

divisible by 49 (the Jubilee cycle), because both dates fall on a Jubilee year. But, how many Jubilee cycles intervene between these two events? – The Coming Millennial Sabbath – Part II, Tim Warner, Copyright © July, 2009, answersinrevelation.org

As we have seen, the text of Leviticus 25 describes both the grouping of 7-year sabbatical cycles (or weeks of years) and the grouping of seven 7-year cycles in a jubilee cycle. Daniel's prophecy seems to enlist both types of Jewish calendar cycles in its prophetic timetable.

From this biblical data we might supposed that the beginning of the 69 weeks of years before the Messiah would start in the first year of a new jubilee cycle (containing 49 years or 7 weeks of years.) However, as Warner notes at the conclusion of the above quote, we would need to know how many jubilee cycles occurred between Ezekiel's vision and the decree mentioned in Daniel 9:25.

A conventional chronology of this period of history would indicate that there were 128 years between the desolation of Jerusalem and the Temple and Artaxerxes' decree to Ezra. We know that Ezekiel had a vision in the beginning of the 14th year of this period and that this year may have been a jubilee year. This means that Ezekiel's vision occurred in the Hebrew year that began in the Fall of 573 BC (586 BC minus 573 BC equals 13 years). (Ezekiel's vision occurred in the beginning of the 14th year after 13 years had been completed.) Consequently, according to conventional history, 573 BC would be the jubilee year that may be indicated in Ezekiel 40. This would mean that the decree of Daniel 9:25 should occur within a number of jubilee cycles from this year.

Adding 100 years (for two jubilee cycles) to the conventional date of Ezekiel's vision (573 BC) would result in the year 473 BC. This is, in fact, 17 years before the conventional date for the decree of Artaxerxes I given to Ezra (458-457 BC.) (For reference it is 30 years ahead of the conventional date for the authorization of Nehemiah in 444 BC, which the above quote indicates Warner used in his calculations of Daniel 9.)

References to the jubilee cycles in Ezekiel 40 and Daniel 9 would indicate that the conventional date of Artaxerxes I's decree may be in error by 17 years. In other words, the conventional duration of the period from Jerusalem's destruction to the decree (of Artaxerxes I to Ezra) would contain an extra 17 years. There would be 17 years too many. Therefore, an adjustment which reduces the count of the period of these years may be necessary. Since this adjustment would be biblically based, we may want to include this possibility in our count of biblical world history. As we consider this reduction there are a few related items that should be mentioned.

First, biblical data on the genealogies of individuals who lived during this period may be helpful in determining how many years transpired between the destruction of Jerusalem and Artaxerxes I's decree to Ezra.

In this respect, Ezra may be of particular use. His genealogy is provided in the biblical texts where it is noted that he was a son of Seraiah, the chief priest.

Ezra 7:1 Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, **Ezra the son (01121) of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah,**

However, as Tim Warner has observed, Seraiah was killed by Nebuchadnezzar shortly after the city and the Temple were burned.

2 Kings 25:18 And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the door: 19 And out of the city he took an officer that was set over the men of war, and five men of them that were in the king's presence, which were found in the city, and the principal scribe of the host, which mustered the people of the land, and threescore men of the people of the land *that were* found in the city: 20 **And Nebuzaradan captain of the guard took these, and brought them to the king of Babylon to Riblah:** 21 **And the king of Babylon smote them, and slew them at Riblah in the land of Hamath.** So Judah was carried away out of their land.

If Ezra was the son of Seraiah, he would have had to have been born prior to the destruction of the Temple and the subsequent death of his father. This would have been at some point near 586 BC, the conventional date of the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem.

Judaism - In 587/586 BCE the doom prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel came true. **Rebellious Jerusalem was reduced by Nebuchadnezzar, the Temple was burnt, and much of Judah's population dispersed or deported to Babylonia.** - Encyclopedia Britannica

Diaspora - The first significant Jewish Diaspora was the result of the Babylonian Exile (q.v.) of 586 BC. After the Babylonians conquered the Kingdom of Judah, part of the Jewish population was deported into slavery. - Encyclopedia Britannica

Jerusalem - Jerusalem became the spiritual and political capital of the Hebrews. **In 586 B.C. it fell to the Babylonians, and the Temple was destroyed.** - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

Standard chronologies place Ezra's return to Jerusalem in 458-457 BC, the 7th year of Artaxerxes I's reign. But according to the Book of Nehemiah, Ezra was still alive at the dedication of the rebuilt walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 12:26.) This event took place after the 20th year of Artaxerxes I when Nehemiah was authorized to serve as the governor of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2:1-8.) As we have seen, Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem is conventionally dated to 444 BC.

If Ezra was born before the year 586 BC, he would have been around 129 years old when he traveled back to Jerusalem (in 458-457 BC.) And he would have been 142 years old at the time Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem in 444. As Tim

Warner points out, notions that Ezra was over 140 years old seem more than a little unlikely. Clearly, Ezra was not over 140 years old.

This leaves us with two options. Option one would require that the conventional history of this period is too long and must be reduced in order to accommodate the historical details of the life and times of Ezra. Option two would be that Ezra was not actually born before the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple and killed Seraiah.

If Ezra was Seraiah's son, this second option must be discarded as impossible. However, we believe that it is entirely possible and reasonable that Ezra was not Seraiah's son, but rather his grandson. Several biblical facts may support this option.

First, the biblical term "ben" (Strong's number 01121) is used to describe Ezra's relationship to Seraiah.

Ezra 7:1 Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, **Ezra the son (01121) of Seraiah, the son (01121) of Azariah, the son (01121) of Hilkiah,**

This Hebrew word does not always refer to a son, but is often used to refer to a male descendent of more than one generation such as a grandson.

1121 **ben**

TWOT - 254 from 01129

Part of Speech

n m

Outline of Biblical Usage

1) son, **grandson**, child, member of a group

a) son, male child

b) **grandson**

The Aramaic equivalent ("bar," Strong's number 01247) corresponds to the Hebrew word "ben." "Bar" is used in this way in regards to Belshazzar, king of Babylon in Daniel 5:22.

Daniel 5:22 **And thou his son (1247), O Belshazzar,** hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this;

Belshazzar was, in fact, a descendant of Nebuchadnezzar, but he was not his son. Instead, Belshazzar is commonly thought to be Nebuchadnezzar's grandson through his daughter Nitocris.

Belshazzar - Though he is referred to in the Book of Daniel as the son of Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian inscriptions indicate that he was in fact **the eldest son of Nabonidus**, who was king of Babylon from 555 to 539, **and of Nitocris, who was perhaps a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar.** – Encyclopedia

Britannica

Nitocris of Babylon – “Nitocris of Babylon” circa (550 BC), was a **queen of Babylon, either married to Nebuchadnezzar II or daughter of Nebuchadnezzar II.** – wikipedia.org

Belshazzar - Herodotus refers to the last king of Babylon as Labynetos and claims that this was also the name of his father. Herodotus says that the mother of the younger Labynetos was the queen Nitocris whom he portrays as the dominant ruler. She is commonly thought to have been the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar. Labynetos is generally understood to be a garbled form of the name Nabonidus and the younger Labynetos is often identified with Belshazzar. – wikipedia.org

In the same way, Zechariah is referred to in Ezra 5:1 and 6:14 as the “ben” of Iddo.

Ezra 5:1 Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and **Zechariah the son (1247) of Iddo**, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them.

Ezra 6:14 And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and **Zechariah the son (1247) of Iddo**. And they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.

However, in his own book, Zechariah identifies himself as the “ben” of Berechiah the “ben” of Iddo. According to Zechariah then, he was the son of Berechiah and the grandson of Iddo.

Zechariah 1:1 In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto **Zechariah, the son (1121) of Berechiah, the son (1121) of Iddo** the prophet, saying,

Zechariah 1:7 Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Sebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto **Zechariah, the son (1121) of Berechiah, the son (1121) of Iddo** the prophet, saying,

A comparison of Ezra and Zechariah shows that the Book of Ezra may use “ben” to refer to “grandson” as is the case with Zechariah. This conclusion is further supported by the fact that Ezra’s own genealogy uses “ben” to refer to grandson rather than son.

Nehemiah 10:2 reports that Seraiah was the son of Hilkiah.

Nehemiah 11:11 Seraiah the son (01121) of Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, *was* the ruler of the house of God.

But, we already know from Ezra 7:1 that Azariah was Seraiah's father and that Hilkiah was, in fact, Seraiah's grandfather.

Ezra 7:1 Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, **Ezra the son (01121) of Seraiah, the son (01121) of Azariah, the son (01121) of Hilkiah,**

With these biblical facts in mind, it is reasonable to consider that Ezra may, in fact, have been Seraiah's grandson and not his son. If this is the case, then Ezra would not have to have been born before 586 BC and would not, therefore, have been 142 years old by the time Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem. Instead, if Ezra was Seraiah's grandson or great-grandson, he could have been born in exile in Babylon several decades after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. Such a scenario is very reasonable and would reduce Ezra's age by 30 years or more.

For instance, let us suppose that Ezra was Seraiah's grandson and that he was born 30 years after the destruction of Jerusalem (and death of Seraiah.) Ezra would then have been born at about the year 556 BC. He would still have been nearly 100 years old when he traveled to Jerusalem in 457 BC and almost 113 years old when Nehemiah arrived in 444 BC. However, we would not need to think that Ezra lived much beyond this. The dedication of the rebuilt walls of Jerusalem seems to have taken place within a short period of time and Ezra may not even have lived to be 120 years old. A scenario in which Ezra dies before age 120 is certainly more reasonable than the alternate idea where Ezra lives to be over 142 years old.

These estimates for Ezra's age do not differ much from those provided by Warner in his earlier paper *The Coming Millennial Sabbath – Part II, Bible Chronology, from Creation to the Second Coming*. See page 17 of that article for Warner's calculations on the age of Ezra.

The challenge created by Ezra's age may at first seem multiplied by a similar fact presented in Ezra 3. Ezra 3:12 refers to the time "when the foundation of this house was laid" and seen by "many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house." As indicated earlier, the completion of the Temple is conventionally dated to the sixth year of Darius in the year 516-515 BC. In order to be old enough to remember seeing the Temple, these men would probably been at least 5-10 years old before it was destroyed. With the Temple's destruction conventionally dated to 586 BC, there would have to be "many" men at least 80 years or more in age if they survived to see the rebuilt Temple's completion in 516-515 BC. However, 80 years does not seem unreasonable, particularly when compared to the 140 years potentially ascribed to Ezra. Moreover, Ezra 3 does not require these men to live until the Temple's completion in 516-515 BC in Darius' sixth year, but only to the time

when its foundation was laid sometime before the reign of Darius. This would subtract at least 6 years from their respective ages. Consequently, these men would not need to be much more than 70.

In conclusion, the age of Ezra does not provide a necessary warrant to reconsider or drastically alter the conventional timeline. However, the possible reference to a jubilee year in Ezekiel 40:1 may provide some warrant to alter the chronology. The potential alteration would mean reducing the conventional 128 years by some 17 years so that the total time from the destruction of the Temple to Artaxerxes' decree to Ezra was only 113 years. (Reducing the duration of this period to fit with the Jubilee cycles may also reduce the age of Ezra.)

These considerations provide some indication that conventional chronologies constructed from non-biblical data sources may not be fully reliable regarding their conception of the amount of time contained in this period. In the next section we will present details regarding how conventional chronologies are compiled for this period using non-biblical data. As we do we will collect additional reasons that support the need for a purely biblical chronology that doesn't employ non-biblical source material.

Period Five: The Destruction of the Temple to the Decree of Daniel 9 (Part 3) *Potential Difficulties with Secular Chronologies*

In this section we will discuss potential deficiencies with using secular chronologies to help calculate the duration of time contained in the period from the Babylonian destruction of the Temple to the occurrence of the decree mentioned in Daniel 9:25.

The first point we will note is that the standard rabbinical timeline for this period is well-known to be much shorter than the conventional chronology.

Wikipedia.org has an informative article on this subject entitled "Missing Years." According to the article, there is a difference of 165 years between the conventional chronology and the traditional Hebrew chronology of the period from the destruction of the first Temple and the destruction of the second Temple. The conventional, secular account is the longer of the two chronologies.

Missing Years – The missing years in the Hebrew calendar refer to a **discrepancy of some 165 years between the traditional Hebrew dating for the destruction of the First Temple and the modern secular dating for it (586 BCE)...** - wikipedia.org

A look into the discussion of these differences will provide us with some useful and relevant insight into the construction of non-biblical historical chronologies.

Wikipedia's article provides explanations offered by proponents of both chronologies as to deficiencies in the other calendar. Of particular interest to our study is the chronology of the Babylonian and early Persian kings prior to the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

The summary of criticisms for the conventional chronology notes that the Persian period (from 538-332 BC) is largely dependant upon the dates provided in the Canon of Kings (also known as Ptolemy's Canon or the Royal Canon.) According to the criticisms cited in wikipedia's article, potential problems with Ptolemy's Canon of Persian kings do exist. Included among these potential inaccuracies are:

1. That information provided in ancient texts requires some interpretation due to the fragmented nature of the source material. This invites questions concerning the ordering (and identification) of Persian rulers.
2. The names and titles of Persian rulers are not clearly explained in the available Persian inscriptions inviting questions about the proper identification of the Persian rulers.
3. Potential forgeries, duplications, and false additions to the list of Persian rulers.
4. Median and Persian rulers who are conventionally counted as ruling exclusively may have actually been contemporaries with overlapping reigns.

Missing Years – The astronomical data used by the secular historians has been criticized. Physicist and science historian Robert R. Newton has found [3] Ptolemy's work to contain errors and fraudulent observations. (Bickerman questions if the Royal Canon is actually the work of Ptolemy.) Dolan notes that Babylonian records of astronomical events are subject to interpretation as they do not clearly distinguish between eclipses and weather phenomena; moreover eclipses may have been missed or their extent misrecorded as a result of observation conditions. Dolan also notes that **the dates of ancient texts have also been the subject of interpretation due to broken texts and uncertainty about ordering.** Aaronson points out that **the Persian inscriptions consist only of names and titles with virtually no explanatory content, and that the identification of the individuals mentioned is also a matter of interpretation.** (Aaronson also notes that some ancient Persian sources, such as **two of the inscriptions of Arsames and Ariaramnes, have subsequently been revealed to be forgeries.**) Aaronson and Heifetz note that **the Greek sources contradict each other and the archaeological sources and reconciling the difference involves additional interpretation.** They argue that the sources can be interpreted in a manner consistent with the traditional dating as well as with the secular dating. **They consider the reigns of certain Median and Persian monarchs to have been overlapping whereas the secular dating counts them as non-overlapping. They also argue that certain kings named in Greek sources who have been counted as separate monarchs are in fact the same individual** - in particular they argue that only one Alexander of Macedonia fought

a king Darius of Persia, not two Alexanders as the secular dating requires. –
wikipedia.org

In his previous article on biblical chronology, Tim Warner also drew a similar conclusion regarding the exactness of conventional, secular understanding of the chronology of the Persian kings.

The reliability of the secular data, particularly the dates and list of Persian kings in Ptolemy's Canon, (the primary source for the Persian period), are suspect. – The Coming Millennial Sabbath – Part II, Tim Warner, Copyright © July, 2009, answersinrevelation.org

In that article, Warner provided additional sources who concur with the criticisms mentioned in wikipedia's article. In addition, the scholars Warner quotes also note that some ancient kings are known to have exaggerated their term of rule as a matter of self-importance. Among these other issues, Warner's sources point out that Ptolemy's Canon does not recognize co-regencies or overlapping reigns. (See Warner, The Coming Millennial Sabbath – Part II, p. 19.)

The absence of co-regencies is a known feature of the Canon of Kings.

Canon of Kings - The Canon only deals in whole years. Thus, monarchs who reigned for less than one year are not listed, and **only one monarch is listed in any year with multiple monarchs.** – wikipedia.org

It should be recognized that the absence of recording co-regencies in the Canon of King's does seem to conflict with information provided in other ancient artifacts and documents. It is a generally well-known fact that co-regencies were commonly practiced among Babylonian, Median, and Persian royalty. There are numerous known historical instances when a son or relative ruled as co-regent or vassal under or alongside another ruler over a different, but equally important and powerful city or province. To the people who lived in that province, the local ruler was often identified as king.

Below are examples of the various practices among the Babylonian, Median, and Persian rulers that may provide some difficulties for ancient historians to construct a perfectly exact chronology of their reigns.

Before the Medes and Persians became the prominent power in the region their Babylonian contemporaries practiced co-regency.

Nabonidus - After a popular rising led by the priests of Marduk, chief god of the city, Nabonidus, who favoured the moon god Sin, made his son Belshazzar coregent and spent much of his reign in Arabia." - Encyclopedia Britannica

Nabonidus - He was not of Nebuchadnezzar's family, and it is possible that he usurped the throne...Cuneiform records indicate that Belshazzar was

Nabonidus' son and his coregent during the last years of Babylon." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

Belshazzar - When Nabonidus went into exile (550), he entrusted Belshazzar with the throne and the major part of his army." - Encyclopedia Britannica

The practice of co-regency did not end with the Babylonians. Cambyses II, the oldest son of Cyrus the Great was regent of Babylon and co-regent with his father Cyrus, king of the Medes and Persians.

Cambyses II - flourished 6th century BC Achaemenid king of Persia (reigned 529-522 BC), who conquered Egypt in 525; **he was the eldest son of King Cyrus II the Great** by Cassandane, daughter of a fellow Achaemenid. **During his father's lifetime Cambyses was in charge of Babylonian affairs.** In 538 he performed the ritual duties of a Babylonian king at the important New Year festival, and **in 530, before Cyrus set out on his last campaign, he was appointed regent in Babylon."** - Encyclopedia Britannica

Prior to the time of Cyrus the Great's rule over Persia, the Persian kings had served as chief ministers and vassals under the Median kings. After this, the Medes served alongside the Persian rulers. The two were often featured together in royal documents.

Cyrus II - He not only conciliated the Medes but united them with the Persians in a kind of dual monarchy of the Medes and Persians. Cyrus had to borrow the traditions of kingship from the Medes, who had ruled an empire when the Persians were merely their vassals. A Mede was probably made an adviser to the Achaemenian king, as a sort of chief minister; on later reliefs at Persepolis, a capital of the Achaemenian kings from the time of Darius, **a Mede is frequently depicted together with the great king."** - Encyclopedia Britannica

Prior to his becoming the chief ruler of Media and Persia, Cyrus the Great himself served as the ruler of Persia under his grandfather Astyages, king of the Medes.

Cyrus II - Astyages, the king of the Medes and overlord of the Persians, gave his daughter in marriage to his vassal in Persis, a prince called Cambyses. From this marriage Cyrus was born. – Encyclopedia Britannica

Persian Empire - 556-530 THE REIGN OF CYRUS THE GREAT. On the death of his father, **Cyrus II became the king of the Persians. In 553, Cyrus led a revolt against his grandfather Astyages."** - The Encyclopedia of World History, 2001

Persian Empire - In 553, Cyrus led a revolt against his grandfather Astyages. Although he suffered some early defeats, **the Median army eventually went over to Cyrus,** and he took Ecbatana in 549. **Cyrus now ruled the entire Median Empire."** - The Encyclopedia of World History. 2001.

Cyrus II - Cyrus overthrew Astyages, king of the Medes, sometime between 559 B.C. and 549 B.C. He entered Ecbatana and, **taking over the Median kingdom**, began to build a great empire after the Assyrian model." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001

In addition, the bloodlines of the Median and Persian kings were heavily intertwined. Cyrus himself was a descendant of both Median and Persian royalty. He is known and identified by various sources as either a Mede, a Persian, or both.

The Book of Daniel – Furthermore, kings commonly took dual titles and **Nabonidus, Cyrus' cousin, referred to Cyrus as "the king of the Medes."** [12] – wikipedia.org

Cyrus the Great - Cyrus was born between 590 and 580 BC, either in Media or, more probably, in Persis... – Encyclopedia Britannica

Cyrus II - According to the legend, **Astyages, the king of the Medes and overlord of the Persians**, gave his daughter in marriage to his vassal in Persis, a prince called Cambyses. **From this marriage Cyrus was born.** – Encyclopedia Britannica

Cyrus II- d. 529 B.C., king of Persia, founder of the greatness of the Achaemenids and of the Persian Empire. According to Herodotus, **he was the son of an Iranian noble, the elder Cambyses, and a Median princess, daughter of Astyages.** Many historians, following other ancient writers (such as Ctesias), deny this genealogy, and the whole of Cyrus' life is encrusted with legend. – Columbia Encyclopedia

Persian Empire - 556-530 THE REIGN OF CYRUS THE GREAT. On the death of his father, **Cyrus II became the king of the Persians. In 553, Cyrus led a revolt against his grandfather Astyages.**" - The Encyclopedia of World History, 2001

Astyages - flourished 6th century BC Akkadian Ishtumegu **the last king of the Median empire (reigned 585-550 BC).** According to Herodotus, **the Achaemenian Cyrus the Great was Astyages' grandson through his daughter Mandane**, but this relationship is probably legendary. According to Babylonian inscriptions, Cyrus, king of Anshan (in southwestern Iran), began war against Astyages in 553 BC; in 550 the Median troops rebelled, and Astyages was taken prisoner. Then Cyrus occupied and plundered Ecbatana, the Median capital. A somewhat different account of these events is given by the Greek writer Ctesias." – Encyclopedia Britannica

Astyages - fl. 6th cent. B.C., king of the Medes (584-c.550 B.C.), son and successor of Cyaxares. His rule was harsh, and he was unpopular. **His daughter is alleged to have married the elder Cambyses and was said to be the mother**

of Cyrus the Great, who rebelled against Astyages and overthrew him (c.550 B.C.), thus creating the Persian Empire." – Columbia Encyclopedia

We should be aware that various ancient sources do not always present these chronologies or kings in the exact same manner. Several instances of this kind of variance are exhibited in the ancient historical accounts of this period.

Our first example is a man identified in the Book of Daniel as Darius the Mede.

Daniel 11:1 Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, *even* I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him.

Daniel 9:1 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans;

Darius the Mede may be understood as Daniel's means of identifying one of several potential historical persons. Wikipedia.org provides summaries of the various theories for Darius the Mede's identity. Below we have simply reproduced the relevant section from wikipedia's article on the Book of Daniel.

Book of Daniel – Responses to the problem of Darius the Mede: As no ruler of this name is recorded, scholars have attempted to identify him with other figures: **"Darius the Mede" as Cyrus the Great**

This theory was first proposed by Donald Wiseman in 1957.[11] Unlike Gubaru or Astyages, Cyrus the Great of Persia was the king who took over the Babylonian Empire. **Cyrus was also married to a Mede, and had a Median mother.[12] Indeed, his maternal grandfather Astyages, to whom he owed fealty, was the so-called "Last King of the Median Empire." An analysis of variant early texts, particularly the Septuagint, reveals that the names "Darius" and "Cyrus" are reversed in 11:1, and may have been miscopied elsewhere. The appellation "Mede" may have been used as an ethnic term to apply to Persians as well, who were of the same race.[13] In addition, Dan. 6:28, "So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian", could also be translated, "So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius, that is, the reign of Cyrus the Persian."**[14] Furthermore, kings commonly took dual titles and Nabonidus, Cyrus' cousin, referred to Cyrus as "the king of the Medes." [12] – wikipedia.org

The above theory suggests that Darius the Mede was an alternative name for Cyrus the Great. It is potentially relevant to point out that one of the common dates given for Cyrus the Great's birth is the year 600 BC.

Cyrus the Great – Cyrus the Great (c. 600 BC or 576 BC,) also known as Cyrus II or Cyrus of Persia,[7] was the founder of the Persian Empire under the Achaemenid dynasty.[8] – wikipedia.org

Cyrus the Great's conquest of Babylon is commonly dated to 538 BC.

Cyrus the Great - The Chaldaean empire of Babylonia fell to Cyrus in 538 BC. - Columbia Encyclopedia

Babylonian Captivity - 538 -"Decree of Cyrus" allows Judahites to return to Jerusalem. - wikipedia.org

Babylonian Captivity - also called Babylonian Captivity, the forced detention of Jews in Babylonia following the latter's conquest of the kingdom of Judah in 598/7 and 587/6 BC. The exile formally ended in 538 BC, when the Persian conqueror of Babylonia, Cyrus the Great, gave the Jews permission to return to Palestine. - Encyclopedia Britannica

If Cyrus was born in 600 BC, he would have been 62 years old when he conquered Babylon. This is exactly what Daniel reports concerning Darius the Mede who he identifies as taking the kingdom of Babylon after the death of the final Babylonian king. This may confirm the theory that Darius the Mede was, in fact, Cyrus the Great.

Daniel 5:31 And Darius the Median took the kingdom, *being* about threescore and two years old.

A second possible identification of Darius the Mede is the figure of Gubaru (or perhaps Gobryas) a general of Cyrus the Great who conquered the city of Babylon before Cyrus arrival a few days or weeks later.

Book of Daniel – "Darius the Mede" as Gubaru/Ugbaru

Gubaru was the governor of Gutium, who actually led Cyrus's army that captured Babylon in the month of Tashritu in the 17th year (see Pierre Briant below).[15] Two weeks later Cyrus made his triumphal entry into Babylon and a week after that Gubaru died. It is possible that Cyrus may have rewarded Gubaru with a regional governorship for capturing the capital of the Babylonian Empire and ending the war. Furthermore, under the first translation of Dan. 6:28, Darius ruled during the reign of Cyrus, and **Dan. 5:31 states that Darius the Mede "received the kingdom" of the Chaldeans.**

Complicating this view is the question of whether or not Gubaru and Ugbaru are two different people, or simply variant spellings of the same name. Verse 1 of "Bel and the Dragon" mentions Astyages the Mede, who was indeed the last king before Cyrus; but nearly the same verse is added in the Greek LXX after the end of chapter 6 of Daniel, but with "Darius" in place of "Astyages". (LXX Dan. 14:1 and Dan 6:29) – wikipedia.org

Nabonidus – king of Babylonia from 556 until 539 bc, when Babylon fell to Cyrus, king of Persia. After a popular rising led by the priests of Marduk, chief god of the city, Nabonidus, who favoured the moon god Sin, made his son Belshazzar coregent and spent much of his reign in Arabia. **Returning to Babylon in 539 bc, he was captured by Cyrus' general Gobryas and exiled...** - Encyclopedia Britannica

The identification of Darius the Mede as the general of Cyrus' armies and regent of Babylon is noted elsewhere. (Though perhaps this person was not the same as Gobryas.)

Gobryas – Gobryas was a common name of several Persian noblemen. The English form Gobryas is derived from the Greek rendering of this name. **This Gobryas is mentioned in the Cyropedia of Xenophon as a general who helped in the conquering of Babylon.** The A.K. Grayson translation of **the Nabonidus Chronicle** based on that of T.G. Pinches, **considers both the names Ugbaru and Gubaru found in the latter to be references to this Gobryas.** However the names are distinct in the text and refer to two different individuals, **the one called Gubaru being the ruler placed over Babylon thus corresponding to Cyaxares of the Cyropedia (and the Darius the Mede of the Bible) not Gobryas.** Ugbaru remains a candidate for Gobryas being described as the ruler of the region of Gutium dying soon after the conquest of Babylon similarly to Xenophon's portrayal of Gobryas as an elderly "Assyrian" ruler – wikipedia.org

A third possibility is that Darius the Mede was a Median king, perhaps the uncle of Cyrus the Great who assisted in Cyrus' conquest of Babylon and served as regent under Cyrus until his death. (The quotes above and below suggest that such a Median king may have existed and elsewhere may be identified as Cyaxares II.)

Book of Daniel – "Darius the Mede" as king of the Medes

Talmudic and midrashic sources describe Darius the Mede as the uncle and father-in-law of Cyrus the Great, to whom Cyrus owed fealty. **After Darius's death, Cyrus took the throne. According to Josippon, the Ahasuerus in the book of Esther was the son of Darius the Mede.** The Midrash Tanchuma describes the fall of Babylon as described in Daniel and adds to the narrative Darius taking Vashti, the daughter of Belshazzar, as a wife for his son Ahasuerus. – wikipedia.org

A fourth possible identification of Darius the Mede involves a Median king discussed in other historical works. Josephus says Darius the Mede was the son of Ahasuerus whom he identifies as the Median King Astyages, Cyrus the Great's grandfather. Xenophon speaks similarly of the son of Astyages calling him by the name Cyaxares II.

Book of Daniel – "Darius the Mede" as Cyaxares II

The little we know of Cyaxares from extra-Biblical sources matches the description offered in the Book of Daniel. According to Daniel, he began ruling when he was 62 years old (chapter 5, verse 31), appointed 120 satraps to govern over their provinces or districts (chapter 6, verse 1), was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans (chapter 9, verse 1), and pre-dated Cyrus (chapter 11, verse 1). – wikipedia.org

Ahasuerus – Book of Daniel

Ahasuerus is given as the name of the father of Darius the Mede in the Book of Daniel.[11] Josephus names Astyages as the father of Darius the Mede,

and the description of the latter as uncle and father-in-law of Cyrus by mediaeval Jewish commentators matches that of Cyaxares II, who is said to be the son of Astyages by Xenophon. Thus this Ahasuerus is commonly identified with Astyages... – wikipedia.org

According to Xenophon, Cyaxares II ruled the Medes after Astyages (the grandfather of Cyrus through his mother Mandane, Astyages' daughter.) Xenophon's account identifies Cyaxares II as the brother of Mandane. And Xenophon apparently has Cyaxares and Cyrus working together to conquer the Babylonians (in 539-538 BC.) After this, Cyaxares II became Cyrus the Great's regent in Babylon until his death.

Astyages - flourished 6th century BC Akkadian Ishtumegu the last king of the Median empire (reigned 585-550 BC). According to Herodotus, **the Achaemenian Cyrus the Great was Astyages' grandson through his daughter Mandane...**A somewhat different account of these events is given by the Greek writer Ctesias." – Encyclopedia Britannica

Cyaxares II – According to Xenophon's Cyropaedia, Cyaxares II followed king Astyages to the throne of the Mede Empire, and was also brother of Mandane, Cyrus the Great's mother. He describes the Persian Cyrus as cooperating with his uncle, Cyaxares, in order to conquer Babylon in 539 BC. However Cyaxares was by then an old man, and because Cyrus was in command of the campaign, the army came to regard Cyrus as king. Cyrus thus received not only the king's daughter (his first cousin), but his kingdom, as dowry, and the aged **Cyaxares became Cyrus' viceroy in Babylon for two years until his death, when Cyrus seized that kingdom as well.** – wikipedia.org

In contrast to Xenophon and the Book of Daniel, other ancient historians do not mention Cyaxares II or Darius the Mede.

Cyaxares II – However, the fact that he is not mentioned at all in the history of Herodotus, nor in the very different history of Ctesias, has caused many scholars to debate whether such a king ever actually existed. – wikipedia.org

This inconsistency may be expected since ancient historical accounts of the Persians are said to be fragmented and to differ from one another in the order and identification of Persian kings. More specifically, the accounts of Herodotus, Ctesias, Xenophon, Josephus, and the bible differ from one another in various details including names.

Ctesias – Ctesias of Cnidus was a Greek physician and historian from Cnidus in Caria. Ctesias, who **lived in the 5th century BC, was physician to Artaxerxes Mnemon, whom he accompanied in 401 BC on his expedition against his brother Cyrus the Younger. Ctesias was the author of... a history of Assyria and Persia in 23 books, called Persica, written in opposition to Herodotus** in the Ionic dialect, and **professedly founded on the Persian royal archives.** – wikipedia.org

Ctesias – Ctesias returned to Greece in 398 and began **writing his Persica, a history of Assyria-Babylonia** in 23 books. Books I–VI included a history of Assyria and the Medes, and the last 10 books were a more detailed account from the death of Xerxes (465) to 398. **Although Ctesias claimed that his history was based on Persian archives and state records and therefore was far superior to Herodotus's history...** - Encyclopedia Britannica

We should note that, besides the person of Darius the Mede or Cyaxares II, both Xenophon and the Book of Daniel corroborate the existence of the previously unknown Babylonian ruler Belshazzar. This Babylonian king is not mentioned in other sources and so his existence was disputed and he was not placed in the conventional chronologies of the rulers of Babylon. The Canon of Kings does not mention him at all. However, the discovery of Babylonian inscriptions has confirmed the accuracy of Xenophon's history and the biblical record contained in Daniel. It is now well known that Belshazzar was the son and co-regent of Nabonidus (who is not mentioned in the biblical texts.)

(And again, we should note that various ancient sources identify Belshazzar using various names.)

Belshazzar - Belshazzar had been known only from the biblical Book of Daniel (chapters 5, 7-8) and from Xenophon's Cyropaedia until 1854, when references to him were found in Babylonian cuneiform inscriptions. - Encyclopedia Britannica

Nabonidus - He was not of Nebuchadnezzar's family, and it is possible that he usurped the throne...Cuneiform records indicate that Belshazzar was Nabonidus' son and his coregent during the last years of Babylon. - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

Belshazzar - According to the accounts in the Bible and Xenophon, Belshazzar held a last great feast...Belshazzar died after Babylon fell to the Persian general Gobyras without resistance on Oct. 12, 539, and probably before the Persian king Cyrus II entered the city 17 days later. - Encyclopedia Britannica

Belshazzar - Herodotus refers to the last king of Babylon as Labynetos and claims that this was also the name of his father. Herodotus says that the mother of the younger Labynetos was the queen Nitocris whom he portrays as the dominant ruler. She is commonly thought to have been the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar. Labynetos is generally understood to be a garbled form of the name Nabonidus and the younger Labynetos is often identified with Belshazzar. Opinions differ however on how best to reconcile Herodotus with the Babylonian sources and an alternative view is that the younger Labynetos is Nabonidus. Josephus gives an account of Belshazzar largely paralleling the Book of Daniel but remarks that he was known to the Babylonians by the name Naboandelus. Bible scholars have viewed this as a corruption of

"**Nabonidus**" which if correct may be taken either as confusion on the part of Josephus or a corroboration of the interpretation of the younger "Labynetos" of Herodotus as Belshazzar. **Josephus, however, knew of Nabonidus and calls him "Nabonnedus"** relating an account of his capture by Cyrus taken from Berossus. Josephus refers to the queen at the time (corresponding to the Nitocris of Herodotus) as the grandmother of Belshazzar which corroborates the alternative view that the younger "Labynetos" (son of Nitocris) is Nabonidus. **Daniel 5:1-4 describes "Belshazzar's Feast"** in which the sacred vessels of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem, which had been brought to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar at the time of the Captivity were profaned by the company. **The narrative unfolds against the background of the impending arrival of the Persian armies...The Greek historians Herodotus and Xenophon also record that there was a festival in the city of Babylon the same night it fell to the Persians.[2]** - wikipedia.org

Another example of the differing nomenclature used by various groups of people concerns a king identified in biblical texts as Ahasuerus. Ahasuerus is another form of the name Xerxes.

Ahasuerus – Ahasuerus, **Hebrew form of the name Xerxes.** – Columbia Encyclopedia

Ahasuerus – **The name Ahasuerus is equivalent to his Greek name of Xerxes,** both deriving from the Old Persian language Khashayarsha. – wikipedia.org

However, Josephus informs us that Ahasuerus is another name for Astyages, the Median grandfather of Cyrus the Great. According to Josephus, the Hebrews knew this Median king as Ahasuerus. As we have seen above, others knew this king by the name Xerxes. But the Greek version of the Old Testament (known as the Septuagint) identifies Ahasuerus with the name Artaxerxes. According to Josephus, the Greeks knew Ahasuerus by this name (Artaxerxes.) Clearly, even in English Xerxes and Artaxerxes seem derivative of one another.

Ahasuerus – Book of Daniel

Ahasuerus is given as the name of the father of Darius the Mede in the Book of Daniel.[11] Josephus names Astyages as the father of Darius the Mede, and the description of the latter as uncle and father-in-law of Cyrus by mediaeval Jewish commentators matches that of Cyaxares II, who is said to be the son of Astyages by Xenophon. Thus **this Ahasuerus is commonly identified with Astyages...**– wikipedia.org

Ahasuerus – Ahasuerus is given as the name of the King of Persia in the Book of Esther.[4] 19th century Bible commentaries generally identified him with Xerxes I of Persia.[5] **The Greek version (Septuagint) of the Book of Esther refers to him as Artaxerxes, and the historian Josephus relates that this was the name by which he was known to the Greeks.[6]** – wikipedia.org

We can see that there may be some interchangeability between the names Ahasuerus, Xerxes, Artaxerxes, and Astyages. Several kings of Media and Persia are identified with these titles over several generations, which shows that these were family names shared by various persons in the Medo-Persian royal lines. For example, there are possibly several kings known as Xerxes, several Artaxerxes, several Darius, two Cyrus, and two Cambyses among these ancient kings.

Related to this is the fact that we do not know if the names of the rulers from this period were their birth names, coronation names, family names, or titular names. For instance, we do not know if Cyrus II the Great was a name given at birth or taken at coronation.

Cyrus the Great - The meaning of his name is in dispute, for it is not known whether it was a personal name or a throne name given to him when he became a ruler. - Encyclopedia Britannica

Daniel's Darius the Mede is earlier than Darius I the Great who is counted as the first of three Persian rulers with that name. This may show that Darius was a name of important Medes and Persians rulers even before the time of Darius the Great. Likewise, Ahasuerus and/or Xerxes may have, in fact, been in use by the Persian royalty before the time of Xerxes I. Perhaps these were alternate names for Astyages, Cyrus the Great's grandfather.

This varying usage of Persian royal names may explain why Ezra 4 seems to place the reign of a Persian king he identifies as Artaxerxes before the reign of Darius I the Great. Perhaps the Artaxerxes to whom Ezra 4 is referring is not Artaxerxes I, but to an earlier predecessor and ruler of the Persians who was known to Jews of this period by some variant of that name. Perhaps these names are family names or being used as titles in some cases. Perhaps there are co-regencies taking place here. Or perhaps various forms of the same name are being used interchangeably.

In addition, we should note that Hystaspes (father of Darius I the Great) served as the king of Persia under Cyrus II the Great. However, Hystaspes remained a Persian ruler even after his son Darius I the Great became king. How would the people of Persia have recorded the rules of Hystaspes and Darius in their accounts? We must keep in mind that at one point Darius was governor of Persia under Hystaspes and that Hystaspes ruled both before and during Darius kingship.

Hystaspes - Old Persian Vishtaspa, fl. 6th cent. B.C., ruler of ancient Persia, father of Darius I. Under him Darius was governor of Parthia. The legendary patron of Zoroaster is also called Hystaspes or Vishtaspa; he may or may not be the same as Darius' father. - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

Hystaspes - flourished 6th century BC son of Arsames, king of Parsa, and father of the Achaemenid king Darius I of Persia. According to the 5th-century-BC Greek historian Herodotus, Hystaspes was governor of Persis under Cyrus II the Great and Cambyses II and accompanied Cyrus on his last

campaign against the Massagetai in 530 BC. **When Darius seized the throne in 522, Hystaspes was governor of Parthia and Hyrcania**, where he suppressed a revolt in 521. - Encyclopedia Britannica

This same Hystaspes (father of Darius I the Great) is considered by some to be the patron of Zoroaster. This is considered possible despite the fact that Zoroaster's patron and Darius the Great's father have differing genealogies. The possibility of identifying two people with different genealogies as the same individual points out the types of uncertainties involved in making determinations about Persian royalty using the information and names provided in the available ancient accounts.

"Hystaspes - flourished 6th century BC son of Arsames, king of Parsa, and father of the Achaemenid king Darius I of Persia. According to the 5th-century-BC Greek historian Herodotus, Hystaspes was governor of Persis under Cyrus II the Great and Cambyses II and accompanied Cyrus on his last campaign against the Massagetai in 530 BC. When Darius seized the throne in 522, Hystaspes was governor of Parthia and Hyrcania, where he suppressed a revolt in 521. Despite the differences in genealogies, some authorities identify him with Hystaspes, the protector of the prophet Zoroaster. - Encyclopedia Britannica

"Hystaspes - Old Persian Vishtaspa, fl. 6th cent. B.C., ruler of ancient Persia, father of Darius I. Under him Darius was governor of Parthia. The legendary patron of Zoroaster is also called Hystaspes or Vishtaspa; he may or may not be the same as Darius' father." - The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001.

From this historical data, we can see how challenging it is for historians to construct a chronology of the Persian period. The process involves understanding how various names and versions of names may or may not relate to one another and how various historical sources and ancient peoples accounted the history of local and regional rulers. We have potentially interchangeable or repeated names like: a) Astyages, Ahasuerus, Xerxes, and Artaxerxes or b) Nabonidus, Labynetos, Naboandelus, and Belshazzar, and c) Darius the Mede, Gobryas, and Cyaxares II. And we have the interrelated nature of the royal relationships and overlapping reigns of these kings.

All of this illustrates the kinds of challenges that exist in the study and construction of historical chronology, especially during the era of the Median and Persian kings. Deciphering the exact chronology of the Babylonian, Median, and Persian kings in the period of 586-544 BC is not a simple task. It involves comparing and interpreting varying information presented by multiple historical artifacts and documents. (The bible is one of those historical documents.)

Wikipedia provides the following list of sources on these periods of history.

Missing Years –

The modern secular dating of the Babylonian and Persian periods are reconstructed using the following sources:

- *Greek sources*: The historians Herodotus, Ctesias, Thucydides, Xenophon, Dinon and Diodorus Siculus as well as the philosopher Aristotle, the playwright Aeschylus and the Egyptian priest Manetho.
- The Royal Canon of the astronomer Claudius Ptolemy, which provides astronomically tabulated dates of the kings of the period.
- *Persian sources*, including king lists like the Saros Canon, as well as other inscriptions such as the Behistun inscription or the Cyrus Cylinder, and administrative records as the Persepolis Fortification Tablets, and the Persepolis Treasury Tablets.
- *Babylonian sources* such as astronomical records recording eclipses, temple inscriptions and various royal documents including the Nabonidus Chronicle, as well as business documents as the Marashu Archive. - wikipedia.org

As we have seen, the names and dates provided in these historical sources do not always match up with one another. So some interpretation, comparison, and assumption are necessary in order to understand how the names of various rulers and their times of rule correspond and should be sequenced. The process and challenges of constructing historical chronologies are described similarly by Encyclopedia Britannica.

Chronology – Scientific chronology, which seeks to place all happenings in the order in which they occurred and at correctly proportioned intervals on a fixed scale, is used in many disciplines and can be utilized to cover vast epochs. **It is difficult to fix ancient historical chronologies in relation to scientific chronology. The terms of reference of ancient peoples were vague and inconsistent when judged by modern standards, and many of their inscriptions and writings have inevitably disappeared. The gaps in their records are increasingly filled in and their inconsistencies removed by the results of archaeological excavation. Guided by these findings, scholars can confirm, refute, or amend chronological reconstructions already tentatively made. Astronomical calculation and dating by radioactive-carbon content are also helpful in the work of fixing ancient chronologies.** – Encyclopedia Britannica

Some of the challenges offered by Encyclopedia Britannica do not seem that different from points made by critics of the conventional chronology of the Babylonian and Persian periods.

Missing Years – The astronomical data used by the secular historians has been criticized. Physicist and science historian Robert R. Newton has found [3] Ptolemy's work to contain errors and fraudulent observations. (Bickerman questions if the Royal Canon is actually the work of Ptolemy.) Dolan notes that Babylonian records of astronomical events are subject to interpretation as they do not clearly distinguish between eclipses and weather phenomena; moreover eclipses may have been missed or their extent misrecorded as a result of observation conditions. Dolan also notes that **the dates of ancient texts have also**

been the subject of interpretation due to broken texts and uncertainty about ordering. Aaronson points out that **the Persian inscriptions consist only of names and titles with virtually no explanatory content, and that the identification of the individuals mentioned is also a matter of interpretation.** (Aaronson also notes that some ancient Persian sources, such as **two of the inscriptions of Arsames and Ariaramnes, have subsequently been revealed to be forgeries.**) Aaronson and Heifetz note that **the Greek sources contradict each other and the archaeological sources and reconciling the difference involves additional interpretation.** They argue that the sources can be interpreted in a manner consistent with the traditional dating as well as with the secular dating. **They consider the reigns of certain Median and Persian monarchs to have been overlapping whereas the secular dating counts them as non-overlapping. They also argue that certain kings named in Greek sources who have been counted as separate monarchs are in fact the same individual** - in particular they argue that only one Alexander of Macedonia fought a king Darius of Persia, not two Alexanders as the secular dating requires. – wikipedia.org

As a result of what we have learned about the historical data of this period of world history, we should understand the conventional, secular chronology as an attempt to understand this important period. It is not set in stone or absolute. For this reason it may be valid to consider potentially altering the conventional chronology to better fit with material presented in some of the sources (including the jubilee cycles that may be mentioned in biblical texts).

To be clear, we believe that the conventional chronology of Babylonian, Median, and Persian history does offer a working understanding of the dynasties of this period. However, it is not inconceivable that this conventional ordering of the Medo-Persian kings and the durations and overlaps of their respective reigns could involve some imprecision. With these considerations in mind, we will turn to the second option for calculating the time from the Babylonian destruction of the Temple to the occurrence of the decree mentioned in Daniel 9:25. That option will involve purely biblical data without the assistance of chronologies constructed from non-biblical sources.