

DANIEL 1:1 AND CARCHEMISH

The following chart is constructed from the data contained in the first and second chapters of the Book of Daniel. Beginning in the third year of the reign of Jehoiachin (Dan.1:1), the first chapter is said to span a three year period (vv. 4, 5, 18). Since the events recorded in chapter two transpired in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, the question arises – does the story contained in chapter two occur *within* the three year span of chapter one or does it take place *afterward*? In other words, does chapter two follow chapter one chronologically or not? Moreover, what is the relationship of the years of King Jehoiachin of Judah's reign to those of Nebuchadnezzar's?

The first step in resolving this issue revolves around the fact that it simply would not be possible that Daniel and his three friends could be so highly elevated in the affairs of the government of Babylonia in chapter two (Dan.2:48, 49) and afterward still have to appear before King Nebuchadnezzar to obtain his approval by proving their abilities "to stand in the king's palace" (Dan.1:4, 18-20) as though they were yet mere students. But such would be the case were the happenings of chapter two imbedded somewhere within the three year time frame of chapter one. Accordingly, the context of chapter two clearly follows *after* chapter one chronologically.

Since chapter one encompasses most of a three-year span (cp. vv. 4,5,18), then the events in chapter two must have occurred after Daniel's schooling. Thus, the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign must take place after Daniel's and the other princes of Judah's "graduation".

Furthermore, Jeremiah 25:1 reveals that Nebuchadnezzar's first regnal year was Jehoiakim's fourth regnal year. Consequently, Nebuchadnezzar's second year of reign (Dan.2:1) was during Daniel's third year in the school of the Chaldeans. Further, the events of chapter two must occur *during* that year (604 BC) but *after* Daniel's face-to-face "final exam" (Dan.1:18-20) with Nebuchadnezzar.

3398 AM	3399 AM	3400 AM	
606 BC	605 BC	604 BC	
1	2	3	← Daniel's years of deportation and his service as a student. Dan.1:1, 5, 18.
0	1	2	← Years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign
3	4	5	← Jehoiakim's regnal years

↑	↑	↑	
Dan.1:1 Nebuchad. as crown prince & General	Carchemish Jer.25:1 Jer.46:2	Daniel becomes Prime Minister of Babylon. Dan.2:1, cp. 2:46-49	

By numbering backward from that point, it will be seen that Daniel's first year of deportation and schooling must have occurred one year prior to Nebuchadnezzar's actual accession to the throne (see above chart where year 1 for Daniel is thereby compelled to equal year 0 for Nebuchadnezzar).

Jeremiah 46:2 states that Jehoiakim's fourth year was the year in which Pharaoh Neco was defeated by Nebuchadnezzar at the battle of Carchemish on the Euphrates River. The date of this battle has been established as firmly as possible by secular scholars and astronomers, assigning it the year BC 605. If this date is correct, it in turn serves as one of the two great connecting links between Bible chronology and secular dating (the other being the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar in which Christ Jesus was "about 30 years of age", cp. Luk.3:1,23). Therefore, the first year of Nebuchadnezzar (which is

also the 21st and last year of his father, Nabopolassar) is the fourth year of Jehoiakim, BC 605, the same year in which the battle of Carchemish was fought.

Considering the chart and comparing these last facts to the first paragraphs in which chapters one and two of Daniel were examined, it is concluded that this data demands both an invasion and a deportation by Nebuchadnezzar in the year *before* that King began to reign, that is, the year prior to Carchemish. The fact is that Daniel Chapter two is contextually after the final testing of Daniel, and chapter one states that the examination took place during the third year of Daniel's deportation (Dan.1:5, 18). Furthermore, when this is compared to Jeremiah 25:1, which states that Nebuchadnezzar's first year of reign was Jehoiakim's fourth, it demands the conclusion that the third year of Daniel's deportation was the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (diagram p. 198).

It follows then that Daniel 1:1 does not conflict with Jeremiah 25:1 as is often claimed. Observe that Daniel 1:1 does not say that the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim is the first year of Nebuchadnezzar's *reign*. As illustrated, such would be impossible from the data in chapter one when compared to 2:1 which is said to occur in Nebuchadnezzar's second year of dominion. Moreover, Daniel 1:1 is merely a statement of *identification*, i.e., the Nebuchadnezzar who came and besieged Jerusalem in Jehoiakim's third year is the same man who became sole Rex the following year (Jer.25:1). The apparent contradiction has been resolved by simply allowing the Scriptures to speak for themselves, apart from profane materials.

This simple chart also corrects the current vogue of making Daniel's deportation occur in the year of the Battle of Carchemish. Those who so insist consider the opening verse of Daniel as being a blunder for it states that Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem "in the third year of Jehoiakim". To prove their point they invariably invoke a quote from Berosus, the Babylonian Priest and historian.

Berosus was a Chaldean Priest of Belus residing at Babylon who lived at the time of Alexander the Great (BC 356-323). About 268 BC, he wrote a history of Babylonia in Greek, beginning from the Creation unto his own time. Preserved in quotes within the works of Apollodorus (BC 144), Polyhistor (BC 88), Abydenus (BC 60), Josephus (AD 37-103), and Eusebius (AD 265-340), only fragments of this work remain. Berosus says he obtained the materials for his history from the archives of the temple of Belus.

According to the Babylonian Chronicles, almost every year during the period from 609-598 BC, a Babylonian army under the command of Nabopolassar or his son Nebuchadnezzar entered the area along the Mediterranean coast toward Judah to oppose Egyptian domination of that part of the fertile crescent. The Battle of Carchemish, and consequently Jehoiakim's fourth year, has been dated by Babylonian evidence as having taken place the twenty-first and last year of Nabopolassar.¹ The Babylonian Chronicles go on to say that Nabopolassar died on the 8th of Ab (8 August) 605 BC, and that Crown Prince Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon from the fighting near Hamath and took the throne on 1 Elul (31 August).

The critics pretend that this account of the 605 Carchemish expedition extended into Judah, and that this is when Daniel, etc., were carried back to Babylon in Jehoiakim's fourth year in order to make it "fit" Jeremiah 25:1 and 46:2. The former cited account of the battle in the Babylonian Chronicles states that the Egyptians fled from Carchemish to Hamath where they were overtaken and slain to the last man. Combining portions of Berosus' account with that of the Chronicles, scholars commonly report that after the Carchemish victory, Nebuchadnezzar hastened back to Babylon "over the desert" to secure the throne.

¹ Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaleaeen Kings*, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-69.

The particular quote from Berossus relating to one of these incursions is preserved by Josephus which says:²

"When his father Nabopolassar heard that the governor whom he had set over Egypt, and the places about Celesyria and Phoenicia, had revolted from him, while he was not himself able any longer to undergo the hardships (of war), he committed to his son Nebuchadnezzar, who was still but a youth, some parts of his army, and sent them against him. So when Nebuchadnezzar had given battle, and fought with the rebel, he beat him and reduced the country from under his subjection and made it a branch of his own kingdom; but about that time it happened that his father Nabopolassar fell ill, and ended his life in the city of Babylon, when he had reigned twenty-one years; and when he was made sensible, as he was in a little time, that his father Nabopolassar was dead, and having settled the affairs of Egypt, and the other countries, as also those that concerned the captive Jews, and Phoenicians, and Syrians, and those of the Egyptian nations, and having committed the conveyance of them to Babylon to certain of his friends, together with the gross of his army, ... he went himself hastily, accompanied with a few others, *over the desert*, and came to Babylon. So he took upon him the management of public affairs and of the kingdom which had been kept for him by one that was the principal of the Chaldeans, and he received the entire dominions of his father and appointed, that when the captives came, they should be placed as colonies, in the most proper places of Babylonia; but then he adorned the temple of Belus, and the rest of the temples, in a magnificent manner, with the spoils he had taken in the war." (author's italics)

It should be pointed out that the account as recorded by Berossus differs from the Chronicles' account in that Berossus says that the governor whom Nabopolassar had set over Egypt rebelled and that this is he with whom Nebuchadnezzar did battle and subdued. In contrast however, the battle of Carchemish was fought against Pharaoh Neco. Neco was a King, not a governor. Neither was he appointed by Nabopolassar. He inherited the throne from his father, Psammetik.

Another question arises concerning these accounts; how could Nebuchadnezzar return to Babylon "over the desert" from Carchemish on the Euphrates? Not even from Hamath would he have crossed the desert. Of course the supposed answer is that he was far to the south having just raided Syria, Phoenicia, Egypt, and Judah as Berossus states, but the Chronicles merely say that "at that time Nebuchadnezzar conquered the whole area of the Hatti-country". Wiseman asserts that the geographical term "Hatti" included "*at this period*" all of Syria and Palestine;³ however this is not as certain as he indicates (author's italics).

The key italicized words from the quote underscore the fact that conjecture is involved in this identification. Only several hundred years previous the region known as "Hattina" (Hatti) was far to the north in the Hamath-Orontes River-Aleppo area, starting about 50 miles southwest of Carchemish and more than 150 miles north of the sea of Galilee.⁴

In any event, the Babylonian Chronicles and the account by Berossus exhibit a number of other significant discrepancies between them justifying one to doubt and wonder if the Berossus narrative is little more than his confused compilation of several different incursions. As it stands, the modern practice of combining these two accounts into one whereby after the BC 605 Carchemish victory Nebuchadnezzar, after already having subjugated Judah such that Daniel was carried back to Babylon in Jehoiakim's fourth year, hastened back to Babylon "over the desert" to secure the throne does not actually "fit" Jeremiah 25:1 and 46:2. Instead, the contrivance invents a direct contradiction with the faithful testimony of Daniel 1:1. The Scriptures clearly declare that Nebuchadnezzar came

² Josephus, *op. cit.*, *Antiquities*, X, 11, 1.

³ Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaleaeen Kings*, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-69.

⁴ Yohanan Aharoni and Michael Avi-Yonah, *The Macmillan Bible Atlas*, (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1968), p. 88.

against Jerusalem in Jehoiakim's third year, the year before Carchemish (Dan.1:1, cp. Jer.25:1; 46:2), and the Lord Jesus endorsed these Scriptures.

In conclusion, the construction of an elementary chart depicting the data in Daniel Chapters one and two enables us to clearly identify the third year of Daniel's deportation as the second year in which Nebuchadnezzar reigned as sole rex (see plat, page 1). This in turn leads one to the inescapable determination that Nebuchadnezzar could not be reigning as sole King when he carried Daniel away to Babylon (although it is acknowledged he could have been viceroy or co-rex at the time). The removal of Daniel, the other "princes" of Judah, and part of the vessels of the House of God had to have occurred in 606 BC, the year prior to Carchemish. This finding harmonizes the paradox between Daniel 1:1 and Jeremiah 25:1, leaving us to see that no contradiction exists between these two passages as is often reported.

To try to force the Babylonian account of the Battle of Carchemish from either Berossus or the Babylonian Chronicles to be the year in which Daniel is deported is unwarranted. This is all the more so since these accounts have been shown to contradict one another with respect to important particulars. As the Chronicles have been found reliable many times over, Berossus' description must come into question. Furthermore, were Daniel 1:1 in error as compared to Jer.25:1 and 46:2, his contemporaries would not have regarded him as a true prophet, but Ezekiel so did (Ezk.14:14,20; 28:3) as did the Lord Jesus about six hundred years afterwards (Mat.24:15). Thus, not only should the matter be settled in the mind of the interested secular inquirer, for the Biblicist it should be without the slightest doubt or hesitancy.