

The Seventy Years of Babylonian Domination

609/608 BCE King Josiah of Judah is killed while attempting to intercede against the Egyptian army. The Assyrian king, Ashur-uballit II, is defeated by the Babylonians in 609 BCE, beginning the period of seventy years of Babylonian domination in the region of Palestine. King Jehoiakim (Eliakim) of Judah becomes a vassal king under Nebuchadnezzar in the time of King Nabopolassar of Babylon.

606/605 BCE Nebuchadnezzar commands Babylonian forces and besieges Jerusalem in the third year of King Jehoiakim's reign over Judah. Members of the royal family and others are taken to Babylon, including Daniel (II Kgs. 23:36; II Chron. 36:1-8; Dan. 1:1-7).

605/604 BCE Accession year of King Nebuchadnezzar. Fourth regnal year of King Jehoiakim of Judah. Babylon halts Egyptian interference in the region of Palestine (Jer. 25:1; 46:1-2).

604/603 BCE First regnal year of King Nebuchadnezzar.

603/602 BCE Second regnal year of King Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar dreams of a "great image" whose "form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay" (Dan. 2:31-33).

598 BCE Jerusalem is besieged a second time by the Babylonians. End of Jehoiakim's reign. Jehoiachin reigns three months in Jerusalem (II Kgs. 24:8, 10, 18). Accession year of King Zedekiah of Judah.

597/596 BCE Jehoiachin is taken to Babylon. Remains as a prisoner for 37 years until 561/560 BCE (II Kgs. 24:12).

589/588 BCE Jerusalem is besieged a third time by the Babylonians. Siege ends in the 11th year of King Zedekiah of Judah in 587/586 BCE (II Kgs. 25:1-2).

587/586 BCE Jerusalem is “broken up” by the Babylonians (II Kgs. 25:4).

586/585 BCE “And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which is the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem: And he burnt the house of the Lord, and the king’s house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man’s house burnt he with fire. And all the army of the Chaldees, that were with the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about” (II Kgs. 25:8-10). [Author’s emphasis throughout.]

562/561 BCE End of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign. Accession year of Amelu-Merodach (Evil-merodach). He reigns two years in Babylon.

561/560 BCE Jehoiachin released from prison in the 37th year of his captivity. “And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, that Evilmerodach king of Babylon in the year that he began to reign did lift up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah out of prison; And he spake kindly to him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon” (II Kgs. 25:27-28). [Note: The “throne” of Judah is implied to be displaced to Babylon.]

560/559 BCE Accession year of Neriglissar (Nergai-Sharezer, Nergal-šar-ušur). He ruled four years in Babylon. His name is found in the writings of Jeremiah: “And all the princes of the king of Babylon came in, and sat in the middle gate, even Nergalsharezer, Samgarnebo, Sarsechim, Rabsaris, Nergalsharezer, Rabmag, with all the residue of the princes of

the king of Babylon" (Jer. 39:3).

559/558 BCE First year of King Neriglissar.

556/555 BCE Neriglissar's son, Labashi-Marduk, reigns nine months in Babylon.

556/555 BCE Accession year of King Nabonidus of Babylon.

555/554 BCE First year of King Nabonidus of Babylon.

553/552 BCE First year of King Belshazzar of Babylon. Belshazzar reigns as coregent with Nabonidus. In this year "Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters" (Dan. 7:1). In this dream Daniel saw four wild beasts that rose from the sea.

551/550 BCE Third year of King Belshazzar. In this year "a vision appeared unto me, even unto me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first. And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I was at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai" (Dan. 8:1-2). In this vision Daniel saw a ram and a he-goat that depicted a conflict between the Persians and the Greeks.

550/549 BCE Sixth year of Nabonidus. Nabonidus is understood to be in Tayma (Tema) by his seventh year of reign over Babylon. He remains in Tayma for the next ten years. Tayma is a large oasis in northwestern Saudi Arabia.

"The Achaemenid period. The entry for the 6th year (550/549 B.C.E.) of the Nabonidus Chronicle records that Cyrus II defeated Astyages, captured Ecbatana, and removed its treasury to Anshan (Grayson, p. 106, 2.1-4). Cyrus and his successors used Ecbatana as a summer capital and as a treasury (Weissbach, cols. 2156-57; Herodotus 3.64). It is frequently assumed that the city was also a royal archive because Cyrus'

order for the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple was found there (Ezra 6.2; Josephus, *Antiquitates* 11.99; but cf. Frye, 1962, p. 99), but in fact neither source actually mentions an archive. Little can be made of Pliny's claim that Ecbatana belonged to the Magi (*Naturalis Historia* 6.116)" (*Encyclopaedia Iranica*, iranicaonline.org/articles/Ecbatana).


Cyrus defeats Astyages and takes Ecbatana, present-day Hamadān. End of the Median Empire. Ecbatana is the city of Achmetha noted in the book of Ezra (Ezra 6:2). A copy of the decree issued by Cyrus was found in this city in the time of Darius I: "Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in the house of the rolls, where the treasures were laid up in Babylon. And there was found at Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of the Medes, a roll, and therein was a record thus written: In the first year of Cyrus the king the same Cyrus the king made a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, Let the house be builded, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid; the height thereof threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof threescore cubits; With three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber: and let the expenses be given out of the king's house: And also let the golden and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of the temple which is at Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon, be restored, and brought again unto the temple which is at Jerusalem, every one to his place, and place them in the house of God" (Ezra 6:1-5). [Note: There is no mention in this decree about the rebuilding of Jerusalem.]

539 BCE End of seventy years of Babylonian domination. Jeremiah's prophecy is fulfilled regarding Babylon: "And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of

the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations” (Jer. 25:11-12).

539/538 BCE Nabonidus is deposed. First year of Darius the Mede. In this year “Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem” (Dan. 9:2). It was also in this year that Daniel received what is commonly called the “seventy-weeks prophecy” by the angel Gabriel. This prophecy is relevant to another prophecy regarding a “king of the south,” and a “king of the north,” which confirmed the reign of Darius the Mede and the succeeding kings of Persia (Dan. 9:22-24; 11:1-2).

[Note: Regnal years are based on a spring to spring reckoning for the kings of Judah and the kings of Babylon and the kings of Persia.]

[Note: For the kings of Judah it should be noted that an “accession year” does not occur in a joint rule. When a king associated a son on the throne, the year of association counted as year one, with no accession year. Acceding to the throne meant coming to full authority upon the death of a predecessor, even if guided by tutors in the years in which the new king was considered a minor. This principle has been applied to this chart in respect to the kings of Babylon and the kings of Persia.]  (andrewburdettewrites.com)

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