

A Review of the Biblical Evidence for the Use of the Fall-to-Fall Calendar

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When apocalyptic time prophecies begin in Old Testament times and extend into New Testament time, it is natural to measure them off according to the calendar that was in use when they began. Examples of these types of prophecies can be found in the 70 weeks of Daniel 9:24-27 and the 2300 evening-mornings of Daniel 8:14.

Seventh-day Adventist interpreters, and the Millerites before them, have taken the operative calendar in these cases to be the fall-to-fall calendar that began in the seventh month, also known as Tishri. This is commonly referred to as the civil calendar, used to measure off the regnal years of the kings, as opposed to the religious calendar that began with the first month in the spring, also known as Nisan. It is called the religious calendar because it was instituted to mark off the religious festivals, especially Passover.

The use of two calendars has complicated these calculations. Thus, it may be useful to review the biblical evidence for the fall-to-fall calendar. The idea that two calendars were in use at the same time is no more confusing than the two calendars that are in use in the United States today. This is the regular calendar year that runs from January to December and the fiscal calendar used in many places that runs from July 1 to June 30.

It was at the time of the Exodus from Egypt that the new calendar for Israel was instituted. The Lord came to Moses and said, “The month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you” (Exod 12:2). The calendar instituted at this time was a lunar one, in that it was based on months marked by new moons.

There was good reason for instituting such a calendar for future use in Canaan. The Egyptian “civil” calendar was a solar calendar based on the agricultural seasons governed by the Nile. It began in July and was divided into three seasons of four months each. Obviously, a calendar geared to the seasons of the Nile was not suitable for use in Canaan.

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The Egyptians also had two calendars in operation, one the solar calendar just described and the other a lunar calendar. Dates for new moons are sometimes given in Egyptian texts in terms of the main civil calendar. Thus the idea of two calendars in use at the same time was well known to the Israelites from their experience in Egypt. So to find the Israelites using both a spring and fall calendar is not so unusual, given their ancient Near Eastern context.

One point should be made clear at the outset: the month numbers never changed, whether the spring or fall calendar was in use. The first month always began in the spring and the seventh month, the month of the fall New Year, always occurred in the fall, September-October. To have had two sets of month numbers in use would have introduced calendrical chaos.

Calendrical information in the Old Testament begins in the Pentateuch, it continues in the time of the united and divided monarchy, it runs through the Babylonian exile, and it concludes in the postexilic period when the books of the Old Testament end. The following evidence for the fall calendar will follow this chronological outline.

I. Levitical Legislation

CASE A. The Celebration of the Spring and Fall New Years

A. The Spring New Year. No special festival was assigned to the date, 1 Abib or Nisan.¹ It was simply treated like the other eleven new moons of the year. It is not even mentioned in the cultic calendar of Lev. 23 (cf. vv. 4-5). It is not separated from the new moon sacrifices in the lists of sacrifices in Num 28:11-15.

One may ask why the spring New Year was passed by so lightly in these legislative passages. The text does not specifically tell us, but one possibility is to avoid the connections with the fertility festival held at that time by the nations around Israel. In Babylon and Assyria it was known as the *Akitu* festival, and it lasted from seven to ten days. During this time the king would cohabit with the high priestess in order to insure fertility for the crops of the land for another year. Given ancient Israel's propensity to idol worship, it was wise to avoid instituting a spring New Year's festival parallel to that of the nations, for it could easily have been perverted into the same kind of idolatrous fertility festival.

¹ Abib is the original name of the first month, Nisan the name used after the Babylonian exile. As Donald J. Wiseman writes in his article "Calendar" in the *New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd ed. [ed. J.D. Douglas, et al (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1982), 159], "The early names were probably local Palestinian references to the seasons, and differ from the designation of the months named in texts from Syria (Ras Shamra, Alalakh, Mari). Some are known from Phoenician also. *Abib*, 'ripening of corn' (Ex. 13:4); *Ziv* (AV Zif; 1 Ki. 6:1, 37); *Ethanim* (1 Ki. 8:2) and *Bul* (1 Ki. 6:38) of uncertain meaning, are the only names extant from this period. At all periods the months were usually designated numerically; first, Ex. 12:2; second, Nu 33:38; sixth, 1 Ch. 27:9; seventh, Gn. 8:4; eighth, Zc. 1:1; ninth, Ezr. 10:9; tenth, Gn. 8:5; eleventh, Dt. 1:3; twelfth, Est. 3:7. In post-exilic times the month-names of the Babylonian calendar were followed." (Wiseman includes a helpful chart showing names, seasons, relation to Gregorian months, and related festivals.)

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B. The Fall New Year. By contrast, the fall New Year of the first day of the seventh month, the month called Tishri, was celebrated not merely as a new moon but as a separate and independent festival. The legislation dealing with this festival, known as the Feast of Trumpets, is found in Lev 23:23-25 and Num 29:1-6. It was known as a ceremonial Sabbath, a holy convocation was to be held on that day, and the people were not to do any laborious work on that day. None of these stipulations applied to the spring New Year, so one can already see in this early legislation the importance given to the fall New Year.

CASE B. The Use of the Fall New Year

A. To Measure Off the Sabbatical Years. Deut 31:10, 11 reads, “And Moses commanded them, ‘at the end of every seven years, at the set time of the year of release, at the feast of booths, when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God.’” Thus the end of these seven year segments, the sabbatical years, came in the fall. The time of release was the Day of Atonement (see below), and this was followed by the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles (Heb. *Sukkot*). These fall festivals, marked off by the blowing of trumpets, all came in the seventh month. This marked the end of one sabbatical year cycle and the beginning of the next.

B. To Measure Off the Jubilee Years. Lev 25:9-10 reads, “Then you shall send abroad the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the day of atonement you shall send abroad the trumpet throughout all your land. And you shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants; it shall be a jubilee for you.” Here the more specific date of VII/10 or the Day of Atonement was appointed for the beginning of the jubilee. This was in lockstep with the sabbatical years (of Lev 25:8). The approach of this fall period for the beginning and ending of these special years was heralded by the Festival of Trumpets on VII/1. Obviously, all the years between the 7th year and the 50th year had to be marked off by the fall month of Tishri that began on the fall New Year of the first day of that month.

II. During the United Monarchy

CASE A. The regnal years of Solomon.

More precise information is available for the regnal years of Solomon than for the regnal years of David. In particular, the more specific information comes from the record of the building of the temple and the palace. 1 Kgs 6:1 and 6:37-38 tell us the construction began in the second month of Solomon’s fourth year and was completed in the eighth month of his eleventh year. 1 Kgs 6:38 concludes that he was seven years in building the temple.

These dates can be charted to show that if a spring-to-spring calendar was in use, the total time elapsed for the construction of the temple was 7 1/2 years. If they are plotted out on a fall-to-fall calendar then the construction time elapsed was 6 1/2 years.

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The question, then, is, which of these two specifications fits best with the stated elapsed time of seven years? In this case, does seven years mean 6 1/2 actual years or 7 1/2 years of elapsed time?

This calculation involves the way the ancient Hebrews reckoned fractions. We place the dividing line at fifty percent, and anything above that goes to the next highest number, whereas anything below fifty percent goes to the lower number. The ancient Hebrews had a different system, known to scholars as “inclusive reckoning.” In this system, any fraction goes to the next highest number. An example of this can be seen in 2 Kgs 18:9-10, which tells of the fall of Samaria to the Assyrian king Shalmaneser (V).

This siege began in the fourth year of Hezekiah king of Judah, and it ended in his sixth year. Hoshea was the king in the north at this time, and the siege began in his seventh year and it ended in his ninth year. Then the text says that “at the end of three years he took it.” Neither by the regnal years of Hezekiah nor by the regnal years of Hoshea do these dates stretch to the end of three years. These three years included one full year, Hezekiah’s fifth, and parts of two others, Hezekiah’s fourth and sixth. Yet this is added up to reach three years. The fractions of years involved have been reckoned as full years, a clear case of inclusive reckoning.

An even more famous case is found in the narrations that deal with the crucifixion and resurrection. Jesus was crucified on Friday and died that afternoon (Luke 23:54-56). He rested in the tomb on Sabbath and came forth from it on the morning of the first day of the week (Lk 24:1). All of this was to fulfill the typological parallel with Jonah, who spent three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish (Jonah 1:17; cf. Matt 12:40).²

Some have mistakenly interpreted the three days and three nights as a literal seventy-two hours. This has led to the inaccurate Wednesday crucifixion theory. Jesus was in the tomb all of one day (Sabbath) and parts of two other days (Friday and Sunday). By inclusive reckoning this yields three days.

Applying this rule of inclusive reckoning to the regnal years of Solomon, it can be seen that 7 1/2 years, according to the spring calendar, would be considered eight years, whereas the 6 1/2 years of the fall calendar yields the specified seven years. Thus, the regnal years of Solomon were calculated according to the fall-to-fall calendar.

CASE B. The Dedication of the Temple

1 Kings 6:38 indicates that the temple “was finished in all its parts, and according to all its specifications” in the eighth month of the year. The question then is, when was it dedicated and put into service? There would appear to be three logical possibilities. It could have been dedicated immediately after its

² The inclusively reckoned “three days and three nights” when Jesus was “in the heart of the earth” were in fact no more than thirty-eight hours, not seventy-two. By inclusive reckoning, the same may be true for Jonah. The truth of the Bible is revealed when we understand it correctly, not when we assume all words mean what they mean today.

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completion, going into service without any delay. Or it could have been dedicated at the spring New Year four months later. Or it could have waited for its dedication and use until the fall New Year eleven months later. These three possibilities appear in descending order of likelihood.

In this case, however, Solomon took the least likely alternative. He waited until after the next fall New Year, eleven months later. This date is given in 1 Kgs 8:2, which indicates that the Ark of the Covenant was moved into the temple at the time of the feast in the seventh month. It was then that the massive number of animals were sacrificed and Solomon offered his dedicatory prayer (1 Kgs 8:12-53). This happened during the Feast of Tabernacles, and at its conclusion, on the eighth day, Solomon sent the crowds of people away.

This chronology is elaborated further in 2 Chr 7:8-10, which indicates that a total of two weeks were spent in the dedicatory services: one week during the Feast of Tabernacles and one week before that festival. This preparatory week overlapped with the Day of Atonement. The initial week is described as a time for dedicating the altar.

Thus Solomon took the least likely alternative and waited eleven months to dedicate the newly constructed temple in the seventh month, both of the two weeks of dedication following in that month after the fall New Year. It is unusual to think of the fully completed and equipped temple standing there in Jerusalem unused for eleven months until the time for dedication Solomon considered most appropriate. Why did he wait that long? He does not tell us directly, but one may estimate that he considered that dedication more appropriate at the time of the fall festivals than at the time of the spring festivals.

In addition, this dedication in the seventh month coincided with the beginning of his own next regnal year. Thus, the reign of God in His temple coincided with the reign of the king in his palace. Both began with the seventh month of the calendar year, in the fall.

III. During the Divided Monarchy

An extensive amount of chronological data about the kings of Israel and Judah is contained in 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles. The lengths of reign are given for nineteen kings of Israel and nineteen kings of Judah. This already yields thirty-eight chronological data to deal with. Then there are the synchronisms which tell when the king of one kingdom came to the throne in terms of the regnal year of a king in the other kingdom. Twelve of these synchronisms are given in terms of the years of the kings of Israel and twenty-three of these synchronisms are given in terms of the king of Judah. This yields a total of seventy-three points of chronological data to locate on a timeline that extended from 931 B.C. to 586 B.C.

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The integration of all this data is a difficult task. Edwin R. Thiele has been done it especially well in his book *Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*.³ This chronology is probably the most widely accepted among biblical scholars.

Thiele developed several principles by which to integrate the dates for the Hebrew kings. One of these principles was that different calendars were in use in the two kingdoms. To put the matter simply, the spring calendar was in use in the northern kingdom of Israel, and the fall calendar was in use in the southern kingdom of Judah.

It is absolutely necessary to make this distinction to make sense out of this chronology. If both kingdoms used the spring calendar or they both used the fall calendar, it is virtually impossible to integrate these data successfully.

This point is illustrated by the most recently published chronology of Israel and Judah, Gershon Galil's *The Chronology of the Kings of Israel and Judah*.⁴ In this work Galil takes the opposite position to that of Thiele, holding that the fall calendar was in use in the northern kingdom and the spring calendar was in use in the southern kingdom.

The point here is not to decide between the position of Thiele and Galil. The point is that both of these major chronologies must make use of alternate calendars in the two kingdoms to make sense of the biblical data. For our present purpose, the fall calendar was in use in the north or the south. It is enough to simply use these chronologies to show that the fall calendar had to be in use in one of these kingdoms. It is an indispensable part of the chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah.

IV. At the End of the Monarchy

Not only do the books of kings give an extensive amount of chronological detail for the kings of Israel and Judah, but they also give some chronological data for foreign kings. This is true for Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in 2 Kgs 24–25. The exile of Jehoiakin is dated in the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar in 2 Kgs 24:12. The destruction of the temple in the eleventh year of Zedekiah is dated in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kgs 25:2, 8).

A new chapter in the study of this data occurred in 1961 when D. J. Wiseman published the *Chronicles of Chaldean Kings*.⁵ This book includes cuneiform texts from the first thirteen years of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. In this work Nebuchadnezzar's capture of Jerusalem in the time of Jehoiakin is dated in his ninth year (73); whereas the biblical text places it in his eighth year. Since both the kingdoms of Judah and Babylon used accession-year reckoning, in which the balance of the year in which the old king died counted as year 0 until the next new year's day, that cannot be the explanation for this difference.

³ This work has gone through three editions: in 1951, 1965, and 1983. The first edition was published by the University of Chicago and the last two editions by Eerdmans.

⁴ Leiden: Brill, 1996.

⁵ London: British Museum.

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The same chronicle tells us that Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar's father, died in the fifth month and Nebuchadnezzar took the throne in the sixth month. This occurred in 605 B.C. For the Babylonians, the time until the spring New Year of 604 was Nebuchadnezzar's accession period, year 0, and this is even marked off in the tablet as such (69).

The Hebrews, however, applied their own fall calendar to the Babylonian king. That meant that his first full year began on 1 Tishri in the seventh month, the month after he took the throne. Thus they dated his regnal years from the fall of 605, not the spring of 604, as the Babylonians did.

When one comes to the fall of Jerusalem, in late winter of 597 B.C. (Babylonian 2 Adar, or March 16, 597 B.C.), the Hebrew dates were six months in advance of the Babylonian dates for him. Thus he conquered Jerusalem in his eighth year according to Hebrew fall reckoning, but in his seventh year according to his own Babylonian reckoning.

Even though we do not have a Babylonian tablet which describes the next conquest of Jerusalem, in 586 B.C., the same problem occurs there as one projects these dates forward. According to 2 Kgs 25:7 and 8, the temple was burned in Nebuchadnezzar's nineteenth year (according to Hebrew fall reckoning) when in his own Babylonian reckoning this would have been his eighteenth year.

Thus, the Hebrew fall calendar was in use late in the kingdom of Judah not only for their own kings but also in dating the events in the reign of a foreign king. Nebuchadnezzar. All this has been described in accurate detail by S. H. Horn in his study, "The Babylonian Chronicle and the Ancient Calendar of the Kingdom of Judah."⁶

V. During the Exile—the Prophets

CASE A. Dan 1:1

This text says that Nebuchadnezzar came up to and besieged Jerusalem in the third year of Jehoiakim. Nebuchadnezzar's chronicle dates these events to the late spring and summer of 605, when he conquered all of "Hatti-land," or Syro-Palestine, which included the kingdom of Judah.

Critical commentaries on Daniel commonly ascribe this date in the third year of Jehoiakim to a mistake and hold that it should be the fourth year. There is no mistake here if one simply acknowledges the use of two Hebrew chronological principles, accession year reckoning and the fall calendar.

Jehoachim was deposed by Pharaoh Necho in the early fall of 609, as can be determined from the date for Necho's return from the battle of Harran.⁷ Thus, Necho installed Jehoiakim in the fall of 609, after the fall New Year of 1 Tishri. The rest of 609 and of 608 until the next fall New Year was Jehoahaz's accession year of year 0. His first year ran from the fall of 608 to the fall of 607. His

⁶ *AUSS* 5 (1967): 12-27.

⁷ Wiseman, *Chronology*, 63.

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second year extended from the fall of 607 to the fall of 606, and his third year reached to the fall of 605. Thus, it included the conquest of Jerusalem in the spring or summer of 605. There is no mistake here, once it is recognized that the fall calendar was in use in Judah at this time.

CASE B. The Dates in Ezekiel

A very large volume of inspired writing was produced to meet the crisis of the Babylonian exile. Ezekiel was with the exiles in Babylonia, Daniel was at court in Babylon, and Jeremiah remained behind with the remnant of Judah. Between these three writers 110 chapters of the Bible were produced in that time.

Each of these writers also used their own dating system. Aside from Dan 1:1, the rest of the dates in Daniel are given according to the year of the Babylonian and Persian kings. Even though he was in Babylonia, Ezekiel did not date to the years of the Babylonian kings, but to the years of his wave of the exiles. Jeremiah, in Judah, continued to date to the kings of Judah, and he may possibly have used a spring calendar. Evidence has been discussed above that shows Daniel used a fall calendar. The question then is, which calendar did Ezekiel use?

A useful study on this subject has been produced by K. S. Freedy and D. B. Redford.⁸ In this study the authors adopt a fall calendar for Jehoiakim (465), for Zedekiah (466), and for Jer 36 (ibid.). For 2 Kgs 24–25 and the parallel passages in Jeremiah, however, they adopt a spring calendar (469). Then they go on to correlate the dozen dates in Ezekiel with Egyptian sources (468, 474–485). While the use of the historical sources here is very valuable, the pattern provided is a mixture which leans toward their spring calendar for 2 Kgs 24–25, when a more rigorous application of the fall calendar would have yielded an even more specific historical picture. In other words, one can use the data provided by Freedy and Redford to provide an even better correlation with the use of the fall calendar from Judah by Ezekiel in exile.

Another work which considers the fall calendar “equally possible” for the dates in Ezekiel is the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, which puts those dates as calculated according to the spring and fall calendars in parallel columns.⁹

CASE C. The Final Date in Ezekiel

The fourteenth and last exile date in Ezekiel is found in 40:1. The date given there is the twenty-fifth year of the exile, the eighteenth year after the city was conquered, the tenth day of *rosh hashanah*. The Hebrew phrase *rosh hashanah* refers literally to the “head of the year” or the New Year. The question then is, which New Year, spring or fall?

⁸ “The Dates in Ezekiel in Relation to Biblical, Babylonian, and Egyptian Sources,” *JAOS* 90 (1970): 462–485.

⁹ Washington: Review and Herald, 4:572.

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In this case that matter can be decided by the theological significance of the date. If it was the tenth day from the spring New Year, that day was not especially significant for the context of the prophecy which follows in chapters 40–48 of Ezekiel. As the tenth day from 1 Tishri in the fall, however, this date becomes highly significant for the content of that prophecy.

The tenth day from the fall New Year was the Day of Atonement. The Day of Atonement was a time of ritual cleansing of the earthly tabernacle and temple so that it could begin the round of sacrificial ceremonies for the next year. At the time when Ezekiel received this prophecy, the temple was in ruins. It is a prophecy about the rebuilding and restoration of the temple, along with the restoration of the people to their land.

Thus, on the day when the temple was cleansed ritually, Ezekiel was shown that temple in its cleansed and pure state after its rebuilding according to the instructions given to him. How appropriate, therefore, for this vision of the restoration of the temple to be given on the Day of Atonement.

It might also be mentioned in passing that *rosh hashanah* is celebrated in modern synagogues in the fall, a descendant from the *rosh hashanah* mentioned here by Ezekiel. Thus, the final date in Ezekiel confirms what had already been suspected historically from the previous dates in the book, that he was using a fall calendar to measure off his years in exile.

VI. Extrabiblical Texts After the Exile—the Elephantine Papyri

The Elephantine papyri are texts written in Aramaic by a colony of Jewish mercenaries in the army of the Persian kings. They were posted to a fort on the southern Nile to guard the border of Persian Egypt from its enemies. Most of the texts in this collection were written during the 5th century B.C., during the reigns of Artaxerxes I and Darius II. These texts are double-dated with both an Egyptian date and a Persian-Babylonian date. Since both of these calendars were variable, the times when these two dates cross can be calculated. From those dates it can be determined whether the regnal year number of the king is calculated according to the Egyptian system or the spring calendar of the Persians and Babylonians or the fall calendar of the Jews. S. H. Horn has provided a detailed analysis of these texts in *The Chronology of Ezra 7*.¹⁰ He concludes from his examination of these texts that the Jews in Elephantine in the 5th century were using their Jewish fall-to-fall calendar.

CASE A. The Reign of Darius II

Artaxerxes I died in February of 423 B.C. Darius II followed him on the Persian throne. From the third year of Darius II comes a papyrus known as Kraeling 6 which is dated in the month of Tammuz with a corresponding Egyptian date that locates the writing of this text on July 11 of 420 B.C. If this text was dated according to a spring calendar, it should fall in the fourth year (from

¹⁰ Washington: Review and Herald.

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the spring of 423), but it is the third year because it was written before the fall New Year, when the number would change.

This factor is pointed out by a text written but three months later, in Tishri or October of 420 B.C. (Kraeling⁷). Since it was written after the fall New Year, the regnal year number changed. These two texts make a nice pair that crosses the fall New Year and demonstrates the change that took place in the regnal year then.

CASE B. The Reign of Artaxerxes

It is difficult to tell from the texts from the times of Artaxerxes what kind of Semitic calendar they used, because in twenty-six of twenty-eight texts the year number follows the Egyptian month name, and it is therefore most likely calculated according to the Egyptian system.

There is, however, one text in this group that is highly significant. It is the earliest text from the reign of Artaxerxes I, *AP 6* (Cowley's numbering), written on January 2, 464 B.C. The dating is "year 21, accession year of Artaxerxes, when he sat on the throne." This text is so important because it shows quite clearly that the Jews at Elephantine did not begin the first regnal year of Artaxerxes in the fall of 465 B.C., or this text would have read Year 1. Xerxes was murdered in August of 465 B.C., but they did not begin Artaxerxes' reign on 1 Tishri in September-October of that year.

This date was delayed because of the struggle for the throne in Persia. Artaxerxes was not first in line for the throne. His older brother Darius was. Darius had to be eliminated first, which Artaxerxes did in league with an official named Artabanes. Then Artaxerxes had to fight two battles with another older brother named Hystaspes, who was the satrap of Bactria. I have discussed this course of events in a recent article in *JATS*, "Who Succeeded Xerxes on the Throne of Persia?"¹¹ It took time for Artaxerxes to carry out the plot to murder his oldest brother and to defeat the next oldest brother militarily. All of this political uncertainty is reflected in the unusual prolongation of Xerxes twenty-first year, which actually came to an end in August of 465, but here is prolonged until January of 464.

While this text does tell us that Artaxerxes' regnal year did not begin on 1 Tishri of 465, it does not tell us for certain whether his first year began in the spring of 464 or the fall of that year. That must be determined on another basis, by extrapolating backward from the reign of Darius II. If a fall calendar was in use in the time of Darius II, then it is likely that it was already in use during the reign of Artaxerxes.

The question has been raised in some quarters as to whether or not Siegfried Horn recanted from his position on the use of the fall calendar at Elephantine. As one who taught with Horn for more than a decade at the SDA Theological Seminary and discussed this subject with him on several occasions, I can say

¹¹ 12/1 (Spring 2001): 84-89.

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from my own knowledge that he did not diverge from this position while he was at the Seminary. The Elephantine papyri provide extra biblical evidence for the Jewish use of the fall calendar during the Persian period.

VII. A Postexilic Biblical Example—Nehemiah

In chapter one of his book, Nehemiah records that he received a letter from Judea stating that Jerusalem was still in a broken-down condition. This episode is dated in Chislev on the ninth month of the twentieth year of Artaxerxes (v. 1). This is followed by the narrative in chapter 2, in which the king sees how sad Nehemiah is and asks him why he is so downcast. Nehemiah tells the king about the broken-down state of Jerusalem and asks the king for letters authorizing him to go and take care of the problem. The king provides Nehemiah with these. This episode is dated in Nisan, or the first month, of the twentieth year of the king (v. 1).

The significant point here is that the regnal year number of the king did not change even after the spring New Year or 1 Nisan was passed. The only way to explain the phenomenon is that a fall-to-fall calendar was in use here by Nehemiah for the foreign king under whom he served. Those commentators who hold that a spring calendar was in use here realize this problem, so they resort to emendation of the text, changing year twenty in 1:1 to year nineteen or changing year twenty in 2:1 to twenty-one. This is a case of manipulating the text to fit the theory instead of deriving the theory from the data in the text.

Beginning with the seventh month of year twenty, this narrative goes to the ninth month for the narrative of chapter 1. Then it goes on to the first month in the spring. The year number did not change until the seventh month following that second narrative. This is strong evidence for the use of the fall-to-fall calendar in the time of Nehemiah. Ezra was a contemporary and fellow worker with Nehemiah (Neh 8:1, 9; 9:6). Since it is unlikely that Ezra and Nehemiah would have used a different calendar, the fall calendar may also be safely applied to the decree that Artaxerxes gave to Ezra in Ezra 7:11–26. Since that decree was given to Ezra in Artaxerxes' seventh year, that year may be dated from the fall of 458 to the fall of 457. Since this was the decree from which the initial stimulus to rebuild Jerusalem resulted (Ezra 4:11-13), this date can also be applied to the decree for the restoring and rebuilding of Jerusalem with which the time prophecy of Dan 9:24–27 begins.

Summary

Ancient Israel used two different calendars: a spring calendar that measured off the religious festivals, and a fall calendar commonly used to measure the regnal years of kings. The spring calendar is commonly called the religious calendar and the fall calendar is commonly called the civil calendar. Since the fall calendar is less obvious, an attempt has been made here to study the evidence for this type of calendar throughout Old Testament times. It began with the same

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Mosaic legislation with which the spring calendar began. It surfaced again in the time of Solomon, when it was used for his regnal years and to mark off the dedication of the temple.

During the divided monarchy the spring calendar was used in one kingdom and the fall calendar in the other. This is the only way to make sense of the chronological data in Kings and Chronicles. It was even used to measure off the regnal years of a foreign king like Nebuchanezzar.

During the exile the fall calendar was used by Daniel and Ezekiel. Ezekiel even received a vision of the restored temple at the time of the fall New Year. Jews in the service of the Persian kings in Egypt appear to have preserved a knowledge of this calendar.

Finally, it shows up in Neh 1–2 in use in the time of Artaxerxes. As a contemporary and fellow worker of Nehemiah, Ezra undoubtedly used it too and dated his decree from Artaxerxes by this calendar. This decree begins the seventy weeks of Dan 9, and therefore the apocalyptic time prophecies of Dan 8 and 9 should be measured off by using this same fall-to-fall or Tishri-to-Tishri calendar.

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