

Summation

In our study we have considered and analyzed the evidence surrounding twelve different sabbath years and compared that evidence with four sabbath cycle systems. The results of this examination prove the following:

The ancient sabbath year began in the spring with the Hebrew month called Abib (Nisan), roughly April of the Gregorian calendar year. This fact is not only testified to in Scriptures but acknowledged by the first century C.E. Jewish writers Philo and Josephus. It is supported by the episode of John Hyrcanus, who shortly after the death of his father in the month of Shebat (Jan./Feb.) was forced to break off the siege of Dagon because of the arrival of a sabbath year. It is also supported with the history of the siege of Jerusalem by Herod, who after taking control of the city on the tenth of Tebeth (Dec./Jan.) was faced with the circumstance that, due to Jewish custom, the land had to remain unplanted because the sabbath year “was approaching.”

The evidence also shows that the ancient Israelite practice of beginning the year with Abib (Nisan) 1 continued with the Jews up until the time of the Bar Kochba revolt (133–135 C.E.), as demonstrated by the coins and documents from both the first and second Jewish revolts against Rome. Only after that time did the rabbis shift the formal beginning of their year from Abib in the spring to Tishri in the fall. These facts confirm that systems “B” and “C,” which demand that the sabbath year begin with the first of Tishri (Sept./Oct.) in the fall, are inaccurate from their conception.

Our investigation directly confirms the dates for nine sabbath years (see Chart B). Every year is based upon an Abib (Nisan) reckoning:

- 701/700 B.C.E. (Jubilee 700/699 B.C.E.)
- 456/455 B.C.E. (Jubilee 455/454 B.C.E.)
- 162/161 B.C.E.
- 134/133 B.C.E.
- 43/42 B.C.E.
- 36/35 B.C.E.
- 56/57 C.E.
- 133/134 C.E. (Jubilee 134/135 C.E.)
- 140/141 C.E.

Three more sabbath years are indirectly established:

- 22/21 B.C.E.
- 42/43 C.E.
- 70/71 C.E.

Systems “B” and “D” are clearly proven to be in error, not only because the dates for nine of the sabbath years can be firmly placed within another cycle but because four of the years required by those systems to be sabbaths are disqualified by the evidence. The Jews planted or harvested crops either within that year or within the six month period just prior to the Abib (Nisan) 1 beginning of the year—strictly forbidden under Jewish Talmudic law.

Namely, crops were harvested in the summer of 37 B.C.E., while Herod laid siege to Jerusalem, and in the spring of 23 B.C.E.—during the 15th year of Herod—when Herod sent his own men into the fields to help with the harvest. In the winter of 40/41 C.E., meanwhile, during the six month period forbidden by Jewish Talmudic law to plant crops, the Jews not only are found planting but were expected to bring forth a bountiful crop in the next spring for the Roman empire. Similarly, in the winter of 68/69 B.C.E. the Idumaeans, devout Jews by religion and custom, had cultivated their fields.

The attack upon the Jewish factional leader Simon ben Gioras by the Zealots, followed “not long after” by Simon’s own invasion of Idumaea and his assault upon Jerusalem during the winter of 68/69 C.E., also eliminate system “B.” It was not until the year 69/70 C.E., Nisan reckoning, that Simon seized the reigns of government in Jerusalem and began dating coins by “the Redemption of Zion.” Only then did his movement become recognized as messianic.¹ In 68/69 C.E., the year before Simon seized power, it would have been impossible for either Simon or his Jewish Zealot opponents to muster support among the people of Judaea if they willingly broke the sabbath year laws against offensive military activity. The year 68/69 C.E., Tishri reckoning, therefore, could not have been a sabbath year.

Our research also established the harmony and the reliability of the ancient accounts. The exercise by the advocates of systems “B,” “C,” and “D” to find fault with and to discredit the relevant pre-second century C.E. sources proves to be an empty attempt to force those records to conform with their preconceived sabbath cycle systems.

System “A” also provides a strong background for understanding numerous historical episodes in Israelite history. It explains why the Israelites did not go to war in certain years or why there were some famines which were of particular severity. As one example, Josephus informs us that towards the end of the eighteen month siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar—which occurred during the reign of King Zedekiah and lasted from Tebeth (Dec./Jan.) 10 of 589/588 B.C.E. until Tammuz (June/July) 9 of 587/586 B.C.E.²—the city was exhausted by famine.³ At first there would seem to be no logical reason for Judah to suffer such a harsh famine in only eighteen months of siege. Samaria, the capital of Israel, as a comparison, had earlier endured a three year siege by the Assyrian empire before they were defeated,⁴ and the records make no mention of a famine.

The severe famine at the time of the siege of Jerusalem, accordingly, is better understood by the fact that the year 589/588 B.C.E. was a sabbath

¹ See above Chap. XXIX, pp. 350f.

² 2 Kings, 25:1–3; Jer., 52:1–6; Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:7:4–10:8:2.

³ Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:7:4, 10:8:1; cf. Jer., 38:2, 52:6; 2 Kings, 25:3.

⁴ 2 Kings, 18:9–10; Jos., *Antiq.*, 9:14:1.

year. By the start of the siege in the tenth month of that year, the food supply in Jerusalem had already been greatly reduced due to the fact that the Judahites had not planted or harvested any crops during the nine previous months. The reason for the harshness of the famine in only eighteen months of siege now becomes apparent.

Another example comes with the record of a “very great famine” in Judaea during the 151st Seleucid year (161/160 B.C.E.).⁵ As demonstrated in our text, the 150th Seleucid was a sabbath year. But this would not explain the famine during the next year, when crops could be planted and harvested. Yet it is explained by a Jubilee year, which according to our Jubilee cycle would have occurred in the 151st Seleucid year. This Jubilee was the last one celebrated by the Jews, since the Pharisees became politically dominant by the arrival of the next Jubilee year and had suspended the practice.⁶

Based upon the strong evidence presented in this study, it is our recommendation that the three sabbath cycle systems popularly proposed today, which we have labeled systems “B,” “C,” and “D,” be set aside, and system “A” be formally adopted as the correct and proven sabbath cycle. Under this construction the next sabbath year, as of this writing, will begin in the spring (Abib) of 1995 C.E., and then a Jubilee year in the spring (Abib) of 1996 C.E. This oncoming Jubilee year is also the beginning of the seventieth complete Jubilee cycle since the entrance of the Israelites into the Promised Land under Yahushua (Joshua) the son of Nun. It will end with the Jubilee year of 2045/2046 C.E. (Abib reckoning).⁷

יהוה יהוה be with you⁸

⁵ 1 Macc., 9:23f, cf. 9:1–18.

⁶ See above Chap. I, p. 15, n. 29.

⁷ The first complete Jubilee cycle observed by the Israelites after their conquest and settlement of the land of Kanaan (the Promised Land) began with the year 1386/1385 B.C.E. and ended with the Jubilee year of 1337/1336 B.C.E. (Abib reckoning). For a detailed presentation of the evidence verifying these dates see our forthcoming text entitled *Israelite Chronology*.

⁸ יהוה יהוה is the ancient palaeo-Hebrew form of the sacred name Yahweh.