel 11:1–2 and the Sages were only counting the Persian period from the time of Cyrus through Xerxes (=Koresh through Ahashverosh). Subsequent to Xerxes and his defeat by the Greeks, the strength of the Persian kings was receding and was eclipsed by the strength of the Greek kings. For this reason, the Persian kings after Xerxes, and the years of the Persian period after Xerxes, did not merit counting.

### 5 Jekuthiel Judah Greenwald (1933)<sup>9</sup>

Greenwald states that passage 4 assigns 250 years to the Medeo-Persian period and represents the majority rabbinic view. He agrees with the suggestion of Jawitz (C-3) that R. Yose's 34-year statement can be interpreted as a statement of the years of the Persian period *before* the Second Temple was built. He also suggests that R. Yose's statement may have originally specified the figure רל"ד (234), and not ל"ד (34). He notes that there is a puzzling statement by Abraham Zacuto that the Sages viewed the Persian period as spanning ר"צ (290) years,<sup>10</sup> and he suggests that ר"צ was a copyists' error for an original ר"נ (250).

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8. Stern, *Be'ur Hadash Maharizash Al Megillat Rut, Eikhah, Kohelet, Ester*, pp. 60–61.

9. Greenwald, *Toledot ha-Kohanim ha-Gedolim*, pp. 41–42.

10. See Part II, n. 46.



## *Biographical Sketches<sup>1</sup>*

**Brad Aaronson:** 20th century; American-Israeli scholar.

**\*Isaac Abravanel:** 15th century; biblical commentator, philosopher, statesman, served King Alfonso V of Portugal and King Ferdinand of Castile.

**\*Abraham Akavya:** 20th century; Hebrew and Yiddish writer and editor, wrote extensively on Jewish chronology.

**\*Moses Auerbach:** 20th century; rabbi and educator in Israel, last chairman of the Juedisch-Literarische Gesellschaft (see entry for Jonas Bondi) and last editor of its annual.

**\*Salo Baron:** 20th century; professor of history at Columbia University, president of the American Academy for Jewish Research, president of the American Jewish Historical Society.

**Louis Bernstein:** 20th century; rabbi of Young Israel of Windsor Park, Queens, N.Y.; president of the Rabbinical Council of America.

**Philip Biberfeld:** 20th century; rabbi, educator and attorney in Germany, emigrated to the U.S. in 1939, thereafter rabbi of Congregation Agudas Yeshorim in Manhattan.

**\*Elias Bickerman:** 20th century; professor of ancient history at

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1. The entries are limited to the individuals included as responses, i.e., the individuals whose responses are collected and categorized in the text of Parts II and III (and in the Addenda).

Asterisk (\*) indicates that a biographical entry for the individual is found in the *Encyclopædia Judaica* (vols. 1–17).

The biographical information provided here is necessarily very limited, and I apologize for material omissions and inaccuracies. Entries are especially brief for some well-known figures because the main purpose of this appendix is to provide biographical information regarding figures who are not well-known.



Columbia University; his *Der Gott der Makkabaeer* revolutionized the study of the Maccabean revolt, and his *Chronology of the Ancient World* is a fundamental work on its subject.

**Abraham Bloch:** 20th century; rabbi of Congregation Petach Tikvah, Brooklyn, N.Y.

**Jonas Bondi:** late 19th to early 20th century; rabbi of Orthodox community in Mainz, Germany, one of the founding members of the Juedisch-Literarische Gesellschaft (a society for the advancement of the scientific study of Judaism, founded by Orthodox Jews in Frankfort in 1902), and editor of its annual (*Jahrbuch der juedisch-literarischen Gesellschaft*).

**\*Hayyim Bornstein:** late 19th to early 20th century; Polish scholar, a large portion of whose writings are devoted to the subject of the Jewish calendar.

**Jay Braverman:** 20th century; rabbi and educator in Canada and the U.S.

**Mordechai Breuer:** 20th century; professor of Jewish History at Bar-Ilan University, author of scholarly edition of the *Tzemah David* of D. Ganz.

**\*Isaac Cantarini:** 17th century; rabbi and physician of Padua, Italy.

**Shelomoh Danziger:** 20th century; rabbi of Beth Midrash Horeb, Riverdale, N.Y. and educator.

**\*Joseph Derenbourg:** 19th century; French orientalist and academic scholar.

**\*Jacob Emden:** 18th century; *halakhic* authority and prolific author; rabbi of Emden; widely remembered for his campaigns against the Shabbateans, and for his controversy with Jonathan Eybeschuetz, which divided European Jewry.

**Henry Englander:** 20th century; professor at Hebrew Union College.

**Isaac Simon Feder:** 20th century; rabbi and educator in Israel.

**Zechariah Fendel:** 20th century; New York-based rabbi and educator.

**\*Abraham Firkovich:** 19th century; Karaite leader; collector of manuscripts.

**\*Samuel Joseph Fuenn:** 19th century; scholar, educator, and Haskalah supporter in Vilna.

**\*David Ganz:** 16th century; chronicler, astronomer, and mathematician, student of Moses Isserles and Judah Loew.

**\*Harold Ginsberg:** 20th century; Bible scholar and Semitist, professor of Bible at the Jewish Theological Seminary, editor of the Bible division of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.

**\*Simon Glazer:** late 19th to early 20th century; rabbi in several cities in the Midwest and in New York, chief rabbi of the United Synagogues of Montreal and Quebec.

**Hersh Goldwurm:** 20th century; rabbi and author of several works in the ArtScroll History Series and the ArtScroll Tanach Series.

**Irving Greenberg:** 20th century; rabbi of Riverdale Jewish Center, Bronx, N.Y.; president of CLAL—The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership.

**\*Jekuthiel Judah Greenwald:** late 19th to mid 20th century; born in Hungary, rabbi in New York and Columbus, Ohio.

**Henry Guggenheimer:** 20th century; professor at Polytechnic University, Long Island; author of commentary on SO.

**Jacob Gutkovski:** late 19th to mid 20th century; rabbi in Poland and later in Tel Aviv.

**Samuel Hakohen:** 20th century; rabbi and educator in Israel.

**\*Isaac Halevy:** mid 19th to early 20th century; rabbinical scholar and historian, one of the founding members of the Juedisch-Literarische Gesellschaft, lived in various cities, served as rabbi of the Lewis Salomon "Klaus" in Hamburg.

**Chaim Heifetz:** 20th century; American-Israeli scholar and attorney.

**\*Jehiel Heilprin:** late 17th to mid 18th century; talmudic scholar and historian, rabbi in Glusck, rosh yeshivah in Minsk.

**Moses Herr:** 20th century; professor of Jewish History, Hebrew University.

**Meir Herskovics:** 20th century; rabbi and professor at Yeshiva University.

**\*Joseph Hertz:** late 19th to mid 20th century; rabbi in Syracuse, N.Y. and Johannesburg, South Africa; thereafter chief rabbi of England from 1913–46.

**\*Levi Herzfeld:** 19th century; historian and prominent member of the Reform movement in Germany.

**\*Hayyim Hirschensohn:** mid 19th to early 20th century; born in Palestine, one of the founders of the *Safah Berurah* society, editor of *Ha-Misderonah*, emigrated to the U.S. in 1904, served as rabbi in Hoboken, N.J.

**David Hayyim Ibn Shalosh:** 20th century; chief rabbi of the city of Netanyah.

**\*Joseph Jacobs:** late 19th to early 20th century; Jewish historian, folklorist, and scholar, founded and edited the *Jewish Year Book*, an editor of the *Jewish Encyclopedia*.

**Issachar Jacobson:** 20th century; rabbi and educator in Hamburg, and later in Israel.

**\*Ze'ev Jawitz:** mid 19th to early 20th century; Lithuanian-born writer and historian, settled in Israel in 1888, later lived in Vilna, Germany, and London.

**\*Josippon:** historical narrative of anonymous authorship written in Italy in the 10th century, based in large part on the works of Josephus.

**\*Kalman Kahana:** 20th century; rabbi of Fulda, Germany; founder and rabbi of Kibbutz Hafetz Hayyim in Israel; member of Knesset and signatory to the Proclamation of Independence; leader of the Po'alei Agudat Israel movement.

**Mattis Kantor:** 20th century; rabbi of Congregation Zichron Moshe, Monsey, N.Y.

**Aryeh Kaplan:** 20th century; New York-based rabbi, prolific writer, and thinker.

**\*Abraham Yeshayahu Karelitz (Hazon Ish):** 20th century; talmudic scholar, rabbi, and eminent *halakhic* authority who flourished in Vilna, and later, Bene-Berak.

**\*Yehezkel Kaufmann:** 20th century; professor of Bible at Hebrew University.

**Gilbert Klaperman:** 20th century; rabbi of Congregation Beth Sholom, Lawrence, N.Y.; president of the Rabbinical Council of America.

**Sholom Klass:** 20th century; rabbi, and editor of "The Jewish Press," a Brooklyn-based weekly newspaper.

**Heymann Kottke:** late 19th to early 20th century; rabbi in Hamburg, Germany, one of the founding members of the Juedisch-Literarische Gesellschaft.

**\*Samuel Krauss:** late 19th to mid 20th century; historian, philologist, and talmudic scholar; taught at the Jewish teachers' seminary in Budapest and at the Israelitische-Theologische Lehranstalt in Vienna; authored over 1,300 articles and monographs. His valuable library and papers were destroyed by the Nazis during the Kristallnacht in November 1938.

**\*Nachman Krochmal:** 19th century; philosopher and historian, one of the founders of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*.

**Abraham Kurman:** 20th century; thinker and writer in Israel.

**\*Jacob Lauterbach:** late 19th to mid 20th century; Galician-born U.S. talmudic scholar, professor of Talmud at Hebrew Union College, author of critical edition of *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishma'el*, major contributor to the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, authoring 260 of its articles.

**\*Isidore Loeb:** 19th century; publication manager of the *Revue des Études Juives* to which he contributed some 50 articles, secretary of the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Paris from 1869–92.

**\*Judah Loew (Maharal):** 16th century; talmudic scholar and philosopher, chief rabbi of Prague.

**Haskel Lookstein:** 20th century; rabbi of Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun in Manhattan, principal of Ramaz High School.

**Saul Lustig:** 20th century; rabbi and educator in Israel.

**\*Eduard Mahler:** late 19th to early 20th century; Hungarian orientalist, mathematician, and astronomer, professor at Budapest University, a large part of his writings were devoted to chronology.

**Hayyim Mantel:** 20th century; professor of Jewish History, Bar-Ilan University.

**\*Ahron Marcus:** late 19th to early 20th century; scholar and philosopher in Poland and Germany, a major part of his literary work was on the subjects of Kabbalah and Hasidism.

**\*Alexander Marx:** late 19th to mid 20th century; historian and bibliographer, author of a critical edition of SO (covering the first ten chapters only), head of the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary.

**Jacob Meidan:** 20th century; rabbi in Alon Shvut, Israel.

**\*Meir Loeb ben Jehiel Michael (Malbim):** 19th century; biblical commentator, chief rabbi of Rumania.

**Avigdor Miller:** 20th century; rabbi of Bais Yisrael Torah Center, Brooklyn, N.Y.

**Aryeh Neuman:** 20th century; educator in Israel.

**Wolf Pohrille:** 19th century; Galician rabbi, biblical commentator, and orientalist.

**Hayyim Dov Rabinovitz:** 20th century; American-Israeli rabbi and author of the *Da'at Soferim* commentaries on the Bible.

**Yosef Rabinowitz:** 20th century; rabbi and rosh yeshivah, Brooklyn, N.Y.

**\*Emanuel Rackman:** 20th century; rabbi of Congregation Shaarey Tefila of Far Rockaway, N.Y. and Fifth Avenue Synagogue in Manhattan; president of the Rabbinical Council of America; presently chancellor of Bar-Ilan University.

**\*Morris Raphall:** 19th century; rabbi of Birmingham, England, and thereafter of B'nai Jeshurun Synagogue in Manhattan; famous for anti-abolitionist sermon he gave in 1861 at the peak of the U.S. secession crisis.

**\*Solomon Judah Rapoport:** 19th century; scholar and pioneer of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, chief rabbi of Prague.

**\*Baer Ratner:** late 19th to early 20th century; Lithuanian talmudic scholar, author of important edition of SO.

**Shlomo Riskin:** 20th century; rabbi of Lincoln Square Synagogue in Manhattan, chief rabbi of Efrat.

**\*Abraham Rosenfeld:** 20th century; rabbi and cantor at the Finchley Synagogue in London, thereafter rabbi in New Zealand.

**\*Judah Rosenthal:** 20th century; professor of biblical exegesis at the College of Jewish Studies in Chicago.

**\*Azariah de Rossi:** 16th century; greatest of Hebrew scholars during the Italian Renaissance, earned living as a physician, famous for his controversial work *Me'or Einayim*, which was banned in many Jewish communities.

**Shlomo Rotenberg:** 20th century; rabbi of Agudat Israel synagogue, Williamsburgh, N.Y.

**\*Saadiah Gaon:** 10th century; greatest scholar and author of the Geonic period, head of the yeshivah in Pumbedita and later Sura.

**Simon Schwab:** 20th century; German-born rabbi of Khal Adas Yeshurun, Washington Heights, N.Y.

**Max Seligsohn:** mid 19th to early 20th century; professor in France.

**David Shmidel:** 20th century; rabbi and head of the *Atra Kadisha* (society for the preservation of ancient Jewish burial sites) in Israel.

**Eliezer Shulman:** 20th century; born in Bessarabia, exiled to Siberia for 3 decades, taught Hebrew and Jewish subjects in secret there, emigrated to Israel in 1975.

**Hayyim Shvilly:** 20th century; rabbi in Israel.

**Adin Steinsaltz:** 20th century; Jerusalem-born internationally known rabbi, author, and educator.

**\*Joseph Zechariah Stern:** 19th century; rabbi of Shavli, Lithuania.

**Joseph Tabori:** 20th century; professor of Talmud, Bar-Ilan University.

**\*Ephraim Urbach:** 20th century; professor at Hebrew University, editor of *Tarbitz*, widely known for his book on the Tosafists (*Ba'alei ha-Tosafot*).

**Ben Zion Wacholder:** 20th century; professor of Talmud and Rabbinics at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

**Berel Wein:** 20th century; rabbi of Congregation Bais Torah, Suffern, N.Y.; rosh yeshivah of Shaarei Torah of Rockland.

**Moses Weinstock:** 20th century; rabbi in Jerusalem, author of commentary on SO.

**Pinkas Weis:** 20th century; professor at University of Manchester.

**\*Abraham Zacuto:** mid 15th to early 16th century; historian and court astronomer in Spain and Portugal, his astronomical tables were used by Christopher Columbus.

**\*Solomon Zeitlin:** 20th century; professor of rabbinics at Dropsie College, specialist in postbiblical literature, editor of the *Jewish Quarterly Review*.

**Meir Zlotowitz:** 20th century; rabbi and editor of the ArtScroll Series publications.

**\*Moses Zuckermann:** mid 19th to early 20th century; scholar in Germany, known for his critical edition of the Tosefta.

No biographical information was available regarding Benny Isaacson, Samuel Kedar, Charles Raddock, Rahamim Sar-Shalom, Elihu Schatz, or Abraham Zwartz.



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