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*Zeal but Not According to Knowledge—Concluded*

## The Problem of Overlapping Reigns

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IN SUCH a study as this it will, of course, not be possible to deal with all the problems of Hebrew chronology, but we will confine ourselves to a single area concerning which there has been much discussion. The period under review will be the century beginning in 841 B.C. with the accession of Athaliah in Judah and Jehu in Israel, and terminating with the end of the reign of Azariah in Judah and Pekahiah in Israel. The lengths of reign for this period are as follows:

Judah		Israel	
Athaliah	7 years	Jehu	28 years
		Jehoahaz	17 years
Joash	40 years	Jehoash	16 years
Amaziah	29 years	Jeroboam	41 years
		Zachariah	— years
Azariah	52 years	6 months	
		Shallum	— years
Total:	128 years	1 month	
		Menahem	10 years
		Pekahiah	2 years
		Total:	114 years
			7 months

Although the sum of the years of reign in Judah for this period is 128 years, and in Israel, 114 years and 7 months, it is clear that the actual years involved for both nations must be the same, for Athaliah began to reign in Judah at the same time as did Jehu in Israel, and Pekahiah died and was succeeded by Pekah in the fifty-second and last year of Azariah in Judah (2 Kings 15:25-27). Why, then, are not the totals of the two nations identical?

A further difficulty arises when the totals of Israel and Judah are compared with the totals of the Assyrian rulers of this century. This is a period when Assyrian chronology is well established, and when there was close correlation between Hebrew and Assyrian history. Shalmaneser III of Assyria in the eighteenth year of his reign claims the receipt of tribute from

Jehu, which was 841 B.C. And Tiglath-pileser III mentions a campaign against Azariah and Menahem that took place between 743 and 378 B.C. So from Assyrian sources we know that the period involved was in actuality about one hundred years, and certainly not 114 or 115, or 128.

Regarding the difficulties of this period, Sanders has expressed himself as follows: "The exact chronology of this century is beyond any historian's power to determine. . . . What to do with the extra twenty-five years is uncertain."<sup>1</sup>

In this same period Albright finds an excess of some 24 years in the totals of Judah over those of Assyria, concerning which he says: "The excess of some 24 years can be eliminated entirely by disregarding the total reigns attributed to the kings of Judah and basing our revised estimates of their reigns solely on the synchronisms with Israel (which throughout contradict the regnal totals of the kings of Judah . . . )."<sup>2</sup> To bring the totals of Judah for this century into harmony with the totals of Assyria, Albright makes the following adjustments from the Biblical data:

	Bible	Albright	Adjustment
Athaliah	7	6	1
Joash	40	38	2
Amaziah	29	18	11
Azariah	52	42	10
Total:	128	104	24

Albright is right when he calls attention to the fact that the total years of this century for the kingdom of Judah are some 24 years in excess of the regnal totals of Assyria, but he is mistaken in his conclusion that the cause is a series of errors in the Biblical data, and he is not justified in his efforts toward making adjustments in the Biblical data. A careful study of the Biblical numbers will show exactly where the difficulty lies and how it may be solved.

Still another scholar who dealt with this period was Professor Oppert, who expressed himself as follows: "The twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam II, King of Israel (II Kings XV:1), is mentioned as the first year of Uzziah, in flagrant contradiction to all the statements of the previous chapter. . . . Intentional mutilation of

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Everything in nature seems to have this sign on it, "Move on." Nothing stands still. Every atom in the universe is on the move. You must either move on or get run over.

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the text and suppression of all notice of the temporary suspension of the independence of the kingdom of Israel by the Syrians are the real cause of the larger number. . . . The subsequent passages have been ruthlessly altered. . . . A similar mutilation has been practised at the end of ch. xv."<sup>3</sup> This is a rather serious charge to be hurled at the Biblical writers, and in the solution to follow we will show that the charge is entirely unfounded, being based simply on a lack of knowledge of the true nature of the problems involved.

The Biblical data for this period give a total of 76 regnal years for Judah from the accession of Athaliah to the death of Amaziah and the accession of Azariah in the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam II of Israel (2 Kings 15:1); namely, 7 years for Athaliah, 40 for Joash, and 29 for Amaziah. In Israel, however, the total for this period is 88 years (28 for Jehu, 17 for Jehoahaz, 16 for Jehoash, and 27 for Jeroboam), or an excess of 12 years for Israel over Judah. It can be shown, however, that this excess of 12 years has not been gradually creeping into the pattern during the previous reigns, but appears here suddenly for the first time. In Judah the total at the death of Amaziah, as we have just seen, was 76 years (Athaliah seven, Joash 40, and Amaziah 29). The death of Amaziah took place 15 years after the death of Jehoash in Israel (2 Kings 14:17), giving a total for Judah of 61 years at that point (76 less 15). That is exactly the total for Israel at this juncture (Jehu 28, Jehoahaz 17, and Jehoash 16). At the next preceding point of comparison, the death of Joash in Judah in the second year of Jehoash in Israel (2 Kings 14:1), the totals are again the same; namely, 47 years for Judah (Athaliah 7, Joash 40) and 47 years for Israel (Jehu 28, Jehoahaz 17, and Jehoash 2). Thus we know that any attempt to solve the problem by a reduction in the lengths of reign of Athaliah, Joash, and Amaziah, as is attempted by Albright,

is entirely out of order, and only increases the difficulty rather than making any contribution toward its solution.

The question we must face, however, is why, at the accession of Azariah in the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam, the regnal years of Israel should be 12 years in excess of those of Judah. An examination of the data we have already given will give the answer. We have shown that the death of Amaziah in Judah took place 15 years after the death of Jehoash in Israel. But by that time Jeroboam had already reigned 27 years, for Azariah's accession is dated in the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam. That being the case, it is clear that Jeroboam must have reigned 12 years contemporaneously with his father before the latter died. It is this 12-year coregency of Jeroboam with his father Jehoash that is responsible for the excess of 12 years in the totals of Israel over Judah at this point. Once this coregency is recognized, it will be clear that the "flagrant contradiction" of which the Biblical writer has been here accused exists only in the mind of the critic.

The next point of comparison comes with the death of Jeroboam after a reign of 41 years and the accession of Zachariah in the thirty-eighth year of Azariah (2 Kings 15:8). Since Azariah's accession at the time of his father Amaziah's death is dated in the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam, and since Jeroboam reigned 41 years, it will be clear that Jeroboam died and Zachariah came to the throne 14 years (41 less 27) after Amaziah's death. But since Zachariah's accession is dated in the 38th year of Azariah, it will also be clear that Azariah had at this time already ruled 38 years. If his father, however, died only 14 years before that time, then the reign of Azariah must have overlapped that of his father 24 years (38 minus 14). Once this is understood, it will be clear why the total regnal years of Judah for this century are 24 years in excess of the contemporary Assyria, as Albright has correctly declared. The cause of the excess,

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The wise carry their knowledge as they do their watches, not for display, but for their own use.—Sir T. Browne.

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however, is not an error in the Biblical data but simply an overlapping of reigns.

When once it is understood that the reign of Jeroboam in Israel overlapped that of his father Jehoash 12 years, and that the years of Azariah overlapped those of his father Amaziah 24 years, the supposed insoluble chronological

difficulties of this century disappear, and harmony rather than "flagrant contradiction" is found.

The question might be raised as to why these overlapping reigns in Israel and Judah should take place at this time. An examination of the records in Chronicles and Kings gives a picture that supplies the answer. Amaziah was engaged in a war against Edom in which he hired an army of Jehoash from Israel to assist him (2 Chron. 25:6-25; 2 Kings 14:7-14). By divine direction Amaziah dismissed the forces of Jehoash and single-handedly gained a great victory over Edom. Upon his return he twice sent a challenge of war to Jehoash, which was at length reluctantly accepted. It was this occasion that would prompt Jehoash to place his son Jeroboam on the throne while he went forth with his armies to fight against Amaziah. In this struggle Jehoash succeeded in defeating and capturing Amaziah, and then proceeding to Jerusalem, he took the city and destroyed 400 cubits of its wall. With Amaziah a captive, the people of Judah would thus have cause to place the young Azariah on the throne, thus beginning his long reign of 52 years at the age of 16. Amaziah undoubtedly was held captive in Israel till the death of Jehoash, whereupon he would be released to live 15 years more before his own death took place. That, no doubt, is responsible for the very unusual statement in 2 Kings 14:17 and 2 Chronicles 25:25, that Amaziah lived after the death of Jehoash 15 years.<sup>4</sup>

When once the above overlapping reigns of this period are taken into consideration, the chronology of this century, far from being "beyond any historian's power to determine," may be established with the utmost exactness. The dates are as follows: Jehoash began his reign in 798 B.C. and Amaziah in 796, the campaign against Edom took place in 793, the challenge of Amaziah to Jehoash came somewhat later in the same year, the beginning of Jeroboam's coregency was in 793/92, and Jehoash's invasion of Judah and his capture of Amaziah and seizure of Jerusalem took place in 792. That would likewise be the year when the youthful Azariah was placed upon the throne made vacant by the capture of his father. In 782 the death of Jehoash took place, Amaziah was released, and Jeroboam began his sole reign, this being the 12th year since the beginning of Jeroboam's coregency and the 15th year since Amaziah came to the throne (2 Kings 14:23). The death of Amaziah occurred 15 years later (2 Kings 14:17; 2 Chron. 25:25), in 767, which was 27 years since Jeroboam first began to

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## "Epilogue" From *Between the Testaments* \*

"In the days of Herod the Great, in an obscure corner of the Roman Empire, in the city which had been the birthplace of King David a millennium earlier, Jesus the Messiah was born. History took little note of His life. Only a few devoted disciples openly espoused His cause. The religious leaders attributed the miracles He performed to Beelzebub, the Prince of the Devils. To the Roman officials he was an insurrectionist; to the Jews, a blasphemer. In the hour of His trial, His disciples forsook Him and fled. He was crucified as a malefactor, between two thieves.

"Yet His life and His death introduce a new age. From apparent defeat came the triumph of victory. The death of the cross is heralded as the divinely provided atonement for sin. The resurrection brings the assurance of life everlasting."—Charles F. Pfeiffer, *Between the Testaments*, p. 125 (Grand Rapids, Mich.; Baker Book House).

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reign, and marked the beginning of Azariah's sole reign but 24 years after Amaziah was taken captive by Jehoash and his son Azariah was placed on the throne by the people of Judah.

Although the Biblical chronological data of this century has been misunderstood and maligned, careful study reveals that it is not the data but the critics that are at fault. In this period where scholars have reported such serious contradictions between the regnal totals of Israel and Judah, where they have declared that synchronisms give evidence of hopeless confusion, where they have stated that the totals for both Israel and Judah are in violent conflict with the totals of contemporary Assyria, and where they have felt that the exact chronology could not be established, we may now know that the Biblical data are entirely correct and set forth a chronological pattern that is in complete accord with the years of contemporary history.

<sup>1</sup> Frank Knight Sanders, *History of the Hebrews*, p. 141, 1914 edition.

<sup>2</sup> W. F. Albright, "The Chronology of the Divided Monarchy of Israel," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, no. 100, Dec., 1945, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Jules Oppert, "Chronology," *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 4, p. 68.

<sup>4</sup> Further details and explanations of the difficulties in the chronology of this century with additional evidence for the coregencies involved will be found in the following previous discussions by me of this period: *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, pp. 68-72; "A Comparison of the Chronological Data of Israel and Judah," *Vetus Testamentum*, vol. 4, no. 2 (1954), pp. 191-195; "The Question of Coregencies Among the Hebrew Kings," *A Stubborn Faith*, Edward C. Hobbs, editor, pp. 43-50.