

THE ASSYRIAN EPONYM CANON AND THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE BIBLE.

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The discovery of the Assyrian Eponym Canon by Sir Henry Rawlinson, while adding new interest and importance to the subject of biblical chronology, greatly increased the difficulties of a satisfactory solution. It was soon found that it would require careful study to reconcile these two records. Not to mention various minor discrepancies, the following was the principal difficulty: An inscription of Shalmaneser II. mentions a victory won by him over Ahab king of Israel; an inscription of Sargon apparently speaks of the capture of Samaria as occurring in his second year. According to the Eponym Canon 134 years intervened between these events, while, according to the common biblical chronologies, the interval was some fifty years or so longer. According to Usher there were 176 years between the death of Ahab and the capture of Samaria. Various chronologies have been formed with different expedients for reconciling the Bible and the Assyrian inscriptions; some, denying the accuracy of the canon, claim that it must omit a number of years, others making the necessary changes in the biblical account,—nearly all taking more or less liberty with the numbers of the Bible. Geo. Smith, in his Assyrian Canon, attempts to reconcile the two accounts by supposing that the Ahab mentioned in the inscriptions is not the Ahab of the Bible. He also makes various changes in the biblical numerals in order to adjust other events of the history. The writer of this paper offers the following arrangement of the chronology as a solution of the difficulty, which, to his own mind, satisfactorily adjusts the two records, while accepting both as correct and without changing or doing violence to a single biblical numeral.

In making out the biblical chronology the following rule has been followed:

1. In computing the years of a king, the computation always begins with the death of the previous king and his own accession, the first year being counted a full year from the actual time he ascended the throne, without reference to the civil year or year of the separation.

2. If a king survived an anniversary, the time he survived, however short, is called a year in giving the length of his reign.

For a common measure, in treating this chronology, it is convenient to use the date of the separation of the two kingdoms as a beginning of an era. For the sake of brevity the year of the separation will be designated by A. Div. The following items are all that we need for present use.

A. Div. 58. Ahab ascends the throne of Israel.

A. Div. 78. Early in the year Ahaziah is associated with his father Ahab on the throne. This year is the 17–18th year of Jehoshaphat and the 20–21st of Ahab.

A. Div. 79. Ahab is slain in battle shortly after the beginning of his 22d year. Ahaziah reigns for a few days (or weeks) alone, when he dies and is succeeded by Jehoram.

A. Div. 90. Ahaziah of Judah ascends the throne, reigns for a few weeks, or months, and towards the close of the year is slain, together with Jehoram of Israel, by Jehu.

A. Div. 135. Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, king of Israel, dies and is succeeded by his son Jehoash, who probably had been reigning for about two years with his father. The reason of this supposition is that Jehoash is stated (2 Kgs. XIII., 10) to have begun to reign in the thirty-seventh year of Joash of Judah, while Jehoahaz did not die until the 39th year of Joash.

A. Div. 136. Amaziah of Judah begins to reign.

So far there is practically no difference between this arrangement and that of Usher as found in the margins of our Bibles. At this point, however, we part company with all previous chronological systems.

The principle difference is that we take the numerals in regard to Azariah and Jeroboam II. as referring to the lives of these kings instead of their reigns. Azariah is said to have been sixteen years old when he began to reign, and to have reigned "fifty-two years." We understand this as meaning until he was fifty-two years old. Hence his actual reign was 52—16 or thirty-six years. The record states that Jeroboam reigned forty-one years, meaning by that that he reigned until he was forty-one years of age. His actual reign would be forty-one less his age at his accession, which, being not directly stated in the Bible, is to be determined otherwise. From considerations in regard to Azariah's accession, to be explained further on, we make Jeroboam's age at his accession to be twenty-nine, and therefore his actual reign was twelve years. The reason of this view of the numerals of these two kings is the statement (2 Kgs. xv., 1) that Azariah began to reign in the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam. No satisfactory explanation of this statement can be given except that the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam's life and not of his reign is meant. If the writer of the record of these two reigns used numerals in this sense once, he probably made the same use of all the numerals he employed. The probability thus established becomes almost a certainty when it gives a chronology which fits very closely the Assyrian Inscriptions. It is true that this use of numerals is without parallel probably in the Bible; but the Book of Kings is admitted by all to be a compilation, and the author of the record here inserted concerning Azariah and Jeroboam may have used numerals in a sense peculiar to himself. It may be objected to this arrangement that it does not give Jeroboam time sufficient for the conquests ascribed to him by the Bible; but the conquests were begun by his father and simply carried on by him. It is no objection to this view that the records of the later writers refer to the fifty-second year of Azariah, etc., as they were undoubtedly influenced or guided in their expressions regarding these two kings by the records. They might have done this with full knowledge of the peculiar usage, providing it was generally understood.

We make a further departure from the common chronologies in making Azariah reign for about seventeen years while his father Amaziah was still living, though living in exile. This brings Azariah's accession in the 149th year of the separation, or the 13—14th year of Amaziah. This is two years before the death of Jehoash of Israel and the accession of Jeroboam II. Azariah's accession being (2 Kgs. xv., 1) in the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam's age, as we understand it, this arrangement makes Jeroboam twenty-nine at his accession, as stated above.

The reason for this arrangement is the statement (2 Chron. xxv., 27; xxvi., 1) that "at the time (*me'eth*, LXX. *ἐν τῷ καιρῷ*) that Amaziah did turn away from following the Lord, they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem; and he fled to Lachish; but they sent to Lachish after him and slew him there....

Then all the people took Uzziah (or Azariah), who was sixteen years old, and made him king in the room of his father Amaziah." It has been commonly understood that this conspiracy took place at the end of the fifteen years which Amaziah "lived after the death of Jehoash king of Israel;" but the turning away from the Lord mentioned in the introduction, by Amaziah, of the idolatry of Edom upon his capture of this country, and the translation we have given of the passage is certainly possible, and is the one adopted by the LXX. This places the conspiracy at the time of the introduction of the idolatry of Edom. The war with Edom was before the war with Israel. The war with Israel is placed by Josephus in the fourteenth year of Amaziah. This may have been 149 or 150 A. Div. Now it does not seem at all likely that it took these conspirators seventeen or eighteen years to mature their plots. Furthermore we have a most fitting opportunity for the refuting of a conspiracy in the defeat of Amaziah by Jehoash of Israel, when the Jewish king was brought a prisoner to Jerusalem by the king of Israel. There is a further statement in the records of these events which favors this view of the reigns of Amaziah and Azariah, viz., that Azariah "built Eloth and restored it to Judah after that the king slept with his fathers" (2 Chron. xxvi., 2), i. e., after Amaziah's death.

In view of these considerations the continued chronology is

A. Div. 149. Azariah is put on the throne of Judah as the result of a conspiracy; Amaziah is slain at Lachish seventeen years later.

A. Div. 151. Jeroboam II. ascends the throne.

A. Div. 171. Zechariah reigns six months in Samaria after an apparent interregnum. He is followed by Shallum reigning one month.

A. Div. 172. Menahem ascends the throne of Israel.

A. Div. 182. Pekahia succeeds Menahem.

A. Div. 185. Jotham ascends the throne of Judah.

The Bible states that Jotham reigned sixteen years, and that Pekah reigned twenty years, when he was slain by Hoshea in the twentieth year of Jotham (2 Kgs. xv., 30). It also states (2 Kgs. xvii., 1) that Hoshea began to reign in the twelfth year of Ahaz. Therefore the twentieth year of Jotham and the twelfth year of Ahaz must have been the same; or, in other words, Ahaz must have occupied the throne with his father the last nine years of the latter's reign. There is no other direct proof that this was the fact; but it may be implied in the two statements, 2 Kgs. xv., 37; xvi., 5, where it speaks of the invasion of Rezin and Pekah as occurring under both Jotham and Ahaz. We have then:

A. Div. 192. Ahaz is associated with his father on the throne of Judah.

A. Div. 201. Jotham dies and Ahaz rules alone. In this year, the seventeenth year of Pekah closed (2 Kgs. xvi., 1.).

A. Div. 204. Hoshea slays Pekah and ascends the throne of Israel. During this year the twelfth year of Ahaz closes and the thirteenth of Ahaz, or the twentieth of Jotham (had he lived), begins.

A. Div. 208. Hezekiah becomes king of Judah.

A. Div. 213. Samaria is captured.

This gives 134 years between Ahab and the capture of Samaria, which is just the number according to the Assyrian Canon.

Let us turn now to the Assyrian inscriptions. Two lines of a mutilated fragment of Tiglath-pilezer are as follows:

and their furniture I sent to Assyria. Pekah their king and Hoshea to the kingdom over them I appointed their tribute I received and

This undoubtedly refers to the overthrow of Pekah and the accession of Hoshea to the throne of Israel. The statement of Geo. Smith (Assyrian Canon,

p. 177) is that this event cannot be later than 729 B. C. Take this as the true date, and the capture of Samaria would be nine years later, or 720. These dates are confirmed by the inscriptions of Sargon. This king states that in the beginning of his reign (i. e., his accession year) he besieged and captured Samaria. He also makes a reference to Samaria in his second year in connection with Sibahe, general of Egypt (Probably the So of 2 Kgs. xvii., 4). If we interpret these events with Smith, Sargon, in the beginning of his reign, which was the last year of Shalmaneser, began the siege of Samaria, or rather carried on the siege begun by Shalmaneser, and in his second year he captured the city and carried off its inhabitants. The second year of Sargon is 720 B. C., which agrees with the date formed above for Hoshea. Here, then, we have data for comparison. The 213th year of the separation is the year of the capture of Samaria, or 720 B. C. From these the other dates are easily computed, and we have :

- B. C. 854. Ahab is slain in battle.
- B. C. 843. Jehu ascends the throne of Israel.
- B. C. 797. Amaziah ascends the throne of Judah.
- B. C. 784. Azariah begins to reign in Judah.
- B. C. 782. Jeroboam II., of Israel, begins to reign.
- B. C. 761. Menahem ascends the throne of Israel.
- B. C. 741. Ahaz is associated with his father.
- B. C. 720. Samaria is captured.

If now we examine the particular references to Palastine found in the Assyrian records, we shall find that they fit very closely with the Bible accounts of the same periods. In the year 854 B. C. Shalmaneser II. claims to have defeated Ben-hadad and twelve kings of the Hittites, taking 2,000 chariots and 10,000 men of Ahab king of Israel. Taking this statement with the biblical account of the closing years of Ahab, we have this as the probable order of events. After Ahab had defeated Ben-hadad the second time, he made a covenant with him. As a part of this covenant he is Ben-hadad's ally, and goes with him against the king of Assyria. In this war he is badly defeated. Seizing the opportunity of Jehoshaphat's visit to him soon after this, he attacks his former ally and is slain. His defeat by Shalmaneser and his battle with Ben-hadad could easily have occurred in the same year, i. e., 854 B. C.*

During the next ten years the king of Assyria claims to have gained a number of victories over Ben-hadad and the twelve kings of the Hittites.

In the year 842 B. C. Shalmaneser claims to have overthrown Hazael of Damascus, and to have received tribute from Jehu, the son of Omri. This would be the year following the one in which Jehu began to reign. This also accords with the time of Hazael's usurpation as given in the Bible.

During the next twenty years there are a few references in the Assyrian inscriptions to the reign of Syria, but none expressly affecting either Israel or Judah.

An undated inscription of Rimmon-Nirari states that he defeated Mariha, king of Syria, and exacted tribute from Omri, Philistia, Edom, etc. Smith thinks that this expedition occurred about 773-772, but this was at the close of the reign of

* If the date given by Josephus for the war between Amaziah and Jehoash be neglected, the chronology may be compressed a year, and this would bring Ahab's defeat and the tribute from Jehu each one year earlier. The tribute would thus have been given in Jehu's accession year. The same result may be reached by keeping Josephus' date and compressing one year at the point of the accession of Amaziah.

Shalmaneser III. and the beginning of that of Assur-Daan. It seems unlikely that Rimmon-Nirari was reigning also at this time. Shalmaneser III. ascended the throne 783 B. C. This is the year before Jeroboam II. ascended the throne of Israel. Rimmon-Nirari ascended the throne 812 B. C. If this expedition occurred between the years 800 and 783, which is given by Smith as a possible date, it was during the reign of Jehoash. The Bible states (2 Kgs. XIII., 25) that Jehoash defeated Ben-hadad three times. This inscription of Rimmon-Nirari, by its account of the breaking down of the power of the king of Syria, explains how Jehoash could accomplish this, and how Jeroboam could extend his rule over Damascus itself,—providing the Ben-hadad of the Bible is the same as the Mariha of the inscriptions, and it is certainly possible that the same king was known by one name to the Israelites and by another to the Assyrians, or that Mariha was simply a title.

Before and after this, or from 817 to 773 B. C., Assyria was engaged for the most part in wars in Babylon, Media, Armenia, etc. Thus Hazael and his son Ben-hadad had been left free to harass Israel from the latter part of Jehu's reign (2 Kgs. x., 32) to some time in the reign of Jehoash (2 Kgs. XIII., 3); which, after the subjugation of Syria by Rimmon-Nirari, the west was again left to itself, and Jehoash and Jeroboam were free to extend the power of Israel over Damascus (2 Kgs. XIV., 28).

In the year 773 B. C. an expedition was made against Damascus. This was the last year of Shalmaneser III. and about the ninth year of Jeroboam II. It may have been during this expedition that the attack occurred upon Beth-arbel by "Shalman" mentioned in Hos. x., 14.

According to this arrangement of the chronology, Assyria had wars with Syria just before and just after the kingdom of Israel, under Jeroboam, conquered Damascus. Here may be an explanation of the intrigues with Assyria for which Hosea denounces Israel.

For some reason the kingdom of Israel appears to have been without a king, in Samaria at least, for about eight years after the death of Jeroboam II.; while Judah, under Azariah, attained a prominence nearly equal to that lately held by Israel. At the end of this period, Zechariah rules for six months in Samaria. About the same time, 763-759, Assyria was busy with rebellions at home. Whether these rebellions had any connection with the appearance of Zechariah in Samaria or not, cannot be stated, though some connection is possible.

During the year 755 there was an expedition to Hadrach, near Damascus, and during the following year an expedition occurred against Arpad, in the same region. The first of these may have been under either Assur-Daan or Assur-Nirari. The second was under Assur-Nirari. 755 and 754 correspond, nearly, to the seventh and eighth years of Menahem. It was probably during one of these expeditions that the attack on Israel mentioned in 2 Kgs. xv., 19, took place. It is stated in the Bible that Pul, king of Assyria, made this attack. It is now pretty generally agreed that Pul and Tiglath-pileser are the same. The king did not begin to reign until 745, or eight years after the second of these expeditions; but he may have been the Assyrian general who conducted these expeditions, and called king because leading general or by anticipation, as, without much doubt, was the case with Sennacherib a few years later. Those chronologies which do not recognize a co-reign of Ahaz and Jotham put Menahem's

death so far back that it is very unlikely that Tiglath-pileser could have been the Assyrian general during Menahem's reign.

The next mention of Palestine is in the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser. These inscriptions are very mutilated. In one which apparently mentions events which took place in his eighth year, he speaks of Rezin of Syria, Menahem of Samaria, and Azariah of Judah. Tiglath-pileser did not begin to reign until six years after the death of Menahem, according to this chronology, and three years after the death of Azariah. It is not necessary, however, to suppose that Tiglath-pileser actually took tribute from Menahem. It may have been a mere boast of the Assyrian king, owing to the fact that, as a general, he took tribute from Menahem, he being ignorant of the change of kings, or, if the view taken above in regard to Pul be incorrect, the boast may have been founded on the fact that a previous king had taken tribute from this king of Israel (Smith's view). We find Sennacherib, thirty-six years after, or fifty-two years after the death of Menahem, claiming the submission of "Menahem of Samaria." In this case it could not possibly have been Menahem and it may not have been in the case of Tiglath-pileser. The same may be true of the reference to Azariah, though here a different explanation is probable. In this inscription Tiglath-pileser speaks of reconquering certain districts which had revolted to Azariah, among which were nineteen districts of Hamath. According to the Bible Azariah extended his rule far beyond the limits of Judah. The inscription of Tiglath-pileser may refer to the reconquering of some of this territory which still remained to Judah for a few years under Jotham. If the inscription refers to the conquering of Azariah also (it is not certain), it may be a mere boast founded on his previous acts as a general, or Jotham may have been the king, the change of crowns being unknown to the Assyrians. This is the only one of the Assyrian inscriptions accessible to the writer of this paper, which does not clearly coincide with the Biblical chronology presented above, and here there is no necessary discrepancy.

Another inscription of Tiglath-pileser, to which Smith gives a probable date of 732, represents Jehoahaz of Judah as giving tribute to the Assyrian king. This Jehoahaz is undoubtedly Ahaz, and the year 732 is the year in which Ahaz began to reign alone. This is also probably the expedition mentioned in 2 Kgs. xvi., 7, when Tiglath-pileser helped Ahaz against Pekah and Rezin, and also, according to the Bible and the inscription, placed Ahaz himself under tribute.

The inscription of Tiglath-pileser in regard to Pekah and Hoshea has already been noticed. So have also those of Sargon in regard to Samaria. In 711 the Assyrians made an expedition to Ashdod, and during the same year the Assyrian records speak of Judah's intriguing with Pharaoh. 711 is the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, or rather the one in which the fourteenth year of Hezekiah ends. The following year, according to Sargon, Merodach-baladan revolted at Babylon after having been sending, for several years, to the surrounding countries, instigating them to revolt against Assyria. This fully accords with the biblical account, as Sennacherib may have acted as Sargon's general.

In this discussion I have accepted Smith's dates in regard to Sargon and Samaria. Prof. W. J. Beecher, D. D., in *THE OLD TESTAMENT STUDENT*, Vol. V., No. 3, p. 120, gives a different arrangement of these events, making the chronology two years longer. If this is the true interpretation, the only change it necessitates in the above chronology is the lowering, two years, of the date of the

conspiracy against Amaziah and Azariah's accession.* This would bring these events in the year Jehoash died, and make Jeroboam's reign two years longer.

These are all the inscriptions which need to be examined, as the later ones present no serious difficulties. We thus find that there is a very close correspondence, with one exception, between the Bible and the Assyrian inscriptions examined, and this one exception is not necessarily an exception, and is no better explained by any other chronological arrangement. If this arrangement is the true one, all the numbers given in the Book of Kings, from the death of Solomon at least, are correct and need no change whatever.

In closing, it may be added that this chronology gives about 393 years between the revolt of Israel under Jeroboam I. and the return from captivity in the first year of Cyrus. This corresponds very closely with the 390 years of Ezekiel (Ezek. iv., 5).

HOW WE SHOULD STUDY THE BIBLE.

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Not that the writer has anything novel to communicate in this direction. Nevertheless, it is good to have our pure minds occasionally stirred up in way of remembering old lessons, however well we know them, and are established in them.

1. *Study the Bible personally.*—We must do our own investigating. I am not sure but that sometimes we are more hurt than helped by the immense amount of commentaries and "lesson helps." In all events, we must do our own thinking, evolving for ourselves what God has involved in his own Word. For the Bible is inexhaustible, having for the true student one meaning to-day, and another meaning to-morrow; and both meanings are true. In the Dresden gallery of royal gems there is a silver egg: touch a spring, and it opens, disclosing a golden chicken; touch the chicken, and it opens, disclosing a crown studded with gems; touch the crown, and it opens, disclosing a magnificent diamond ring. So it is with the Bible: as we study it, we touch successive springs, disclosing exhaustless treasures. For so Augustine says: *Habet Scriptura haustus primos, habet secundos, habet tertios.* Again: we must compare Scripture with Scripture: for the Bible is its own best commentator. We must study the Gospels in light of each other; for they constitute a beautiful specimen of divine mosaic, complementing and interpreting each other. So also the Acts of the Apostles often interpret in a striking way the Epistles of Paul. And we must study the Old Testament not less than the New; for both Covenants form one divine unit or rather unity. As Augustine finely says: *Novum Testamentum in Vetere latet, Vetus in Novo patet.* We must study Genesis in light of Revelation, Exodus in light of Gospels, Leviticus in light of Hebrews, Chronicles in light of Acts, Psalms in light of Epistles, Ezekiel in light of Apocalypse, and *vice versa.* Again: we ought to master the subtle principles which lie at the foundation of Hebrew poetry and

* The longest arrangement of the chronology at the date of the accession of Amaziah will coincide with Prof. Beecher's arrangement without changing the date of Azariah's accession.