

Beauties of the Truth

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Satan, the Serpent, and the Woman
Jesus' Birth and Herod's Death
Chronology of the Hebrew & Septuagint
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Satan the Serpent and the Woman

What beginning is referred to in John 8:44, which states that Satan was a liar from the beginning? Lucifer was perfect from the time he was created until the day iniquity was found in him (Ezekiel 28:15). His defection commenced here on earth, in the physical Garden of Eden, and is associated with the dawn or "beginning" of *human* civilization.

The failure of Lucifer to exercise continued and steadfast trust in the inherent goodness of God, as well as his failure to maintain a proper respect for the dignity of the office of the Supreme Deity, paved the way for his downfall. These failures, together with the development and the harboring of personal pride and ambition in his thoughts, were the soil or culture of his heart, in which the seeds of sin germinated and lodged.

Piecing together the clues in the Genesis narrative reveals that the Adversary felt confident in his distorted assessment of what appeared to be the true nature of God's motives and dealings with the first human pair. Until events proved otherwise, Satan felt justified in his appraisal of the situation, and he was oblivious to the rebellion in his own heart and to the abhorrence of his own defection. The record is clear that Satan desired to be Adam's Lord and God. It did not take much imagination on Lucifer's part to see that the creation of physical beings on this planet was but the prelude to a vast program of populating all the other physical universes with creatures similar in nature to Adam.

Nor did the Adversary, up to this point in time, possess a sense of dread of impending judgment for his actions. None of God's intelligent creation had heretofore died in the spirit realm. It would

therefore be easy to assume falsely that death to those created in God's image was an impossibility. Until this time no occasion had arisen to invoke divine indignation, for God's will was, is now, and ever will be done in heaven. The exception is the earth; it is here that God did not prohibit or interfere with the introduction of sin-which He foresaw-to stain, pollute, and to temporarily mar His *physical work*. The divine intention is that all should see, as an object lesson, the exceeding sinfulness of sin and be alerted to the danger of the allurements of evil, so that those who are rightly exercised will profit thereby.

Satan's strategy in Eden was to beguile Eve in order to get through to Adam. The Adversary used the serpent as his medium by taking possession of that creature so that he could better incite or provoke the woman to transgress the Lord's commandment and thus prove his estimate that God was a liar.

First, the serpent (or Satan) put God's commandment to Adam in a very unfavorable light by introducing an improper emphasis into the original declaration. God had put the emphasis upon the generosity of His terms: "Of *every tree* of the garden thou mayest *freely* eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil [merely], thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof [dying] thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:16, 17)

Satan's slant was a negative approach: "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall *not* eat of every tree of the garden?" (Genesis 3:1)

The Devil thus planted a seed of doubt, impugning God's motives by injecting suspicion into Eve's mind in the form of a question to engender distrust. Note Eve's reply: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden [she omits 'every tree']: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, *neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.*" (Genesis 3:2, 3)

It can be seen that both Eve and Satan misunderstood the situation. The prohibition of the tree of knowledge was simply a *test of obedience* on man's part. If, on the one hand, the penalty of death for disobedience was severe, the test, when seen in its proper light under normal circumstances, was, on the other hand, a very simple and reasonable one to obey. God did not say, "If ye touch it, ye shall die"; but He said, "If ye eat of it, ye shall die."

The woman thought God had implied that this particular species of tree was *exceedingly poisonous* and that mere contact with it would be lethal. Anyone possessing a suspicious nature will sometimes misunderstand the most explicit of statements. This trait also applies to the Adversary, in spite of all the intelligence he may possess. A careful reading of Genesis 2:9 plainly indicates that every tree of the garden, including the tree of knowledge, was good for food-the tree of knowledge was simply prohibited. At first, both the Devil and the woman thought God had implied that the tree was poisonous; and since they both saw the serpent partake of it, they concluded that the Creator had deliberately misrepresented the matter. It is written that God had made the serpent "more subtil" (Genesis 3:1); therefore, the cunning this creature possessed did not result from partaking of the forbidden fruit as a "brain food," but was a part of its very implanted nature.

The Adversary's reply to the woman revealed Satan's own mistrust of Deity. Note the boldness and

effrontery of Lucifer's flat contradiction of the Creator's original declaration of the death penalty. The Devil declared, "Ye shall *not* surely die" (Genesis 3:4). The inclusion of the word "surely" is tinged with sarcasm and even contempt. "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then *your eyes shall be opened*, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil ' " (Genesis 3:5)

It is true that the Lord Himself designated this particular species of tree "the tree of knowledge of good and evil," but the Lord did not mean, as the Adversary thought, that eating its fruit would enable man to possess the intelligence of angels in acquiring a superhuman ability to discern that which is wise and that which is unwise, or to foresee in greater measure the results of certain actions or events for good or evil in due process of time. Rather, God's designation of the title "the tree of knowledge" indicated His foreknowledge that:

1. Man would sin by partaking of the forbidden fruit.
2. Man, by partaking thereof, would experience shame, nakedness, and related guilt complexes, as well as harrowing experiences ending in death. All such experiences would be in marked contrast to his former blissful state before the entrance of sin.
3. This tree would forever be a symbol of the exceeding sinfulness of sin and its dire consequences.

By believing the tree was a brain food, Satan thought God was trying to curtail the liberty of both Adam and Eve lest they become too independent of divine control. The Adversary regarded the threat of death and extinction as a mere bluff on God's part to prevent them from getting too far out of line. Satan therefore patronizingly posed as man's true benefactor, hoping to win to himself the friendship and loyalty of the parents of a new and potentially illimitable race of physical beings. Thus reasoning, he would be the "Lord God" over a vast physical domain, similar to Jehovah's supreme rule over the vast spiritual realm.

Therefore, the woman seeing that the tree was "desired to make one wise" feeling to some degree that God had withheld this reward from her and her husband for some selfish reason, and realizing that the food was not poisonous as she mistakenly thought she had been led to believe - considered her doubts about God justified and ate the fruit. The scriptural narrative indicates that Eve had Adam accompany her to the tree. "She took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her [i.e., by her side]; and he [no doubt shocked by her betrayal and act of disobedience to the divine command] did eat [the forbidden fruit]. (Genesis 3:6)

Adam was not deceived with the hope of obtaining an illegal reward as was Eve. In a sudden, impulsive suicidal pact, he partook of the fruit to share with her the penalty of death (1 Timothy 2:14; 2 Cor. 11:3). And the Lord God, who had taken the man and put him into the garden to dress and keep it, now banished him without.

Improper Translation: "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil." (Genesis 3:22)

It is difficult to see - yea, almost incomprehensible to understand-how man, through an act of disobedience, could become more godlike, resembling God or the Logos or the angels of heaven. What would have happened had man not sinned? Would he whom the Creator had looked upon

and declared to be “very good” have been less godlike by abstinence from sin? Certainly not! Adam and Eve were created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) before they ate the forbidden fruit.

Corrected Translation: “And the Lord God said, Behold the man become as one of us [previously made in our image and likeness] to know good and evil [how he has fallen!].”

- Frank Shalliu “The Revelation of Jesus Christ”

Jesus’ Birth and Herod’s Death

Bible Students have long believed that Jesus was born in 2 BC (SS, Vol. 2, pp. 54-62 [B54-B62]). But many modern historians have dated his birth at from 4 to 7 BC. The reason for this is that Jesus was born before Herod died (Matt. 2:1), and it has been thought that Herod died in the spring of 4 BC, following an eclipse of the moon early in that year. Early Christian writers, however, testify against such an early date.

“Virtually all early Christian historians and chronologers who lived from the second to the sixth centuries (and even later) put the birth of Christ *after* the eclipse of 4 BC. Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Orosius, and Cassiodorus Senator said Christ's birth was in a year we now recognize as 3 BC.¹ The early Christian chronologist Julius Africanus said it was the year from 3 to



The Nativity.

2 BC. This same year was accepted by Hippolytus of Rome, Origen, the *Chronicon Cyprianicum*, Eusebius of Caesarea, John Chrysostom, Jerome, Hippolytus of Thebes, Photius Patriarch of Constantinople, the Greek historian Zonaras, and Bar Hebraeus, who quoted Syrian, Armenian, and Greek sources. Ephiphanius and the early Syrian chronological work called the *Chronicon Edessenum* indicate it was 2 BC. Almost all the early Christian fathers of whom we have record said Christ's birth was in either 3 or 2 BC.”²

The Scriptures support the later date. Jesus began his ministry as he turned 30, being baptized by John. (Luke 3:23) Since John had begun his ministry in the 15th

year³ of Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3:1), 29 AD, Jesus turned 30 years of age no later than 29 AD. So Jesus could not have been born *any earlier* than 2 BC.⁴

This suggests that there has been an inaccurate deduction by many historians about the date of Herod's death. What is their reasoning? Where is the flaw? In an article by William Filmer, published in the October, 1966 issue of *Journal of Theological Studies*, "The Chronology of the Reign of Herod the Great," the evidence is reviewed in detail. Filmer concludes that Herod died in early 1 BC. We here summarize his findings.

Most of the primary information on Herod's reign is from Josephus, a Jewish historian of the first century AD. He states that Herod died shortly after a lunar eclipse, but before passover. Eclipses which could be the one referred to occurred on 15 September 5 BC, 12/13 March 4 BC, 9 January 1 BC, and 29 December 1 AD. To determine which of these four was meant, we look at other evidence.

Josephus indicates that Herod was appointed king of Judea by the Romans, Mark Antony specifically, three years before Herod actually conquered Jerusalem, deposing the previous king, Antigonus. He states that Herod reigned 37 years from his appointment, but 34 years from the death of Antigonus.⁵ Therefore, if we could date any year of either span positively, we could compute the date of Herod's death. Josephus does give data which enable dates to be assigned. The problem is that some of the data yields one date, and the balance of the data another.

On the one hand he states of Herod's appointment, "Thus did this man receive the kingdom, having obtained it on the hundred and eighty-fourth olympiad, when Caius Domitius Calvinus was consul the second time, and Caius Asinius Pollio." (Ant. XIV xiv 5) "This makes it 40 BC, but in this he is contradicted by Appian, who mentioned Herod's appointment in a context that can be dated from Dids Roman History to 39 BC." (Filmer, JTS pg. 285; Appian, *Civil Wars*, v. 75, chap. viii) And Josephus said of Herod's victory at Jerusalem that he took it with help from General Sosius, "when Marcus Agrippa and Caninius Gallus were consuls at Rome, on the hundred eighty and fifth olympiad ...," which gives 37 BC, but continues, "... on the third month, on the solemnity of the fast, as if a periodical revolution of calamities had returned since that which befell the Jews under Pompey; for the Jews were taken by him on the same day, and this was after twenty-seven years'time" (Ant XIV xvi 4) But Pompey conquered Jerusalem in 63 BC, giving 36 BC for Herod's victory. Filmer also quotes Dids writings to show that Sosius was inactive in 37 BC, for "the Romans accomplished nothing worthy of note in Syria ... Sosius ... spent the time devising means, not for achieving some success and incurring [Antony's] enmity, but for pleasing him without engaging in any activity." (Dio, xlix, 23, 1-2)

Filmer supports the later dates (39/36 BC) with six more arguments: (1) a difference between Roman and Jewish new year dates may have led Josephus to err one year in relating Jewish records with Roman consular years; (2) "Apart from this, several other consular dates given by Josephus are impossible to reconcile with one another," (pg. 287); (3) the 27 year span between Jerusalem's fall to Pompey and to Herod is confirmed by Josephus' mention of Hyrcanus (installed by Pompey) and his successor Antigonus (removed by Herod) holding the office of high priest for 24 years, and 3 years 3 months, respectively; (4) the history of Antony's activities for six years from the Battle of Philippi (at the end of 42 BC) are much more consistent with the 39/36 BC dates; (5) Josephus

refers to a shortage of food at the time of Jerusalem's fall to Herod, caused by a sabbath year. Concluding that a previous sabbath was recorded in 135/134 BC, one would also have fallen in 37/36 BC. So at the close of 36 BC there would indeed have been a shortage of food caused by a sabbath year.

WHERE ARE WE?

This evidence tells us that Herod's appointment to be king was in 39 BC, and his actual assumption of kingly power by conquering Jerusalem was in 36 BC. 37 and 34 years respectively bring us to 2 BC. So neither the eclipse of 5 BC nor that of 4 BC can be the one Josephus referred to as just preceding Herod's death. The next possible eclipse would be that of 9 January BC 1. But isn't that too late? Shouldn't Herod have died in 2 BC? No. We can adjust our dates by one year, if we assume (as footnote 6 suggests) that Josephus considers the first fractional year of reign as the "accession" year, and the next as year "one" (which was a common method of reckoning). Filmer also shows that both Herod's appointment and victory at Jerusalem occurred after Tishri 1 of whatever year. Therefore, year "one" of Herod would be either Nisan 35 BC to Nisan 34 BC, or Tishri 35 BC to Tishri 34 BC, and Herod's 34th (and last) year of kingship would end at either Nisan (spring) or Tishri (fall) BC 1 (depending on what month the regnal years began).

THE OTHER OPTION

Those who use the 40/37 BC dates can place Herod's death in 4 BC only by assuming: "(1) That Josephus always reckons reigns or periods of time inclusively, that is by the non-accession-year rule; (2) That Herod's regnal years began on 1 Nisan; (3) That Herod died after 1 Nisan in BC 4, and that Josephus reckoned the odd day or two of the new year as a full regnal year. The first assumption converts the fraction of a year into a whole, while the last two make a couple of days count as a year." (Filmer, JTS, pp. 293-294) The first assumption is contrary to Josephus' usual reckoning, and the second is not provable. The third is impossible! If Herod died after 1 Nisan BC 4, there would be only 14 days left to Passover, which must accommodate a funeral procession which William Whiston (the translator) puts at "no less than twenty-five days," and the quelling of a Jewish riot. (*Ant.* XVII Viii-ix)⁷ The third assumption is therefore disproved, and the date must fall.

THE MEGILLAT TA'ANIT

The *Megillat Ta'anit*, compiled shortly before AD 70, was a list of days associated with notable events, on which the Jews were not to fast. The reason for the holiday is given in every case but two, 7 Kislev and 2 Shebat. According to Jewish tradition these were the dates and deaths of two hated kings, Herod and Jannai. But which died on 7 Kislev, and which on 2 Shebat? 7 Kislev fell earlier in the year than all the eclipses of 1 and 4 BC; 2 Shebat was before that of 4 BC, but 15 days after both eclipses of BC 1. So if there is any validity to the tradition, Herod must have died on 2 Shebat, and it could not have been in 4 BC.

HEROD'S AGE

Josephus said Herod died at about 70 years of age. (*Ant.* XVII vi 1; *Wars* I xxxiii 1) As most understand Josephus to mean that Herod was 25 when his father Antipater made him governor of Galilee⁸ in 47 BC, Herod would have been 70 in 2 or 1 BC.

CONCLUSIONS

The eclipse marking the approximate time of Herod's death was evidently that of 9 January BC 1, putting Jesus' birth *before the end* of 2 BC. Scriptural evidence indicates Jesus was born *no earlier* than 2 BC. Therefore Jesus was born *in* 2 BC, and his ministry began in 29 AD. That this was the same year in which John began his ministry, and that John was 5-6 months older than Jesus (Luke 1:35-38), are consistent with the usual reasoning on Daniel 9:27 indicating that Jesus' birth was in the fall of the year.

- David Rice

¹ In *Pyramidology*, Volume 2, pp. 309-312, Bro. Adam Rutherford states that Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian support the 2 BC date. His references from their writings make this sound reasonable. We have not independently checked the first-hand sources, however.

² Ernest L. Martin, "The Celestial Pageantry Dating Christ's Birth," - *Christianity Today*, pg. 17, December 3, 1976.

³ To reconcile this with the 4-7 BC dates, some assume this 15th year is reckoned from some coregency with Augustus prior to Augustus' death. So far as we know, this is an arbitrary assertion without historical support.

⁴ For those wishing to calculate this, remember there is no year numbered "0" - the year preceding AD 1 is BC 1. This means any arithmetic between AD and BC dates must be adjusted by 1 to secure the correct result.

⁵ *Ant.* XVII viii 1; *Wars* I xxxiii 8. Bro. Adam Rutherford, in Volume 2 of his work *Pyramidology*, forwards the thought that the 37 years dates from Herod's victory at Jerusalem, and the 34 years from death of Antigonus 3 years after that. While at first inclined to the argument, an examination of the balance of Josephus' data to us obviates that possibility.

⁶ Filmer later shows by a listing of 6 priestly rulers that Josephus uses an accession-year reckoning, meaning that a straight total of individual periods of office does result in a correct number of overall years.

⁷ This argument is nearly fatal in any case for the BC 4 date, as between the eclipse (March 12/13) and Passover (April 11) are only 4 weeks, which is still not adequate time.

⁸ "The Greek text reads fifteen, but this must be an error, for otherwise Herod could never have reached the age of seventy." (Filmer, footnote, pg. 293) Whiston's translation gives "25."

The Chronology of the Hebrew Bible Compared to the Chronology in the Septuagint

When many today prefer the Chronology of the Septuagint instead of the Hebrew Bible, it is good to examine this subject closely.

The Septuagint is the oldest known Greek translation of the Old Testament. It is believed to have been done by 72 educated Jews of Alexandria in Egypt in the third to the first century before Christ. They have departed considerably from the Chronology of the Hebrew Bible. Each generation from Adam to Enoch has been increased in length a hundred years, by increasing the age of the father to the birth of the listed son by 100 years. So Adam is listed at 230 years instead of 130, Seth 205 instead of 105, and so on. Lamech's number is changed from 182 to 188. Arphaxad is said to be born 102 years after the Flood instead of 2. Also every generation from Arphaxad to Serug has in the same manner been increased 100 years. Against the Hebrew text a person has been mentioned, Kenan, between Arphaxad and Sela, who should have been born, when Kenan was 130 years old. For Nahor is mentioned 179 years.

Since the days of the Apostles, some have been of the understanding that the last day should come 6000 years after the creation of Adam. If the Chronology of the Septuagint was right, the last day would already have gone by. Because of this longer Chronology, it was also expected by many that it should start some 400 or 500 years after Christ. So when Jesus did not return, some made the wrong conclusion that it never was meant that Jesus himself should rule the people on earth on the last day, in the 7th millennium, but his ruling should be done by a deputy, the Pope in Rome. The Swedish Poet and Author Biktor Rydberg has touched this subject and clearly shown that the 70 translators in Alexandria *changed* the chronology of the Hebrew text to agree with the Egyptian historical chronology. Of course this was a dishonest way of doing things, whatever the motive. To prefer the worldly chronology before the words of God, when these are clear, is as putting aside the words of God. If the Hebrew Old Testament is not reliable, there is no way for us to determine the exact time for the beginning of the last day. The Apostle Paul said: "I believe everything laid down by the law or written by the prophets" (Acts 24:14). Such a remark means that we must choose the words of God before knowledge of the world where this last one parts itself from the first one.

Before the days of Jesus, God had entrusted the truths of the Old Testament to be taken care of by the Jews, and still today especially the orthodox among them, seem considerably and truly, to keep the very old scriptures. It is very often so that an educated person prefers the wisdom of mankind before the words of God. This concerns also the Jews. The 70 translators had in all probabilities been infected by the heathen culture of their time, so as to prefer the chronology of Egypt before the one of the Bible. In our time, for example, it is not so easy to convince either educated Jews or other educated people that Adam was created just somewhat over 6000 years ago, even if one

proves it ever so clearly by the words of the Bible. Partly they are stuck with the theory of evolution or they believe in men of science, who find old bones from human beings and monkeys and from that judge the age of humanity to be millions of years. Concerning the Jews, the Scriptures say: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos 3:2)

This remark concerns mainly the time before Christ: "He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel." He has not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them" (Psalms 147:19, 20)

Then what advantage have the Jews? Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the Oracles of God (Romans 3:2). They are Israelites and to them belong the stewardship, the glory of the covenants, the giving of the Law, the worship and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs and to their race according to the flesh came Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever (Romans 9:4, 5). It is clear that the Hebrew text is the word of God, and a change from that is infidelity to the Word. The Chronology of the Septuagint has been changed to agree with the Egyptian, but the information of heathen history writers or heathen priests cannot have the same value or greater value than the words of God.

From what is said above, we believe for our part, that it would be most sensible to keep to the Hebrew text. Also the Chronology in the text of the Samaritans is a change from the Hebrew text, but the Samaritans, who were a mixture of Jews and heathen, have not received the commission to serve the truths of God in the Old Testament, which commission alone has been given to the Jews (before Christ).

- *H. Karlan, 1946, translated from Swedish*

The 450-Year Period of the Judges

Here is a problem in Bible Chronology which, in some measure, should exercise the minds of students.

The Apostle Paul declares that God gave judges to Israel. "He gave unto them judges about [during] the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul ... forty years." (Acts 13:20, 21)

Did the Apostle speak solely by inspiration when he gave us this important chronological information? Or could he also have been guided by the records of the Old Testament? In other words, is it possible to find in the ancient Hebrew Scriptures chronological records which prove that judges ruled in Israel during 450 years?

It is possible, and this fact shows that the inspired Apostle Paul spoke "according to the Scriptures" in this matter of the period of the judges, and of the reign of Saul, as he did in his preaching of the Gospel of Christ. (1 Cor. 15:1-4) But we shall not find in the Old Testament a plain statement, such as that given by the Apostle, that Judges ruled during 450 years. Close study is necessary, also attention to the original Hebrew text in some important passages.

We have been much helped in this study by our dear Brother in the Lord, Hugo Karlón, whom we mention in our Pyramid booklet, "Its Scientific Features," page 37, 2nd paragraph. What follows is largely the result of his investigations, made some years ago.

In connection with this period of the judges, Brother Russell wrote in his 2nd volume of *Studies*, page 49 (B49): "The records given in the books of Judges and 1 Samuel mention nineteen periods, approximating a total of four hundred and fifty years." He adds, however, "but they are disconnected, broken, lapped and tangled so much that we could arrive at no definite conclusion from them, and should be obliged to conclude as others have done, that nothing positive could be known on the subject, were it not that the New Testament supplies the deficiency ... Acts 13:19-21."

Brother Russell did not attempt to define the 19 periods to which he calls attention; but other students of the Word have made the attempt. Recently we presented such a list, with Scriptural references, which add up to 450 years. This list appeared to be conclusive, but we invited examination and comments. Most of those to whom we sent the list expressed themselves as satisfied, but a few were critical. Certain Scriptural statements, it was pointed out, seem to be irreconcilable with the list as it stands, even though the 19 periods sum up to the desired 450 years. Let us repeat the list as presented, and then we can consider the irreconcilable Scriptures referred to:

| Years | | | Judges |
|-------|------------|---|----------------------|
| 1. | 8 | servitude to Mesopotamia | Jud. 3:8 |
| 2. | 40 | judgeship of Othniel | Jud. 3:9-11 |
| 3. | 18 | servitude to Moab | Jud. 3:14 |
| 4. | 80 | rest under deliverer Ehud | Jud. 3:15-30 |
| 5. | 20 | servitude to Jabin | Jud. 4:1-3 |
| 6. | 40 | rest under Deborah | Jud. Jud.4:4 to 5:31 |
| 7. | 7 | bondage under Midian | Jud. 6:1 |
| 8. | 40 | rest under Gideon | Jud. 6:11-14; 8:28 |
| 9. | 3 | reign of Abimelech | Jud. 9:1-22 |
| 10. | 23 | judgeship of Tola | Jud. 10:1-2 |
| 11. | <u>22</u> | judgeship of Jair | Jud. 10:3 |
| | 301 | see Judges 11:26 | |
| 12. | 18 | oppression of Ammon | Jud. 10:8 |
| 13. | 6 | judgeship of Jephthah | Jud. 12:7 |
| 14. | 7 | judgeship of Ibzan | Jud. 12:8, 9 |
| 15. | 10 | judgeship of Elon | Jud. 12:10, 11 |
| 16. | 8 | judgeship of Abdon | Jud. 12:12-15 |
| 17. | 40 | oppression of Philistines | Jud. 13:1 |
| | | Note: during the last 20 of these 40 years, Samson judged Israel (judges 15:20; 16:30, 31) | |
| 18. | 40 | judgeship of Eli, 1 Samuel 4:12-18 | |
| 19. | 20 | judgeship of Samuel, until Israel asked for a king, 1 Samuel 8:5; Acts 13:20, 21 | |
| | | Note: it was during Samuel's judgeship that the ark remained in Kirjath-Jearim, 1 Samuel 7:2 | |
| | <u>450</u> | Total (see Acts 13:20) | |

The above 19 periods appear to be those Bro. Russell referred to. Nevertheless, Scriptures can be quoted which prove that this list is not quite correct.

For instance, the 8 years of servitude to Mesopotamia is the first period of the list. But a punishment of servitude could not follow immediately after the end of the wilderness journey when Joshua led the people into the land of promise. The Scriptures declare: "And the people served the Lord [not the king of Mesopotamia] all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel." (Judges 2:7)

Before the punishment of servitude for unfaithfulness could be due, the faithful generation which served the Lord under the elders that outlived Joshua must have died out, and an unbelieving generation taken its place (judges 2:8-10). Therefore an interval of many years must have passed. (We shall refer to this interval presently.)

Jephthah, a prominent judge in Israel, speaks of a period of 300 years (see Judges 11:26). The Scriptures show that this 300 year period began to count from the end of the wilderness-journey, and terminated when Jephthah began his judgeship. When Judge jair died, and Jephthah took over

the judgeship of Israel, the Ammonites determined to “crush into complete subjection the children of Israel. (See the marginal reading of judges 10:8.) Jephthah tried to reason with the Ammonite king, and asked him why he fought against Israel. The king replied: “Because Israel took away my land, when they came up out of Egypt” (judges 11:12, 13). Jephthah then reminded the king that for 300 years the children of Ammon had made no attempt to regain their lost land, saying: “While Israel dwelt in Heshbon and her towns, and in Aroer and her towns, and in all the cities that be along by the coasts of Arnon, three hundred years? Why therefore did ye not recover them within that time?”

The termination of the 300 years spoken of by Jephthah (Judges 11:26), which coincides with the death of Judge Jair and the beginning of Jephthah's judgeship, is a definite timepoint in the history of Israel. From this time-point we can reckon backward to the days of Joshua, and forward to the time when Samuel anointed Saul as king over Israel.

JUDGES BEFORE JEPHTHAH

First, let us reckon backward. From the foregoing list, we note that Jair judged Israel for 22 years, and Tola before him for 23 years. Abimelech had a brief reign of 3 years, after Israel had enjoyed a rest of 40 years under Gideon. Before Gideon's deliverance Israel had suffered bondage to Midian for 7 years.

These five periods total 95 years, and all are easily to be followed in the Scriptural records.

But the preceding times of Deborah, Jabin, and Ehud call for careful consideration. For it is a mistake to assume that the 80 years referred to in Judges 3:30 were entirely under the deliverer Ehud.

Ehud delivered Israel after their 18 years' servitude to Moab (judges 3:14-29); but the Scriptures neither say nor imply that the 80 years rest which the land then enjoyed were all under the deliverer Ehud. The judgeship of Shamgar who followed Ehud, and of Deborah the prophetess who judged after Shamgar, are included in this 80 year period. Also, the oppressor Jabin, with his captain Sisera, were conquered within that time.

The Philistines tried to break the rest which Ehud had won for the land, but they were immediately overthrown by Shamgar. (Judges 3:31)

The “Twenty” years spoken of in Judges 4:5 can also be read “twentieth” according to the Hebrew original. For there are no ordinals in the Hebrew above 10, and the context, and the meaning of the passage, must determine which is correct in any particular text (ordinals: First, Second, Third etc., cardinals: One, Two, Three, etc.).

After the death of Ehud, during the time of Shamgar, the children of Israel again did evil (judges 4:1), and in punishment the Lord “sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; and the captain of whose host was Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles. And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord: for he had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel.” (Judges 4:1-3)

But as we point out, we can read “and in the twentieth year he [Jabin], mightily oppressed the children of Israel.” It was in the 20th, and last, year of Shamgar that Jabin oppressed Israel. The Hebrew of the word translated “oppressed” in this text does not necessarily imply that Jabin subjected Israel, but that he troubled them, and this in the northern part of the country only. (See marginal note of Judges 4:2.)

Judge Shamgar apparently did not exercise complete control of the land, for we read: “In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through byways” or “crooked ways” (judges 5:6, marginal reading). Although the land had rest during this time (no active wars) yet, owing to the weakness of judge Shamgar, there was a feeling of insecurity. The people were afraid to walk openly along the highways.

In the last, the twentieth, year of Shamgar, jabin determined to subject Israel and not merely to trouble them, and his yoke became so great that the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, with the result that Deborah, with Barak, put an end to Jabin and Sisera. (See the Song of Deborah and Barak, Judges 5.)

From the Hebrew text it is clear that the times of Ehud, Shamgar (jabin), and Deborah are included in the 80 years of Judges 3:30.

Immediately preceding the 80 years, Israel had been in servitude to Moab for 18 years (judges 3:14). Previous to this, Othniel had judged Israel for 40 years (judges 3:9-11). Othniel had delivered Israel from their 8 years of servitude to Cushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia (judges 3:8-10). This punishment of 8 years' servitude had come upon the erring children of Israel, when all that faithful generation which served the Lord during the days of Joshua, and of the elders that outlived him, had died out.

How many years were there between the end of the wilderness journey, and the beginning of the 8 years' servitude? This we can ascertain by summing up the periods backward from the death of Jair, and deducting this sum from the 300 years mentioned by Jephthah.

| | |
|--|------------|
| Jair | 22 |
| Tola | 23 |
| Abimelech | 3 |
| Gideon | 40 |
| Midian | 7 |
| Ehud, Shamgar (Jabin), Deborah (Judges 3:30) | 80 |
| Moab | 18 |
| Othniel | 40 |
| Mesopotamia | 8 |
| Total years = | <u>241</u> |

This total of 241 deducted from the 300 = 59 years

The Lord had caused Israel to wander for 40 years in the wilderness, until all men from 20 years old and upward, who had come out of Egypt, had been consumed in the wilderness (Numbers 32:11-13). Therefore the oldest of the “elders that outlived Joshua” would be 60 when he entered Canaan; and even if he had lived to the extreme age of Joshua, 1:10, his death would be 9 years short of the beginning of the Mesopotamian servitude.

Turning again to the list of 19 periods referred to earlier, we find that the 12th period, the oppression of Ammon, requires our attention. Let us read judges 10:8 and context. “... The anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon. And that year they vexed and oppressed the children of Israel: 18 years, all the children of Israel that were on the other side Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which is in Gilead. Moreover the children of Ammon passed over Jordan to fight against Judah, and against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim; so that Israel was sore distressed.” (Judges 10:7-9)

The above translation from the English Authorized Version does not convey the true meaning of the Hebrew original. The English text requires explanation. The word “eighteen” should be rendered “eighteenth;’ judging from the context. The correct translation is: ‘And that year they [the Ammonites] vexed and crushed the children of Israel in this, the 18th year ...’ Note also that the word “oppressed” is, in the marginal reading, “crushed,” which is a truer translation of the Hebrew word, and suggests a different thought.

The Ammonites did not succeed in dominating Israel as a whole. They troubled and vexed part of Israel for 17 years, during the time of jair's judgeship.. But “that year,” when Jair died (judges 10:5), which was the 18th year of their hostility to Israel, they evidently thought the passing of Judge Jair would allow them to easily dominate the whole of Israel, so they attacked Israel dreadfully, crushingly. But they were stopped and defeated by jephthah, who is declared to be “a mighty man of valour” (judges 11:1)

In Judges 11 we read how Jephthah was made leader of Israel, and how the Lord delivered the children of Ammon into his hands: “ He smote them from Aroer, ... with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.” (Judges 11:32, 33)

The Ammonites did not “crush” Israel for a period of 18 years from the date of Jair's death; rather, it was in the 18th year of their trouble-making that they crushed Israel (in “that year”), so calling forth that special effort of Israel under Jephthah to defeat and subdue the Ammonites. Therefore the 18 years of oppression do not commence with the death of Jair.

The 6 years of Jephthah's judgeship began at the death of Jair, the end of the 300 years spoken of by Jephthah. From this time-point we now move forward to the time of Samuel's judgeship, and his anointing of Saul as king.

JUDGES AFTER JEPHTHAH

Ibzan followed Jephthah and judged Israel 7 years. Then Elon judged for 10 years, and Abdon for 8. The 40 years' oppression by the Philistines followed, in the last 20 of which Samson judged Israel. (judges 13: 1; 15:20; 16:30, 3 1)

Eli followed with a judgeship of 40 years (1 Sam. 4:12-18). Finally, the prophet Samuel acted as Judge until the people asked for a king, and God gave them Saul.

In the list of 19 periods, Samuel is entered as having judged Israel for 20 years, on the assumption that the 20 years spoken of in 1 Samuel 7:2 has reference to the duration of Samuel's judgeship. But 1 Samuel 7:2 does not state that Samuel judged Israel for 20 years. The Scriptures show that up to the time Saul was anointed king, Samuel must have judged much longer than 20 years.

Ferrar Fenton says 45 years, while other chronologers reckon Samuel's judgeship at between 40 and 50 years. The Scriptures show that Samuel was "a child" at the time when Eli's "eyes began to wax dim" for age (1 Sam. 3:1, 2), but Samuel was "old and grayheaded" when he anointed Saul as king of Israel (1 Sam. 12:1, 2). This implies a considerable number of years between the death of Eli when Samuel replaced him as judge, and Saul's anointing. (See also 1 Sam. 8:1, 5; 12:2.)

When we take the literal translation of the Hebrew of 1 Sam. 7:2, we read: "And it came to pass from the time the ark remained in Kirjath-jearim, that the days were multiplied and it was the 20th year and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord," or "assembled before the Lord." The Latin Vulgate reads: "it was now the 20th year"

Most translators and commentators consider that the Philistines, after the death of Eli, continued to have a certain power over Israel during 20 years. In the meantime, however, Samuel was Judge in Israel.

But in the 20th year from the arrival of the ark in Kirjathjearim, Israel had had enough of the oppressive Philistine power, and turned to the Lord for help. Samuel prayed to the Lord for aid on behalf of the children of Israel in their distress, after admonishing them to "put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only: and he shall deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines" (1 Sam. 7:3)

When the Philistines sought to do battle against the now repentant children of Israel, "the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel ... So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more unto the coast of Israel." (1 Sam. 7:4-15)

After these 20 years, in the last of which the Philistines were finally subdued, Samuel judged Israel for 25 years until he anointed Saul to be king, making, therefore, 45 years in all for the judgeship of Samuel. This number of years for Samuel as judge, 45 until Saul became king, is consistent with the Scriptures.¹

Commencing with the end of the wilderness journey, our amended list now reads:

| | | | |
|---|-----------|-------------------------|-----------|
| Judgeship of Joshua, plus elders, etc. | 59 | Carried forward | 300 |
| Mesopotam. servitude | 8 | Jephthah | 6 |
| Othniel | 40 | Ibzan | 7 |
| Moab | 18 | Elon | 10 |
| Ehud, Shamgar (Jabin), and Deborah | 80 | Abdon | 8 |
| Midian | 7 | Philistines | 40 |
| Gideon | 40 | Eli | 40 |
| Abimelech | 3 | Samuel | <u>45</u> |
| Tola | 23 | Total = | 456 |
| Jair | <u>22</u> | | |
| (Jud. 11:26) Total = | 300 | | |

As the final total of 456 years dates from the end of the wilderness journey, whereas the Apostle Paul dates his 450 years from the division of the land among the tribes of Israel, we require to deduct 6 years from the 456 year total, the remainder of 450 years being that period spoken of by the Apostle in Acts 13:20.

That it took 6 years to divide the land is fully discussed by Brother Russell in Volume 2, pages 47, 48.

Although the above amended list appears to be comprised of 17 periods, it must be noted that the 80 years is the sum of three periods: 20 years for Ehud, 20 for Shamgar, and 40 for Deborah. Thus we still have 19 periods in all for the time during which judges ruled in Israel.

- Morton Edgar, 25 November, 1947

¹ Editor's note: we know no scripture statement for the length of Samuel's judgeship. Therefore we acknowledge the foregoing statement of 45 years is a matter of deduction. However, from 1 Samuel 7:15; 8:5 and 12:1-2 we know it was for an extended length of time. Therefore we still need Paul's words in Acts 13:19-21.