

# Three chronological periods of the Old Testament

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The study of Bible chronology can be confusing. The overlapping of events in Scripture, together with the introduction of hypothetical theories, the rearrangement of Scripture, adding words etc. to the biblical narrative, and the production of complicated charts are the source of many different 'answers'. Three chronological periods of the Old Testament are presented here where Scripture and events are kept in their proper time sequence. In this way the accuracy, sufficiency and perspicuity of the Scriptures becomes more evident. Unproven facts or events which have led to confusion in the past have also been omitted.

Jones<sup>1</sup> correctly states:  
 'Chronology is the science of measuring time by regular intervals and assigning dates to events in their proper order. Without it, we would find it impossible to understand the sequence of historical events, Biblical or non-Biblical. As chronology is the very foundation on which history rests and the skeletal framework giving it structure and shape, *the events of history can only be meaningful and properly understood as long as they are kept in their proper time sequence.* If the time sequence becomes altered, the interpretation of the events becomes distorted and no longer dependable [emphasis added].'

The principles stated in this definition of chronology are used throughout this article.

Three chronological periods of the Old Testament are presented (OT) in Table 1 with Scripture and events kept in their proper time sequence. In this way the accuracy, sufficiency and perspicuity (clarity) of the Scriptures becomes more evident. We take away from these every time we suppose unproven facts or events and consequently it leads to confusion. The veracity of the chronological tables presented here is evident when we consider:

- a) If one figure in any of these periods is altered then the grand total of that period must be altered. This would bring us to disagreement with Scripture, e.g. 300 years for Heshbon (Judges 11:26). Note that this verse does not say 'about' or 'as' to modify the figure as found in other Scriptures e.g. Acts 13:18; Luke 3:23, where even here the figures of 40 and 30 are 'close' and not 'rough approximations'.
- b) There can be no proper comparison of one period with the others if any figure is changed. For example, if there existed only 14 years between the rest from war

when the division of the land commenced until the servitude under Cushan, then that 14 year period is necessary to make up the 450 years of Acts 13:19–20 and the 480 years of 1 Kings 6:1.

- c) The figures of the three periods are not manufactured. Scripture is given in every case except the 'Interval' of the 14 years where we conclude by a legitimate and inevitable historical induction that the period must have been for exactly that time (see also explanatory notes for Period 1). This is an established method of calculation in chronologies.<sup>2,3</sup>

## AM and BC dates

The AM dates do not represent calendar years that commence with January and end with December. Rather, they represent the number of years in which a *New Year's Day* appeared. Bishop Ussher<sup>4</sup> in computing the years of a king's reign as stated in the Scriptures says this computation is 'based on the number of Jewish new years that happened during his reign.' This method of computation of years will also be applied consistently in working out the AM dates

a)	From Creation to Exodus	2513 yrs	4046–1533 BC
b)	Exodus to 4 <sup>th</sup> yr of Solomon. (Total of Periods 3 (i), and 3 (ii))	594 yrs	1532–939 BC
c)	Remaining years of Solomon's reign	36 yrs	938–903 BC
d)	Divided Kingdom to 5 <sup>th</sup> yr of Jehoiachin's captivity, (Ezekiel 1:2), thus Zedekiah's 5 <sup>th</sup> yr when Ezekiel prophesied retribution to Israel (390 yrs—refer to Ezekiel 4:5; also Numbers 14:34 re punishment for 'crime already committed').	390 yrs	902–513 BC
e)	Remaining yrs of Zedekiah's reign to the destruction of Jerusalem	6 yrs	512–507 BC
f)	Remaining yrs of Captivity. 20 yrs already served from Daniel's time, (2 Kings 24:10–16).	50 yrs	506–457 BC
g)	483 yrs, (69 wks × 7) from 'Restoration' to Christ's Baptism, (AD 26) less those 26 AD yrs Christ born c. 4–5 BC.	457 yrs	457–1 BC
Total:		4046 yrs	

**Table 1. Three chronological periods of the Old Testament.**

Period	1*	2**	3a†	3b‡	Reference	Dates (Inclusive)	
						AM	BC
Exodus to Heshbon			39		Num. 21:25; Jud. 11:26	2514–2552	1532–1494
Entrance to Canaan	1		1		Num. 14:30–34	2553	1493
War to Division of Land	6	6	6		Josh. 14:7,10; Num. 13:20	2554–2559	1492–1487
Rest to Cushan	14	14	14		See comments	2560–2573	1486–1473
Service under Cushan	8	8		8	Jud. 3:8	2574–2581	1472–1465
Rest under Othniel	40	40	40		Jud. 3:11	2582–2621	1464–1425
Service under Eglon	18	18		18	Jud. 3:14	2622–2639	1424–1407
Rest under Ehud	80	80	80		Jud. 3:30	2640–2719	1406–1327
Service under Jabin	20	20		20	Jud. 4:1–3	2720–2739	1326–1307
Rest under Barak	40	40	40		Jud. 5:31	2740–2779	1306–1267
Service under Midian	7	7		7	Jud. 6:1	2780–2786	1266–1260
Rest under Gideon	40	40	40		Jud. 8:28	2787–2826	1259–1220
Usurper—Abimelech	3	3		3	Jud. 9:22	2827–2829	1219–1217
Tola’s Judgeship	23	23	23		Jud. 10:1–2	2830–2852	1216–1194
Jair’s Judgeship		22	22		Jud. 10:3	2853–2874	1193–1172
Service under Ammon		18		18	Jud. 10:8	2875–2892	1171–1154
Jephthah’s Judgeship		6	6		Jud. 12:7	2893–2898	1153–1148
Ibzan’s Judgeship		7	7		Jud. 12:8–9	2899–2905	1147–1141
Elon’s Judgeship		10	10		Jud. 12:11	2906–2915	1140–1131
Abdon’s Judgeship		8	8		Jud. 12:13–14	2916–2923	1130–1123
Service under Philistines		40		40	Jud. 13:1	2924–2963	1122–1083
Eli’s Judgeship until Samuel’s ‘sole’ period began		40	40		1 Sam. 4:18	2964–3003	1082–1043
Samuel’s (Prophet) ‘sole’ period to Saul’s reign			20		1 Sam. 7:2; 1 Chr. 9:22; 2 Chr. 35:18; Acts 3:24.	3004–3023	1042–1023
Saul’s reign			40		Acts 13:21	3024–3063	1022–983
David’s reign			40		2 Sam. 5:4	3064–3103	982–943
4 <sup>th</sup> yr of Solomon’s reign (4 New Year’s Days)			4		1 Kings 6:1	3104–3107	942–939
<b>TOTALS</b>	300	450	480	114			

\* Period 1: the 300 yrs occupation of Heshbon and towns (Judges 11:26).

\*\* Period 2: the 450 yrs of Acts 13:19–20 (Destruction of Nations, Division of land until Samuel the Prophet).

† Period 3a: the 480 yrs ‘after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt’ (1 Kings 6:1, Deut. 28:68).

‡ Period 3b: the 114 yrs of servitude and usurpation between the periods of God’s deliverances, i.e. rests (Judg. 3:8– 13:1).

for the three periods. For those who would demand BC dates, this article emphatically states that it is impossible to compare ‘traditional’ with biblical dates due mainly to ‘received chronology’ making the Persian period lasting 205 years instead of 123.<sup>5</sup> A scoutmaster mapping out a route for his scouts to follow would expect them to start at the beginning of the course. However, for those requiring BC dates the following information is provided: the total number of AM years until ‘After Christ’ years commence is 4046, allowing for the four years error in the calendar.

By the mathematical deduction of any AM date given in the tables from the total 4046 AM years we can find any BC date. For example, the BC date for the Exodus can be found by deducting 2513 AM from 4046 AM, equalling 1533 BC.

The 4046 AM years to year ‘zero’, (no adding one yr. for zero), are made up as follows: I have used a different method to Philip Mauro<sup>6</sup> in calculating these 4046 years, yet he arrives at the same figure. All Scriptural quotes are from the KJV unless otherwise stated. For James Strong’s Hebrew or Greek see Reference 7.



Photograph courtesy of Clifford Wilson

**Figure 1.** A few months after Heshbon was taken by Israel (Numbers 21:25) they entered Canaan and commenced the wars against the Canaanites. Moses was not allowed entrance but died on Mt Nebo. It is interesting to realise that this monument is found in Jordan–Arab territory (see John 3:14–15).

### Explanatory notes on the 3 periods

#### Period 1—the 300 years of occupation of Heshbon & towns (Judges 11:26)

##### The six years war

Why is there only six years given to the war against the nations that occupied Canaan when in Joshua 11:18 there is record that the war lasted ‘a long time with all those kings’? Caleb’s age at the end of the war is our answer. Caleb was 40 years old when he was sent to spy out the land ‘at the time of the ripe grapes’ (Joshua 14:7; Numbers 13:20) which was about our May or June.<sup>8</sup> Another 39 ‘New Year’ years remained before entrance to Canaan when Caleb would be 79. He was 85 years at the end of the wars (‘lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old’—Joshua 14:10). This leaves six years for the destruction of the Canaanites.

##### The interval between the rest from war and servitude under Cushan

A period of 300 years existed from the time of Israel’s taking of and dwelling ‘in all the cities of the Amorites, in Heshbon, and in all the villages’ (Numbers 21:25; Judges 11:26) until retaken by the Ammonites (Judges 11:4–33). By taking events as ‘kept in sequence’ we find Period 1

covers 286 years excluding this interval period, which must be 14 years.

The 300 years of Heshbon must end with the death of Tola (Judges 10:2). If we, for example, add the 22 years, Judgeship of Jair, (Judges 10:3–5), to the 286 years excluding the Rest to Cushan period we would then arrive at the ‘impossible’ result of *minus eight years for such an interval*. Because Tola has not been interpreted as the *terminus ad quem* of the 300 years, and due to other suppositions, some of which are mentioned below, so many different figures as stated by Jones<sup>9</sup> are presented for the number of years for: Rest to Cushan. Martin Anstey<sup>10</sup> also records 13 different answers.

A brief exegesis on Judges 10: 3–18 is given here.

Verses 3–4: Jair is named a Gileadite who ‘had thirty sons that rode on thirty ass colts, and they had thirty cities, which are called Havoth-jair unto this day’. Havoth-jair was a region in the northern part of Gilead about 12 miles south east of the Sea of Galilee. Gilead designates a variety of areas in the OT. Its primary reference is to the hilly district south of the Jabbok River, i.e. from the Jabbok to the Arnon, (Numbers 21:24–26). It may also refer to the area north of the Jabbok which is part of East Manasseh, (Numbers 32:39–41). Sometimes it designates the whole of the Transjordan territory held by Israel (Joshua 22:9, 13).

Why is there recorded in verse 4 an aspect of the political state of Northern Gilead by mentioning the thirty sons, thirty ass colts and thirty cities? Answer: To indicate reasonable control in this part of Gilead at that time. It was not so in the southern part around Heshbon where the cities and villages were already recaptured by the Ammonites after the 300 years. The sons of Jair riding on thirty ass-colts, (cf. 70 ass colts of Abdon in a ‘rest’ period—Judges 12:13–15), indicated ‘a mark of prestige as well as a sign of prosperity’<sup>11</sup> and so relative control in that region. In the song of Deborah (Judges 5:10) we find those who were riding on white asses were sitting in judgement and no longer travelled stealthily along the lesser known tracks (see also Zechariah 9:9—‘thy King cometh—upon an ass’).

Verses 5–18: After Jair died (v. 5) the children of Israel did evil again and they worshipped the gods of heathen nations. A general comment concerning future retribution is made because of their apostasy. They were to be sold into the hands of the Philistines and the Ammonites. There is no mention at all of any Philistine activity or of their later ‘dominion over Israel’ (Judges 14:4) in the rest of the chapter, but rather ‘in that year’, a particular year, the children of Ammon ‘vexed and oppressed the children of Israel: eighteen years, all ... on the other side of the Jordan’. Notice that verse 8 says *all*, i.e. not just Northern Gilead but Southern Gilead as well.

The conclusions reached from the above exegesis are: N. Gilead enjoyed relative peace until the Ammonite invasion of Judges 10:8–18, Heshbon and its towns in S. Gilead were taken after 300 years, and then in ‘that year, (v.

6), all North and South Gilead on the other side of Jordan were 'vexed and oppressed'.

If the 'Interval' lasted only 14 years then there are difficulties to explain. Three of them are dealt with here.

i) *How 'young' was Joshua at the time of the 'spies?' (Numbers 11:28)*

Numbers 11:28, (about the time of the spies), says: 'And Joshua—the servant of Moses, one of his young men' (KJV). If we compare the KJV here with other translations and consider the approximate age of Joshua when he attempted to stop Eldad and Medad from prophesying, (58: spies, 98: Canaan, 104: Rest from war, 110: death), this reference to Joshua cannot indicate that Joshua was a young man as we know it today but rather one chosen for a particular service in times of the wilderness scene. Other translations given are:

NIV: 'Joshua son of Nun who had been Moses' aide since his youth'. The *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*<sup>12</sup> also has the NIV translation.

NASB: 'Then Joshua the son of Nun, the attendant of Moses from his youth, answered and said'.

LXX: 'And Joshua—the son of Naue, who attended on Moses, the chosen one, said'. Kiel and Delitzsch<sup>13</sup> say on Numbers 11:28: 'Joshua felt himself warranted in doing this [i.e. prohibit the two from prophesying], because he had been Moses' servant from his youth up (see at Ex. xvii. 9).'

These above translations or interpretations indicate that Joshua belonged to a particular chosen group who perhaps were 'young' in experience, vigour or activity or had been Moses' servant since 'youth'. It was Jeremiah who protested his lack of experience when he said; 'I am a child' (Jeremiah 1:6). The conclusion reached, Joshua's age of about 58 at the time of the 'spies', is not contradicted by the above translations or commentary.

ii) *The events consequent to Joshua's death.*

If Joshua died within six years from the war (see Joshua 23:1–24:29 where after a 'long time' he gave his message, then died), a minimum of eight years is allowed for such consequent events. These events were:

a) The death of the elders that outlived Joshua. The elders 'had seen all the great works of the Lord' (Judges 2:7), so probably witnessed the plagues. The maximum age of those who had seen the plagues would be 19 at the Exodus, (Numbers 14:29), at Joshua's death, 71, and with eight years to outlive Joshua and serve the Lord, 79, nine years past the normal span (Psalm 90:10—*Psalm of Moses*).

b) The period when another generation 'arose'. 'Arose' is Strong's Hebrew #6965 = rise, set up, establish. To 'establish' a new generation does

not imply birth or a full period to completion. 'Another' generation (Judges 2:10), would have been born before and 'established' at or after Joshua's death.

iii) *Were there overlappings in the 'Period of the Judges'?*

If there were more than those indicated in Scripture then this would extend the 14 year 'Interval' period. But only two are recorded in Scriptures, both inclusive of other periods. These were: (a) The Shamgar incident, (Judges 3:31) which occurred when he fought the Philistines during the judgeship of Jabin. It was here that Jael 'hammered the nail into the temples of the captain of Jabin's army, Sisera (Judges 4:2, 21; 5:6), and (b) Samson's 20-year intermittent attacks against the Philistines during the period of their 'dominion' over Israel (Judges 15:20). Note that it was during the Philistine invasion Samson *shall begin* 'to deliver out of the hand of the Philistines' (Judges 13:5). This was stated of him after, in verse 1, the Lord declared he would deliver 'into the hands of the Philistines 40 years'. Several attempts have been made to overlap other periods of the

judges. Arthur E. Cundall<sup>14</sup> in commenting on Judges 10:6–16 considers that the oppression of the Philistines and the Ammonites were contemporaneous events. He says: 'The Ammonite attack was the lesser menace and is dealt with first, before the account of Samson's private war with the Philistines' (chapters 13–16). But between the 18 years of Ammonite oppression and the 40 years of 'dominion' of the Philistines (Judges 13:1, 14:4), were the periods of Jephthah (six years), Ibzan (seven years), Elon (10 years) and Abdon (eight years)—Judges 12:7–14. If there were any attacks by the Philistines at the same time as the Ammonite invasion (no mention of any war with the Philistines in the following narrative of 10:8–18), then it is quite possible the Philistine's attacks were intermittent or that Judges 10:6 is a



Photograph courtesy of Clifford Wilson

**Figure 2.** Picture of Ashtaroth (right), the wife of both El and of Baal (left) her son. Judges 11:6 is a more general comment covering, it seems, the apostasy of the whole period of the judges. For their worship of Ashtaroth and Baal by the Israelites, even to Samuel's time, (1 Samuel 7:3–4), they suffered much retribution.

‘summary notation’ of future attacks and apostasy. The Philistines’ 40 years of inflicting bondage upon Israel could not have been in the time of the Ammonites when they ‘vexed and oppressed’ East Jordan 18 years and when Judah, Benjamin and Ephraim were also ‘sore distressed’ by them (10:8–9). How could such oppression by the Ammonites be going on when similarly the Philistines were exercising ‘dominion’ over Israel (Judges 14:4)?

Jones<sup>15</sup> states: ‘Furthermore, an overlap exists in the stories in Judges *where the period of servitude is given along with the time of rest for the land in order to complete the 480 year scenario as hereto justified* [emphasis added].’ What this statement is saying is a period of servitude, e.g. under Eglon, overlaps the rest

period under Ehud. This is evidently Jones’ interpretation because he goes on to say concerning Judges 3:30, ‘A break or pause in thought is construed as following after the word “rest” (vs. 30) so that the next two words are taken as a recapitulation whereby the total time elapsed for the whole story (Judges 3:12–30) was fourscore or 80 years.’ A straight forward reading of KJV, NIV and NASB do not indicate such an overlapping. Nor does any punctuation in these translations. A relevant feature on the Hebrew accents (MT) of Judges 3:30 is given here by a Hebrew scholar, David Graves—see Box. It is not for me to say punctuation in the original Hebrew is inspired, although articles by Dr Thomas Strouse<sup>16</sup> and John Owen<sup>17</sup> argue for the obvious necessity and inspiration of the Hebrew vowel-points to give us

### The land enjoys rest for eighty years

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Hebrew with accent	שָׁנָה:	שְׁמוֹנִים	הָאָרֶץ	וַהֲשִׁקֹּט
Transliteration	šānâ	šümônîm	hă’ă°rec	waTTišqöt
English translation	Year	Eighty	The Land	Was at rest
Identification of accent	Silluq and Sof pasuq	M’ayyla	TifHa	M’ayyla

Why would a translation set the 80 years off from the rest of Judges 3:30? Is there anything in the Hebrew that would support such a decision? The short answer is an emphatic no.

Medieval Jewish scribes called the Masoretes (c. AD 600–1100) annotated every word in the Hebrew Old Testament with an accent. These accents served to assist in pronunciation but primarily they serve as punctuation markers.<sup>1</sup> There are two basic types of accents: disjunctive, which set apart two words to varying degrees, and conjunctive, which serve to connect words to varying degrees.

The two main disjunctive accents are the silluq and the atnaH. The Masoretes placed a silluq<sup>2</sup> at the end of every verse. Most verses are then dichotomized by an atnaH. The silluq is roughly equivalent to a period, and the atnaH roughly corresponds to the semicolon.

As one reads Judges 3:30, the accents support the reading, ‘... the land was at rest for 80 years’. To understand this, one needs to examine the accents in the table above. The accents that will answer this question are the tifHa (disjunctive accent) under ‘the land’ (hă’ă°rec) and the m’ayyla (conjunctive accent) under ‘eighty’ (šümônîm).

A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew written by Joüon and Muraoka gives the following uses for the tifHa:

1. It can be used in place of an atnaH, especially in short verses such as Gen 3.21.
2. When there is an atnaH or silluq then it marks a secondary stress in words or groups.<sup>3</sup>

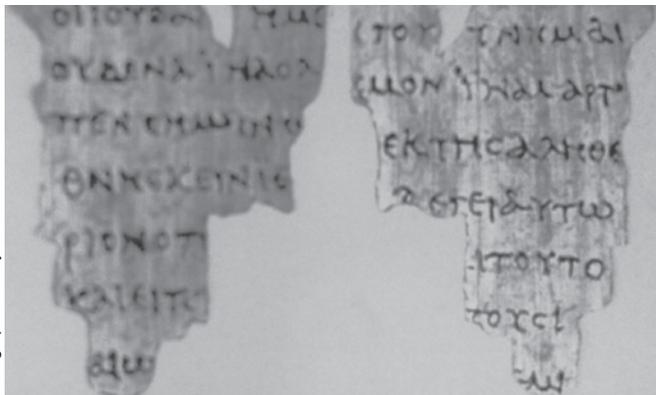
From these two entries one observes that a tifHa is lesser than a silluq or atnaH. However, it can have a stronger function if a verse lacks an atnaH. One could thus posit that if a verse lacks an atnaH then the tifHa may have a strong disjunctive force such as in Genesis 3:21. If Judges 3:30 lacked an atnaH then one could possibly argue for a strong disjunction between ‘the land had rest’ and ‘eighty years’. However there is an atnaH under ‘Israel’ in the Masoretic Text, thus indicating that the tifHa under ‘the land’ functions as in use #2 from Joüon-Muraoka.

It is over reading or eisegesis for external considerations to place a hyphen after ‘the Land had rest’. The presence of the atnaH demonstrates that disjunction is of a secondary nature. Unlike Greek with its case system, biblical Hebrew lacks cases which would help the reader discern the subject, verb and object of a clause. This is where the accents can play a helpful role. The tifHa indicates to the reader that since we have a fronted verb, this definite noun, i.e. ‘the land’, is the subject of the clause with the accent m’ayyla on וַהֲשִׁקֹּט (waTTišqöt) linking the verb to the subject of the clause in the same manner that the m’ayyla on שְׁמוֹנִים (šümônîm) links it to :שָׁנָה: (šānâ).

The general rule for the accents is that every verse is dichotomized by the atnaH; each clause within a verse is then dichotomized in turn on down the line with the next level lower accents. One would have to demonstrate a special reason to deviate from this rule. Bringing this to Judges 3:30, there is no basis for deviating from the rule and setting the 80 years off from the subject and verb of the clause as the inclusion of the hyphen would indicate. The grounds for such an insertion lie purely outside of the text.

### References

1. Yeivin, I., *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah*, Masoretic Studies 5; trans. and ed. Revell, E.J., Scholars, Atlanta, GA, pp. 34–36, 1980.
2. For the spelling of transliterated Hebrew, I have adopted that of Yeivin, ref. 1.
3. Joüon, P. and Muraoka, T., *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, subsidia biblica 14, 2 vols., edirice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, Rome, 15g, 2003.



**Figure 3.** There are four kinds of Greek manuscripts: papyri, uncials, cursives or minuscules and lectionaries. From these Erasmus prepared his NT. Jones states that, Erasmus ‘in preparation for this labor had collected and gathered variant readings from many Greek manuscripts. He journeyed all over Europe visiting libraries and anyone from whom he could gather manuscript readings.’<sup>30</sup>

punctuation and meaning.

### Period 2—the 450 years of Acts 13:19–20

Acts 13:19–20 has been differently translated. Below are 2 examples:

- i) KJV: ‘And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to them by lot. And after that he gave *unto them* judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.’
- ii) NIV: ‘he overthrew seven nations in Canaan and gave their land to his people as their inheritance. All this took about 450 years. After this, God gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophet.’

This article cannot deal exhaustively here with which is the correct translation as above, but a number of resources were helpful.<sup>18–21</sup>

Martin Anstey<sup>22</sup> in dealing with the chronologist’s problems of reconciling Acts 13:19–20 and the Revised Version translation of 1 Kings 6:1 states:

‘This “amended” or rather corrupted Text, is the basis of the translation of Acts 13:17–20 in the Revised Version, a rendering which absolutely precludes the possibility of putting any intelligible construction on the words of Acts 13:19–20. The Authorised Version translates the true Text of ζTi, D2, E, H, L, P, and many others, item D\*d., syr., ar., aeth., “when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He divided their land to them by lot. And after that He gave unto them Judges about the space of 450 years until Samuel the prophet”. The Revised version translates the “emended” Text of Gb1 κ, A, B, C, and 7 cursives (i.e. miniscules) which yields this nonsense, “when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, *he gave them their land for an inheritance for about 450 years;* and after these things He gave them Judges until Samuel the prophet.”’

‘The great blot of the R.V. throughout the New Testament, is the overrating of authority of Westcott and Hort’s pet MSS. κ and B., two MSS. regarded as amongst the earliest and best authorities by one school of Textual critics led by Westcott and Hort, but really two faulty copies carelessly made by Eusebius for the Emperor Constantine, containing numerous errors, and by no means worthy to be adopted as a standard Text, as is clearly proved by an opposing school of Textual critics led by Burgon and Scrivener. How could St Paul have been guilty of perpetrating a sentence which limits the inheritance of the Land by the people of Israel to the time of Eli [emphasis added]?’

To understand Acts 13:18–20 we will use Osgood’s formula,<sup>23</sup> remembering there is no separation of verses in the original Greek. This ‘particular form’ applied here to all these verses is as follows:

Verse 18. Item 1: ‘About the time of 40 years—in the wilderness’. *Total time: About 40 years.*

Verse 19–20. Item 1: ‘And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan’. Item 2: ‘He divided their land to them by lot’. Item 3: ‘After that He gave unto them Judges’. *Total time: About the space of 450 years until Samuel the prophet.*

Verse 21. Item 1: ‘they desired a king ... Saul, by the space of 40 years’. *Total time: by the space of 40 years.*

In delivering his message to the synagogue congregation in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:14–41) Paul sets forth a series of events which follow the chronological order just as we find in the OT and which agrees with Period 2. Question: Do the number of years mentioned in Acts 13:17–22 refer to ‘*the time when an event was given*’ or to a ‘*duration period of time*’? Answer: Verse 17 refers not to the time when the wilderness scene was given but to the duration time of God’s suffering the manners of Israel. Similarly, verse 21 refers not to the time when the children of Israel desired a king but to the duration period of Saul’s reign. So also verses 19–20.

*None* of Samuel’s time is to be included in the 450 years of Acts 13:20.

After the death of Joshua and the elders that outlived him there *arose* another generation that ‘forsook the Lord God of their fathers’. Consequently, they were delivered into bondage. Nevertheless the Lord in His mercy ‘raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them’ (Judges 2:16). These judges, in exercising deliverance from their enemies and administering civil and ceremonial justice, particularly in times of rest, were not self-constituted rulers but *divinely commissioned*. Their deliverance and administration covered a period commencing with Othniel, not Isaac or Abraham, and ended with Eli and is known as ‘The period of the Judges’. This period can be followed mainly in the book of Judges *until* Samuel’s time as a child under Eli. Eli failed miserably to live up to his commission. Anarchy reigned and the last verse of Judges, (21:25) states: ‘In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.’ The position of ‘judge’ was to be replaced and

after a transitional period (the Ark having been removed about 20 years ago when Eli died—1 Sam. 4:21; 7:2), Saul was anointed as king. As stated above, not one of Samuel's years are to be included in the 450 years (whether he was a prophet or a judge) because the 450 years terminate with the last commissioned judge, Eli, and was *until Samuel*. Acts 13:20 states clearly the 'about the space of four hundred and fifty years' was 'until Samuel the prophet', i.e. who was a prophet. On the use of the word, 'UNTIL' see Strong's #2193, εως, GR.: a conjunction, preposition and adverb of continuance, until [of the time and place], up to. The same Greek word is used in Luke 15:4. Question: Does the Shepherd continue to go after the lost sheep after He had already found them? Refer also to the woman with the lost coin. Does the lady go searching for the lost coin after she has 'the money in her pocket'? So the use of the word 'until' in Acts 13:20 terminates the 450 years with Eli's death.

**Period 3a—the 480 years 'after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt', and Period 3b—the 114 years of servitude and usurpation that were between the periods of God's deliverances, i.e. 'rests' (Judges 3:8–13:1)**

There seems to be a paradoxical problem when comparing the statement of Scripture: '480 years after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt' (1 Kings 6:1), with the actual consecutive linear 'New Year' 594 years of events recorded in the OT. (Josephus, according to Alford<sup>24</sup> reckons '592 years from the Exodus to the building of the temple'). To solve this one problem numerous suppositions are made, some of which are mentioned above. Here is another theory: The editor of *The New Complete Works of Josephus*<sup>25</sup> interpreting Josephus and inferring that 80 years is too long for the rest under Ehud, states 'that the rest under Ehud, which has here and in our other copies no fewer than 80 years ascribed to it, was hardly a breathing time; which well agrees to 8, but by no means to 80 years duration of this rest until the death of Ehud.' But the 80 years 'rest' of Judges 3:30 (Strong's #8252 = to repose, to be in quietness, to have rest, to be still) has reference to the state of Israel's relief after servitude to Eglon and not to 'hardly a breathing time'. The end result of many theories: numerous hypotheses to solve one problem, the 'Gordian Knot' of 1 Kings 6:1. To do this is illogical and does not make a 'science' of chronology. This attempt to reduce the 594 years by 114 arouses high suspicions, particularly when it seems more than coincidental that the years of servitude and usurpation by Abimelech equals exactly these 114 years. Abimelech, by the way, was not a judge but a king (Judges 9:16, 22), so he cannot be counted in any summing of the years of the judges.

There is another way of solving 1 Kings 6:1. This is to be solved without the need to change the translation, the number 480, and without resort to the presumption of a scribal error. It is unravelled by the correct interpretation of a particular clause (see below). When it comes to this verse, research has found generally that writers and authors have overlooked, at least to some degree, the importance and meaning of the modifying clause 'after the children of

Israel were come out of the land of Egypt'. What does this clause mean?

First of all, it is to be carefully considered that the writers and prophets of the OT were considerably influenced by the judgments and sayings of Moses in the Pentateuch. Israel would have been aware that blessings were to come to Israel for obedience and curses were to be inflicted if they disobeyed. The prophets and writers were aware and would keep in mind these oracles from Deuteronomy. Two or three examples are given below:

*In Deuteronomy 28:68 we read (Note: This was said after the Exodus!): 'And the Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships by way whereof I spoke unto thee, "Thou shalt see it no more again: and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen, and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you" [emphasis added].'* This oracle of judgment had reference to not just an exclusive group but to *all* those who would be disobedient. Now from this time forward after Moses spoke, we know all those who were disobedient did not literally end up back in Egypt. Many were made captive in literal Babylon. Here, in Deuteronomy 28, Moses was detailing two kinds of judgment. These in turn may be grouped in two divisions: those involving disease and other disasters in the land, (vv. 59–63) and those involving deportation from the land, (vv. 64–68). As Eugene H. Merrill<sup>26</sup> says:

'But the two kinds of judgment share in common the character of an "exodus reversal" (cf. v. 27); that is, the calamities in Canaan would be like the plagues Yahweh visited on Egypt (v. 60), and the exile, though universal in scope (v. 64), would be tantamount to a return to Egyptian bondage (v. 68) [emphasis-mine].'

For their disobedience, the Israelites were metaphorically thrust back into 'Egypt' being in bondage to the current oppressor. Compare Deuteronomy 28:68 with Hosea 8:13 ('they shall return to Egypt') and Hosea 9:3 ('Ephraim shall return to Egypt and they shall eat unclean things in Assyria'). Patrick Fairbairn<sup>27</sup> points out that Ephraim could not literally be in two places at once. Rather, he says:

'... beyond a doubt that when the prophet speaks of the Israelites being sent back to Egypt, it is not the exact country, but the state of bondage and misery with which, from past experience, that country had become identified in their minds, that he has in view.'

Martin Anstey<sup>28</sup> and Philip Mauro<sup>29</sup> agree with the above interpretation of 1 Kings 6:1. It is of little wonder, considering the horror of servitude under the Canaanites as 'being back in Egypt', (metaphorically speaking) that the recorder of 1 Kings wrote according to the 'voice of Moses'. And so the writer of 1 Kings did not count the years of servitude and usurpation when the children of Israel rebelled against *the Theocracy* (114 years), but only the 480 years which were put down as a measure of such

theocracy, i.e. God's rule over His people. It is relevant to note that the word 'Israel' = Strong's #3478: he will rule as God. There was no sovereign theocracy in the times of the servitude and usurpation.

### Conclusion

Either we arbitrarily manipulate the figures of *Periods 1, 2 and 3*, for which Scriptures and explanations are given, or we are left with the alternative to rely on many unproven hypotheses.

In researching material relating to the 3 periods it is found

- i) No indication of any scribal error was discovered in copying from the original Hebrew of 1 Kings 6:1.
- ii) In the placing of events consequent to each other (see tables above), which is an essential principle to be followed in the study of chronology, the 'Period of the Judges' reveals 594 'New Year' years from the Exodus to the fourth year of Solomon's reign but 480 years of sovereign theocracy. The difference, 114 years, are the years of servitude and usurpation.
- iii) Numerous hypothetical theories, especially those of overlapping, cannot account for the one 'Gordian Knot' of 1 Kings 6:1.
- iv) The phrase: 'after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt' is to be interpreted 'deuteronomically' and in accordance with Deuteronomy 28:68.
- v) Acts 13:19–20 is not a poor translation but evidence of the preservation of God's truth. Not one jot or tittle of it shall be broken.
- vi) The explanations of Period 3 are not attempts to alter the numeral of 480 in 1 Kings 6:1 but rather are given to explain the meaning of the modifying clause (see above).
- vii) The 450 years of Acts 13:20 does not start with Isaac's birth or weaning as some would have it, but with the six year war after the children of Israel entered Canaan. Its completion was at the death of Eli who, as the last of that period, judged Israel for 40 years. There were many who judged in Israel right throughout the OT but the 450 years relates to that specific period mentioned in Joshua, Judges and 1 Samuel.

This study on Chronology, for me, is a further confirmation concerning the accuracy of the 'God breathed' Scriptures. The Lord continues to magnify his Word above all the manifestations of His name (Psalm 138:2).

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