

## When Was the First Year of the Reign of Zedekiah, King of Judah?

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The army of Nebuchadrezzar II,<sup>1</sup> emperor of Babylonia,<sup>2</sup> besieged Jerusalem and deposed king Jehoiachin, an eighteen-year old who had reigned in Judah for three months after the death of his father, king Jehoiakim, a wicked and rebellious ruler (2 Kings 24:1-12; 2 Chronicles 36:8-10 adds ten days, possibly in line with Ezekiel's remembrance [Ezekiel 40:1] that the exile of Jehoiachin occurred ten days into a new year).<sup>3</sup>

Nebuchadrezzar chose Jehoiachin's twenty-one year old uncle, Mattaniah, to become the regent of Judah and changed the new king's name to *Zedekiah* (2 Kings 24:17-18; Jeremiah 37:1; 1 Chronicles 3:15; compare 1 Chronicles 3:16 and 2 Chronicles 36:10-11).<sup>4</sup> He was a son of the late king Josiah, who had died about twelve years earlier from wounds suffered in a battle at

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<sup>1</sup> The Biblical rendering of the name occasionally as "Nebuchadnezzar" (compare, e.g., Jeremiah 21:2, 7; 39:1; with 2 Kings 24:1, 10-11) sometimes is thought to be a slightly erroneous translation of the emperor's Babylonian name, *Nabū-kudur-uṣur*. Compare James Hastings, ed., *Dictionary of the Bible*, Rev. ed., Frederick C. Grant and H. H. Rowley, eds. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), 693 ("Nebuchadrezzar") with Donald J. Wiseman, *Nebuchadrezzar and Babylon*, The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1983), 2-5.

<sup>2</sup> Nebuchadrezzar acceded to the throne of Babylonia upon his father's death in August 605 B.C. and his first regnal year began with the Babylonian New Year Festival in the spring of 604 B.C. Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, Rev. ed. (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 76, 252-53; idem., *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 200; Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1965), 164-166; Donald J. Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldean Kings (626-556 B.C.) in the British Museum* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1956), 26-28.

<sup>3</sup> *Jehoiakim* was the name given by pharaoh Necho II to king Josiah's son, Eliakim, in August/September 609 B.C. Jehoiakim ruled Judah for eleven years (2 Kings 23:36; 2 Chronicles 36:5). After Nebuchadrezzar defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish and Hamath between May and August, 605 B.C., the Babylonians brought the Syrian and Palestinian kingdoms (including Judah) into submission to Babylonia, probably no later than December/January 604/603 B.C. Nonetheless, after the damaging clash of the armies of Egypt and Babylonia on the borders of Egypt in or shortly after December 601 B.C., the Egyptians advanced back to Gaza and the Babylonian army retreated to Babylonia. About this time, Jehoiakim realigned Judah with Egypt in rebellion against Babylonia. Nebuchadrezzar sent "Syrians" and others to harass the people of Judah (2 Kings 24:1-2; Jeremiah 35:11), but Jehoiakim kept his allegiance to Egypt. The army of Nebuchadrezzar was not able to retake control of all of Judah until after the surrender of Jerusalem by Jehoiachin. See 2 Kings 24; Jeremiah 35; 36:9-29; 46:2-12; Oded Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem: Judah under Babylonian Rule* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 36-55; Finegan, *Handbook* (Rev. ed.), 253-56; idem., *Handbook*, 200-04. See also Oded Lipschits, "'Jehoiakim Slept with his Fathers ...' (II Kings 24:6) – Did He?" *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 4 (2002): 1-33; accessed by the author on September 5, 2008, at [www.arts.ualberta.ca/JHS/Articles/article\\_23.pdf](http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/JHS/Articles/article_23.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> At this time, Babylonian policy seems to have been "not to cause any unnecessary trauma to the kingdom, to preserve stability of rule, and not to create a vacuum that could quickly be filled by elements that the Babylonians would find harder to control." To secure the loyalty of the rebellious kingdom, Nebuchadrezzar chose the last of the sons of the late king Josiah (who had been killed by pharaoh Necho; 2 Kings 23:29) and the full brother of the late king Jehoahaz (who was deported by Necho and died in exile in Egypt; 2 Kings 23:31-35; 24:18). Presumably, Nebuchadrezzar hoped Zedekiah would be loyal because of Egypt's mistreatment of his father and brother—and because Jehoiachin, waiting in exile, represented a ready replacement who could be returned to rule Judah, if necessary. Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, 56.

Megiddo against the Egyptian foes of Babylonia (2 Kings 23:29; 2 Chronicles 35:20-25).<sup>5</sup> In accepting the regency, Zedekiah made a covenant of allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar and swore an oath in the name of the Lord to seal the covenant (2 Chronicles 36:13; Ezekiel 17:12-14).

During the two months before Jerusalem's surrender, and within a few weeks after, a total of 3,023 people (perhaps mostly military men) were deported to Babylonia (Jeremiah 52:28).<sup>6</sup> After the surrender of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar, the collection of an immense levy of captives and treasure was conducted by the Babylonian army (2 Kings 24:12-18; 2 Chronicles 36:10-11). Zedekiah's reign began as the treasures of Judah, together with Jehoiachin, his mother and wives, his eunuchs, the men of might, craftsmen and smiths, some 10,000 people—indeed, “all Jerusalem” except “the poorest sort of the people of the land” were taken to Babylonia (2 Kings 24:12-18; 2 Chronicles 36:10; Ezekiel 40:1).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The Babylonian chronicle records that in emperor Nabopolassar's sixteenth year (c. April 610/April 609 B.C.), he drove the Assyrians out of Haran. In his next regnal year, between June and September, 609 B.C., Assyria and its Egyptian ally attempted to retake Haran. The “army of Egypt” mentioned in the chronicle is the army of Necho that Judah's king Josiah attempted to defeat at Megiddo (2 Kings 23:29; 2 Chronicles 35:21). Josiah's purpose seems to have been to keep Egyptian assistance from reaching the Assyrians, an old enemy of Judah, while Necho sought to keep the borders of his influence near Haran. Thus, Josiah's death is to be dated in Nabopolassar's seventeenth year and “in the month of Duzu/Tammuz (June 25-July 23) 609 B.C.” Finegan, *Handbook* (Rev. ed.), 252.

<sup>6</sup> Jeremiah 52:28 states that this exile occurred in Nebuchadnezzar's seventh year, but this data does not appear in the Septuagint version of the book of Jeremiah nor in the related chapter in the book of Kings (2 Kings 25). John Bright, *The Anchor Bible: Jeremiah* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1965), 366. Bright noted that the “3023 may be an exact count of adult males” and thus, would differ from the “probably round numbers including all the people deported” found in 2 Kings 24:14, 16 (ten thousand, eight thousand). Bright, *Jeremiah*, 369. See also Kathleen M. O'Connor, “Jeremiah,” in John Barton and John Muddiman, eds., *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 526.

Second Kings 24:12 indicates that the exile occurred in Nebuchadnezzar's eighth year; so, the deportation of military prisoners might have occurred first, removing them from Judah's fortified cities as quickly as possible. When it was safer for Babylonian forces to identify and gather the elite and skilled citizens and material treasures of Judah, the second phase of the exile could be organized and accomplished during Nebuchadnezzar's eighth regnal year. Jack Finegan suggested this timing: “If some three thousand captives were taken off before the end of Addaru and the balance only after the beginning of Nisan, then both the seventh and eighth years of Nebuchadnezzar were involved.” Jack Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past*, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 592; but see Finegan's later position (Finegan, *Handbook* (Rev. ed.), 256).

Lipschits suggested that the “reference to the deportation of ‘Judeans’ in Jer 52:28 permits us to conjecture that this event refers to those who were captured even before the conquest of Jerusalem” in Nebuchadnezzar's seventh year. Then the deportation in 2 Kings 24, “which included the nation's leaders, the king, heads of the army, ‘the craftsmen and smiths,’ and some of the priests (and compare with Jer 29:1), occurred only a few weeks or months afterward—in any event, after Nissan 597 B.C.E., when the 8th year of Nebuchadnezzar's rule began.” Probably, it all had to happen as quickly as possible because Nebuchadnezzar and the mass of his army would not have chosen to remain away from Babylonia very long due to political vulnerabilities there. “Even more difficult problems awaited Nebuchadnezzar in the 10th year of his reign (595/594 B.C.E.). According to the Babylonian Chronicle, there was a revolt in Babylon that lasted from the month of Kislev to the month of Tebeth (from mid-December 595 to mid-February 594 B.C.E.). This revolt was suppressed only after Nebuchadnezzar ordered the execution of many in his own army and when he had personally trapped the leader of the revolt, whose identity is not known.” Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, 60-63.

<sup>7</sup> Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, 59, sees the number of exiles as being “approximately 10,000 people out of a total of 110,000 people in the entire kingdom of Judah.” The writer of 2 Kings 24:12 reported that the king and his entourage were taken in the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar. Ezekiel, who may

The comparison in 2 Kings 24:14 (“all Jerusalem” carried away versus “the poorest sort of the people of the land” who were left behind) appears to be an overstatement reflecting the perspective of the people in exile.<sup>8</sup> The so-called “poorest sort” actually included some of the more prosperous and educated ranks because Zedekiah’s ruling circle in Jerusalem included princes, prophets and priests (e.g., Jeremiah 27:14-16; 28:1; 34:10, 19, 21; 37:19). The palace and city included scribes, eunuchs, servants, captains and men of war (e.g., Jeremiah 32:12; 34:9, 19; 37:2, 13, 15; 38:4, 7; 40:7). All of these continued to dwell in Jerusalem and Judah.<sup>9</sup>

According to a Babylonian chronicle (British Museum tablet no. 21946) that included information about the surrender of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar took his army into Palestine during his seventh regnal year and:

encamped against (i.e., besieged) the city of Judah and on the second day of the month of Adar [the last month of the Babylonian’s seventh year] he seized the city and captured the king. He appointed there a king of his own choice (lit. heart), received its heavy tribute and sent (them) to Babylon.<sup>10</sup>

The recording of this specific date demonstrates the importance of Jerusalem’s surrender for the writers of the Babylonian chronicle<sup>11</sup> and provides a key date for establishing the chronology of ancient Judah. From records of astronomical events such as lunar eclipses<sup>12</sup> and

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have been taken captive at that time (Ezekiel 1:1-3), appears to have remembered the exact date of the captivity of Jehoiachin as just ten days into a new year (Ezekiel 40:1). 2 Chronicles 36:10 noted that Jehoiachin was taken “when the year was expired”—again, suggesting the deportation occurred just after the start of a new year. Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past*, 2:592; but compare Finegan, *Handbook*, 205, 209 (before the start of the new year) with his switch back to after the start of the new year, *idem.*, *Handbook* (Rev. ed.), 257.

<sup>8</sup> This comparison and a similar one following the destruction of Jerusalem eleven years later express “the viewpoint of the exiles to Babylon, where [these comparisons were] composed.” They represent the “judgment of the elite deportees toward those who remained in the land.” Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, 102-03 (see also 59 n.87, where Lipschits contradicts the notion that “the entire population of Jerusalem was sent into exile,” seeing 2 Kings 24:14 as a “later addition connected with 2 Kings 25:21b, a verse that very obviously is a generalization”).

<sup>9</sup> After subjugating Judah in 604 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar permitted Jehoiakim to remain in power, “an action that demonstrated realpolitik and his willingness not to deal harshly with the Judean kingdom and the Davidic line.” However, after Jehoiakim’s revolt, Nebuchadnezzar “intentionally impaired the kingdom’s economic strength and deported part of the nation’s social, religious, military, and economic elite.” Nonetheless, both the makeup and number of the exiles indicate the Babylonian policy “to allow Judah to rebuild itself and to permit the life of the kingdom to continue.” Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, 55, 59.

<sup>10</sup> Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldean Kings*, 73. See also Albert Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, Texts from Cuneiform Sources, A. Leo Oppenheim, ed., vol. 5 (Locust Valley, New York: J.J. Augustin, 1975), 102; Jean-Jacques Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, Benjamin R. Foster, ed. (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 231.

<sup>11</sup> Wiseman, *Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon*, 32.

<sup>12</sup> “The chronology of the Neo-Babylonian kingdom is well established through extensive dates from contract tablets and the chronicles of Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar II, and Nabonidus, and calibrated through an eclipse text from year 37 of Nebuchadnezzar. The period begins with Nebuchadnezzar coming to the throne in 605 [B.C.] and ends with the Persian conquest of Babylon in 539.... Correlations with Nebuchadnezzar’s chronicle indicate that Jehoiakim ruled until the end of 598, and Jehoiachin surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar on 2 Adar 597. Zedekiah reigned until 587 if a spring calendar was used in Judah at this

with the modern capacity to calculate when astronomical events have occurred in the past (according to current and ancient methods of reckoning time), the date 2 Adar in Nebuchadrezzar's seventh regnal year—the day Jehoiachin surrendered Jerusalem to the Babylonians—has been calculated to have been Friday/Saturday (sunset to sunset), 15/16 March (J), 9/10 March (G), 597 B.C. JDN 1503444.<sup>13</sup>

The exile of Jehoiachin and some of the elite of Jerusalem may have begun on the following 10 Nisan (see Ezekiel 40:1), Sunday/Monday, 21/22 April (J), 15/16 April (G), 597 B.C. JDN 1503481,<sup>14</sup> if one assumes that the lunisolar calendars of Babylonia and Judah were in correspondence. However, this cannot be proven and they may not have been in correspondence,<sup>15</sup> in which case, 10 Nisan in the calendar of Judah likely would have been just eight days after the capitulation of Jerusalem, Saturday/Sunday, 23/24 March (J), 17/18 March (G), 597 B.C. JDN 1503452.

With Jehoiachin in captivity, Zedekiah may have officially begun his reign on this same date, 10 Nisan, 597 B.C.<sup>16</sup> If so, this date would have been viewed in Judah as the beginning of

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time or 586 if a fall calendar was used." William H. Shea, "Chronology of the Old Testament," in David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck, eds., *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), 245-246. An eclipse listed by Ptolemy for Nabopolassar's fifth year (621 B.C.) establishes the same absolute chronology for Nebuchadrezzar's reign. See Randall P. Spackman, "Review of Thomas O. Moore, A Detailed Chronology of the Book of Mormon," *FARMS Review of Books* 10/1 (1998):7-8, and sources cited therein.

<sup>13</sup> See, e.g., Finegan, *Handbook* (Rev. ed.), 256; idem., *Handbook*, 204; idem., *Light from the Ancient Past*, 2:590; Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 167; J. Arthur Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, R.K. Harrison, ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1980), 24; Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldean Kings*, 33. Julian dates for the Babylonian calendar have been calculated and published in tables. See Richard A. Parker and Waldo H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.-A.D. 75*, Brown University Studies, vol. 19 (Providence, Rhode Island: Brown University Press, 1956). The various calendric formats for presenting specific dates are described in the chapter on "Calendars."

<sup>14</sup> Finegan, *Handbook* (Rev. ed.), 257; idem., *Light from the Ancient Past*, 2:595; Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 168. See also Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldean Kings*, 33-34.

<sup>15</sup> An annual calendar measured with moons usually has twelve moons (about 354.367 days), but an annual calendar measured by the sun has approximately 365.2422 days (about 10.875 days more). Hence, a strict twelve-moon calendar loses correspondence with the solar year at the rate of about one moon every three solar years. In ancient Babylonia and Judah, the calendar keepers added or "intercalated" a moon every few solar years, but as far as can be determined, in the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. their methods were not standardized. Finegan, *Handbook* (Rev. ed.), 14-39. Based on the publication of more than 35,000 economic documents from ancient Babylonia, the actual Babylonian practice of intercalation has been established; so, it is known that the Babylonians intercalated a second month, Elul, in Nebuchadrezzar's seventh year. If the kingdom of Judah did not intercalate a second month of Elul in 598 B.C., then the Babylonian year would have ended one month (moon) later than the Jewish year. Hence, the crowning of Zedekiah may have occurred in the Babylonian month of Adar, the equivalent of a coronation in the Jewish month of Nisan. Gershon Galil, *The Chronology of the Kings of Israel and Judah*, Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East, B. Halpern and M.H.E. Weippert, eds., vol. 9 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 113-26. See also Parker and Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology*, 27.

<sup>16</sup> Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past*, 2:592, 594. See also Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 167-68. Finegan later changed his position, stating that "Zedekiah's accession year was the balance of the month in which Nebuchadrezzar installed him," Adar. Finegan, *Handbook*, 205. Then his position changed again and 10 Nisan 597 B.C. became the beginning of Zedekiah's accession year, which ended with the commencement of his first regnal year on 1 Tishri, Tuesday/Wednesday, 8/9 October (J), 2/3 October (G), 597 B.C. JDN 1503651. Finegan, *Handbook* (Rev. ed.), 258. Wiseman stated that: "By this

Zedekiah's "accession year," a phrase referring to the period between the king's accession and the first New Year's Day of his reign. One ancient method of measuring a king's reign counted this short accession year as the king's first official year, while an alternate method ignored the accession year and began the king's first regnal year with his first New Year's Day.<sup>17</sup> Scholars differ as to which method of accession year counting was used for the eleven-year length of Zedekiah's reign (2 Kings 24:18; 2 Chronicles 36:11; Jeremiah 1:3; 52:1); they also differ as to when New Year's Day for the start of regnal years occurred in the last decades of the kingdom of Judah—some holding for the spring (1 Nisan) and others for the autumn (1 Tishri).<sup>18</sup>

Some scholars have assumed that the Babylonian emperor would not have waited at Jerusalem for the deportation, but would have chosen Zedekiah as quickly as possible and then returned to Babylon.<sup>19</sup> Hence, Zedekiah's reign might have begun officially before the deportation of Jehoiachin and before a New Year's Day that might have occurred on 1 Nisan (if the Jewish month of Nisan was in correspondence with the Babylonian month of Nisan). If this is how events actually transpired, Zedekiah's "accession year" would have been only a few weeks in Adar.

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time [Nisan 597 B.C.] Nebuchadnezzar had returned to his own capital to which he had had Jehoiachin taken and the Jerusalem temple vessels had been dedicated in the temple of Marduk there (2 Chron. 36:10; Dan 1:2; 5:2). Jehoiachin's successor Zedekiah was installed before the departure of Nebuchadnezzar, three months and ten days after Jehoiakim's death (6/7 December 598 B.C.)—and therefore before the fall of the city, implying that [Zedekiah] was outside [Jerusalem] at the time. That Zedekiah was set up as ruler after the actual departure of Jehoiachin requires the assumption that a Tishri [autumn] new year calendar reckoning was used.... The majority of scholars, however, still opt for the Nisan [spring] calendar." Wiseman, *Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon*, 33.

<sup>17</sup> Referring to the phrase translated *in the beginning of the reign* in Jeremiah 26:1, Thompson wrote: "The first expression in [the Masoretic text], *rē šīt mam<sup>l</sup>kūt*, corresponds to [Akkadian] *rēš šarrūti*, a technical term for the period between the king's accession and the beginning of the next full year (the New Year). In some systems of dating this part year was counted as one, in others it was ignored and only full years were counted in the length of a king's reign." Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 524. Ancient Egyptians counted the partial year as the pharaoh's first regnal year. K.S. Freedy and Donald B. Redford, "The Dates in Ezekiel in Relation to Biblical, Babylonian and Egyptian Sources," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 90/3 (1970): 464; Galil, *The Chronology of the Kings of Israel and Judah*, 108 n.2. Babylonians did not count the partial year. Finegan, *Handbook* (Rev. ed.), 75; idem., *Handbook*, 201-02; Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldean Kings*, 27-28.

<sup>18</sup> Thompson, for example, thought that from the beginning of the eighth century to the end of the kingdom of Judah, the accession dating system was in use and the (partial) accession year was counted as the king's first regnal year. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 524. Thiele, on the other hand, thought that "all Biblical writers of this period used the accession-year system for Hebrew, Babylonian, or Persian kings," but did not count the accession year as the king's first regnal year. Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 161, 168. Also compare Freedy and Redford, "The Dates in Ezekiel," 464-67 with Abraham Malamat, "The Last Kings of Judah and the Fall of Jerusalem," *Israel Exploration Journal* 18 (1968): 146.

For *spring years*, see, e.g., Bright, *Jeremiah*, 242; Finegan, *Handbook*, 205; Galil, *The Chronology of the Kings of Israel and Judah*, 117; J. Philip Hyatt, "New Light on Nebuchadnezzar and Judean History," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 75 (1956): 278; Hayim Tadmor, "Chronology of the Last Kings of Judah," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 15/4 (1956): 226-227; Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 620; and Wiseman, *Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon*, 33; and for *autumn years*, see, e.g., Finegan, *Handbook* (Rev. ed.), 251-261; Freedy and Redford, "The Dates in Ezekiel," 464-67; Siegfried H. Horn, "The Babylonian Chronicle and the Ancient Calendar of the Kingdom of Judah," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 5 (1967): 15-16; Malamat, "The Last Kings of Judah and the Fall of Jerusalem," 146-50; Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 168.

<sup>19</sup> See, e.g., Galil, *The Chronology of the Kings of Israel and Judah*, 111; Malamat, "The Last Kings of Judah and the Fall of Jerusalem," 145; Wiseman, *Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon*, 32-33.

According to one ancient method for counting an “accession year,” that period of just a few weeks might have been designated the first regnal year of Zedekiah.

Scholars have worked on these issues for many decades (and there are numerous related chronological texts and issues not important for my purposes). Two chronologies appear to have reached a somewhat acceptable level of confidence among their separate proponents, one that ends Zedekiah's eleven-year reign in 587 and the other in 586 B.C.<sup>20</sup> According to Jack Finegan, if the fall of Jerusalem is placed in 587, the date when the siege of Jerusalem began would have been Friday/Saturday, 14/15 January (J), 8/9 January (G), 588 B.C. JDN 1506671 and the walls would have been breached on Friday/Saturday, 28/29 July (J), 22/23 July (G), 587 B.C. JDN 1507231. If the fall of Jerusalem is placed in 586, then the siege commenced on Tuesday/Wednesday, 3/4 January (J), 587 B.C. or 28/29 December (G), 587 B.C. JDN 1507025 and the Babylonians broke through the city's walls on Wednesday/Thursday, 18/19 July (J), 12/13 July (G), 586 B.C. JDN 1507586. In each case, the siege is deemed to have lasted about one and one-half years.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, Edwin R. Thiele held that the siege commenced on Friday/Saturday, 14/15 January (J), 8/9 January (G), 588 B.C. JDN 1506671, but the city did not fall to the Babylonians until Tuesday/Wednesday, 17/18 July (J), 11/12 July (G), 586 B.C. JDN 1507585, a siege of about two and one-half years.<sup>22</sup> K.S. Freedy, Donald B. Redford and Abraham Malamat also proposed a siege of about two and one-half years ending in 586 B.C.<sup>23</sup> Finegan came to accept this position.<sup>24</sup>

Scholarly differences need not be settled for the purposes of my limited chronological interest in the first year of the reign of Zedekiah. For my interpretive purposes, external sources confirm that there was a monarch who ruled the kingdom of Judah, under the name Zedekiah, for a period that included a *first* regnal year.

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<sup>20</sup> Jeremy Hughes, *Secrets of the Times: Myth and History in Biblical Chronology*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series 66 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 229 n.137, lists eleven scholars in favor of 587 and twelve scholars in favor of 586 B.C.

<sup>21</sup> Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past*, 2:594.

<sup>22</sup> Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 168-169.

<sup>23</sup> Freedy and Redford, “The Dates in Ezekiel in Relation to Biblical, Babylonian and Egyptian Sources,” 481-84; and Malamat, “The Last Kings of Judah and the Fall of Jerusalem,” 150-56.

<sup>24</sup> Finegan, *Handbook* (Rev. ed.), 259.