

# WHEN WAS ANCIENT JERUSALEM DESTROYED?”

A critique of the two-part article published in the public editions of  
*The Watchtower* of October 1, 2011, Part One, pages 26-31 and  
*The Watchtower* of November 1, 2011, Part Two, pages 22-28.

## PART ONE

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### CONTENTS

An introductory background overview .....	1
REVIEW OF “WHEN WAS ANCIENT JERUSALEM DESTROYED?” PART ONE.....	3
“Seventy Years”for Whom? .....	4
When did “the Seventy Years” Start? .....	7
When did “the Seventy Years” End? .....	9
Classical Historians – How Accurate? – Berossus .....	10
Classical Historians – How Accurate? – The Canon of Ptolemy .....	12
The Canon of Ptolemy and the Uruk King List .....	15
The Conclusion Based on this Evidence .....	20

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## AN INTRODUCTORY BACKGROUND OVERVIEW

In 1977, when I sent a treatise entitled “The Gentile Times Reconsidered” to the Watchtower headquarters, correspondence was started that lasted for three years, from May, 1977 until May, 1980. I finally realized that the leaders were not prepared to let any facts disturb the claim that the Watchtower organization is “God’s sole channel on earth”, a claim based upon the calculation that “the times of the Gentiles” is a period of 2520 years that started in 607 BCE and ended in 1914. The correspondence is available here: <http://kristenfrihet.se/english/corr.htm> .

This was confirmed the following year, 1981, when the book “*Let Your Kingdom Come*” was published. An Appendix on pages 186-189 contained a defense of the Watchtower Society’s chronology that was clearly directed against my treatise. As a consequence, I wrote a thorough refutation of the Appendix and added it to my treatise, which was published in both English and Swedish in 1983. See *The Gentile Times Reconsidered*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition 2004 (hereafter referred to as *GTR4*), pages 283-307.

The Appendix in “*Let Your Kingdom Come*” has been the only *official* defense of the Society’s chronology published in the Watchtower publications since 1981. But now, after 30 years, the Watchtower leaders have finally decided to break the silence and make another attempt. In the two-part series entitled “When Was Ancient Jerusalem Destroyed?” and published in the public editions of *The Watchtower* magazine of October 1 and November 1, 2011, the authors try to undermine the enormous burden of evidence against 607 BCE as the date for Nebuchadnezzar’s destruction of Jerusalem. The articles are claimed to present “thoroughly researched and Bible-based answers to questions that have puzzled some readers.”

During the past decades an increasing number of Jehovah’s Witnesses have become aware of the Biblical and historical problems with the 607 BCE date. As a consequence many (not just “some”) of them have sent their questions to the Watchtower headquarters. Until now, writers at the headquarters have tried to answer their questions *in private letters*. But many of the questioners did not find the “answers” satisfying, and that is the reason I have been sent copies of many private letters sent from the Watchtower headquarters.

In recent years many of the answers have developed into a kind of “standard letter” of up to five pages, accompanied by about 85 copies from 16 various sources. I have seen several “answers” of this kind. In 2005 I wrote a 13-page refutation of such “standard letters” that could be sent to those who contacted me. If someone is interested in receiving a copy of one the Society’s “standard letters” and of my refutation of it, just send me an email.

Undoubtedly, the presently best known Watchtower apologist for their chronology is Rolf Furuli in Oslo, Norway. He has written two books in support of the chronology of the Watchtower Society. Evidently these books have impressed some of the writers at the Watchtower headquarters, who even have referred to his books in their answers. Thus, at the end of a letter dated January 29, 2009, one Society writer (using the code ECJ:ECN) refers the questioner to Rolf Furuli’s two books in this way:

We are enclosing photocopies of all of the secular references we have cited or quoted above. Since you refer to Rolf Furuli, you likely would find interesting his in-depth study of this subject in his two-volume work, entitled *Assyrian, Babylonian, Egyptian and Persian Chronology Compared With the Chronology of the Bible*. Of course, he is solely responsible for the information presented therein since it is the result of his personal research and is not published by our organization. We trust that the contents of our letter will be helpful to you.

With our best wishes,

*Christian Congregation  
of Jehovah's Witnesses*

The two articles in *The Watchtower* of October 1 and November 1, 2011 continually reflect the contents in Furuli's two books. The two articles seem clearly to have been written in co-operation with Rolf Furuli. Most readers will not be aware of this, nor will they be aware of the fact that both books have been thoroughly refuted in articles and reviews published on the web and elsewhere.

For articles and reviews on chronology, see the "Articles on Chronology" on this site: <http://kristenfrihet.se/english/epage.htm>. Note, for example, the devastating review of Furuli's volume II, 2<sup>nd</sup> 2008 edition, near the bottom of the page, written by Professor Hermann Hunger in Vienna, who is the translator of and also the leading authority on the astronomical observational cuneiform tablets. The direct link is:

<http://kristenfrihet.se/kf4/reviewHunger.htm>

A review of the first four chapters of Furuli's volume I, 1<sup>st</sup> 2003 edition, is available here:

<http://kristenfrihet.se/english/furulirev.htm>

Most of the remaining chapters are reviewed in the British interdisciplinary journal *Chronology & Catastrophism Review*, "Can the Persian Chronology be Revised?," Part I, Volume 2006, pp. 25-40, and Part II, Volume 2007, pp. 38-57.

This means that most of the argumentation in the Society's two articles has already been thoroughly refuted. Most of the following examination of the two articles in *The Watchtower* therefore summarizes what has already been published elsewhere.

## REVIEW OF “WHEN WAS ANCIENT JERUSALEM DESTROYED?” PART ONE

Historians and archaeologists date Nebuchadnezzar’s destruction of Jerusalem either to 587 BCE or 586 BCE. The *difference* between the two dates has nothing to do with secular or extra-Biblical sources, which establish beyond all reasonable doubt that Nebuchadnezzar’s 18<sup>th</sup> year was 587 BCE and his 19<sup>th</sup> year 586 BCE. The question which of these two dates is correct is a Biblical problem: Jeremiah 52:12-27 (quoted in 2 Kings 25:8-21) dates the desolation to the 19<sup>th</sup> year, while Jeremiah 52:29 dates it to the 18<sup>th</sup> year. The problem may be solved if the different methods of reckoning regnal years in Judah and Babylonia are considered. (*GTR4*, pp. 314-320.)

As is well known, the Watchtower Society rejects both of these dates and insists that the destruction took place 20 years earlier, in 607 BCE. The article in *The Watchtower* of October 1, 2011, pages 26-31, therefore, starts by quoting a reader who asks:

“Why do Jehovah’s Witnesses say it was 607 B.C.E.? What is your basis for this date?”

The authors add:

“But why be interested in the actual date when Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar II razed the city of Jerusalem?”

Two reasons are given for this. First the authors quote an historian who stated that the destruction led to “a catastrophe, indeed the ultimate catastrophe.” The name of the historian is not given, but he has been identified as Rainer Albertz, and the statement is found on page 8 of his book, *Israel in Exile: the History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003). The statement does not reflect the assessment of the author, however. He is talking about how the books of Kings see the exile, in contrast to the more positive outlook of Jeremiah’s book which doesn’t only view it a catastrophe but also as “a God-given chance for a new beginning.” (p. 7) The destruction was indeed a catastrophe for Judah and Jerusalem. But it was not the ultimate one, because after the fall of Babylon in 539 BC Jehovah brought the exiled Jews back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and the city, in fulfillment of his promise at Jeremiah 29:10.



The “ultimate catastrophe” did not come until CE (AD) 70, when Jerusalem was once again totally destroyed and the temple burnt and torn down, never to be rebuilt again. And this time Judah ceased to exist as a theocratic nation.

The second reason why the Watchtower Society finds it so important to hold on to the 607 BCE date is claimed to be that it “fulfilled a precise Bible prophecy” and “because of evidence within the Bible itself.” Is this true? Which “precise Bible prophecy” was fulfilled only if Jerusalem was destroyed in 607 but not in 587 BCE? And what evidence “within the Bible itself” supports 607 and not 587 BCE? As will be shown below, none of the two reasons mentioned requires that Jerusalem was destroyed in 607 BCE. And both the Biblical and the extra-Biblical evidence prove conclusively that the 607 BCE date is wrong.

The *real* reason why the Watchtower Society insists that Jerusalem was destroyed in 607 BCE is not revealed by the authors of the article. The truth is that this date is required by the movement as the starting-point for its calculation that the “times of the gentiles” (Luke 21:24) is a period of 2520 years that ended in 1914, when Jesus Christ is believed to have returned invisibly and, after an inspection of the Christian denominations, appointed the Watchtower movement in 1919 as his sole “mouthpiece” and “channel” on earth. Without the 607 BCE date, this claim would have to be abandoned as a serious mistake.

### **“SEVENTY YEARS” FOR WHOM?**

To arrive at the 607 BCE date for the destruction of Jerusalem the Watchtower Society refers to Jeremiah’s prophecy of the “seventy years”, claiming that this was the period the Jewish exiles spent at Babylon after the destruction of Jerusalem. It is further claimed that the exiles returned to Jerusalem in 537 BCE, two years after the fall of Babylon in 539 BCE. By adding seventy years to the 537 BCE date, the Society arrives at 607 BCE as the year of the destruction of Jerusalem.

This calculation is based upon a misleading interpretation of Jeremiah’s seventy-year prophecy which also includes a serious mistranslation of a part of it. It is therefore of interest that the authors of the *Watchtower* article, in a note on page 26, mention that Jehovah’s Witnesses have produced “a reliable Bible translation known as the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*.” Then they add: “However, if you are not one of Jehovah’s Witnesses, you may prefer to use other translations when considering Bible subjects. This article quotes from a number of widely accepted Bible translations.”

All Bible quotations in the article – with one important exception – have references to the translations used. It turns out that almost all are taken from the *New International Version (NIV)*. The only other translation explicitly referred to is the *English Standard Version (ESV)*, which is quoted twice on page 28. The “number” of Bible translations referred to, then, turns out to be just two.

The first prediction about the seventy years is found at Jeremiah 25:11, which the authors quote from *NIV*:

“This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.”

It is to be noted that this prophecy does not speak of the length of the Jewish exile, as the authors claim, but of the length of the period when “these nations” (“all nations” according to Jeremiah 27:7) would *serve* the king of Babylon. (For a detailed analysis of this verse, see *GTR4*, pages 195-209.)

The second prediction about the seventy years is found at Jeremiah 29:10, which the authors quote as follows:

“This is what Jehovah has said, ‘In accord with the fulfilling of seventy years at Babylon I shall turn my attention to you people, and I will establish toward you my good word in bringing you back to this place.’”

This translation gives the impression that the seventy years refer to the length of the Jewish exile at Babylon: “seventy years at Babylon”. This is the only Bible quotation in the whole article for which the authors *do not* refer to the translation used. It is neither *NIV* nor *ESV*. It is, in fact, the *New World Translation (NWT)*, Jehovah’s Witnesses own “reliable” Bible translation. Why did they conceal this? The reason is obvious.

The Hebrew preposition translated “at” here in *NWT* is *l<sup>e</sup>*. Modern authorities on Hebrew agree that this preposition means “to”, “for”, “with reference to”. They point out that it *may* also be used in a local or spatial sense (“in”, “at”), but *only in certain adverbial expressions*, and in any case not at Jeremiah 29:10, where the meaning is “*for* Babylon”. The Swedish Hebraist Dr. Seth Erlandsson states that, “*The spatial sense is impossible at Jer. 29:10.*” Other Hebraists agree, including Professor Ernst Jenni, the leading authority on the Hebrew prepositions. His work on the preposition *l<sup>e</sup>* alone covers 350 pages! (See *GTR4*, pages 209-215, 375-379.)

Very few Bible translations have “at Babylon” at Jeremiah 29:10, and most if not all of them are influenced by the venerable *King James Version (KJV)* from 1611. Today it is realized that this is a mistranslation. Thus, as Ernst Jenni points out, “The rendering in all modern commentaries and translations is ‘for Babel’ (Babel as world power, not city or land); this is clear from the language as well as also from the context.” (*GTR4*, pages 212, 213, 379)

Thus the *NIV*, the translation usually quoted in the *Watchtower* article, renders Jeremiah 29:10 as follows:

“When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place.”

The authors of the *Watchtower* article do, in fact, quote Jeremiah 29:10 according to *NIV* on page 27, but with a conspicuous omission:

“When seventy years are completed ... I will ... bring you back to this place”.

True, they had mentioned earlier on the same page that “many translations read ‘for Babylon.’ (*NIV*)” But they evidently did not want to emphasize this later on in a context where they claim that, “according to the Bible, the 70 years was a period of bitter punishment for Judah”. This claim is contradicted by modern translations which show that the seventy years refer to the period of Babylonian supremacy, from the fall of Assyria in 609 BC to the fall of Babylon in 539 BC, during which period the nations were to “serve the king of Babylon seventy years.” The seventy years were “for Babylon” and did not, therefore, refer to the period of Jerusalem’s desolation or the length of the Jewish exile. As Professor Norman Gottwald points out:

“Certainly it must be stressed that the seventy years refer primarily to the time of Babylonian world dominion and not to the time of the exile, as is often carelessly supposed.” (N. Gottwald, *All the Kingdoms of the Earth*, New York, Evanston, London: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1964, pp. 265, 266)

This is the conclusion of *many* historians and Bible commentators, not just “some”, as the authors of the *Watchtower* article state on page 27, evidently in an attempt to defuse this important observation.

Some examples were quoted in *GTR4* on page 215, and many other leading scholars agree. One example is Professor Jack Finegan, whose *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* is a classic. In the second edition, published in 1998 (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers), he concludes on page 255:

“The ‘seventy years ... for Babylon,’ of which Jeremiah speaks are therefore seventy years of Babylonian rule, and the return of Judah from exile is contingent upon the end of that period. Since the final fall of the Assyrian empire was in 609 B.C. (§ 430), and the New Babylonian empire endured from then until Cyrus the Persian took Babylon in 539, the period of Babylonian domination was in fact seventy years (609 – 539 = 70).”

Another recent example is Dr. Jack Lundbom, an internationally respected authority on the book of Jeremiah. His three-volume commentary on Jeremiah in the Anchor Bible series is the most extensive and detailed modern commentary on the book, covering 2262 pages in all (Vol. I, 1999, XXV+934 pages; Vol. II, 2004, XVI+649 pages; and Vol. III, 2004, XIV+638 pages). In his discussion of the 70 years in Jeremiah 25:10-12 and 29:10 Dr. Lundbom concludes that this period refers “not to the length of Judah’s exile or to ‘Jerusalem’s desolations’ but to Babylon’s tenure as a world power (Duhm).” He further observes:

“From the fall of Nineveh (612 B.C.) to Babylon’s capture by Cyrus (539 B.C.) was 73 years; from the Battle of Carchemish (605 B.C.– Nebuchadrezzar’s first year; cf. 25:1) to Babylon’s capture by Cyrus (539 B.C.) was 66 years; and from the actual end of the Assyrian Empire (609/8 B.C.) to Babylon’s capture by Cyrus and the return of the exiles (539 B.C.) was almost precisely 70 years.” (Vol. II, Doubleday, 2004, pp. 249, 250)

The answer to the question, “Seventy Years’ for Whom?”, then, is “for Babylon.” This is what Jeremiah clearly predicted at Jeremiah 25:11 and 29:10. The claim of the authors of the *Watchtower* article, that the Bible “shows that the 70 years were to be a period of severe punishment from God – aimed specifically at the people of Judah and Jerusalem,” conflicts both with Jeremiah’s prophecy and with the extra-Biblical historical evidence and is clearly false.

**Jeremiah 29:10 according to the revised Swedish translation of NWT:**

<p>10 "Ty detta är vad Jehova har sagt: <u>'När sjuttio år har gått för* Babylon</u> skall jag vända min uppmärksamhet till er,<sup>e</sup> och jag skall gentemot er befästa mitt goda ord genom att föra er tillbaka till denna plats.'<sup>f</sup></p>
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Some translations of the *New World Translation (NWT)* into other languages have changed the erroneous “at Babylon” into “for Babylon.” This holds true of the most recent edition of the Swedish *NWT*, revised in 2003, which has changed the “at Babylon” [“i Babylon”] to “for Babylon” [“för Babylon”]. The same holds true of the Danish *NWT*, which has “for Babylon.” The statement on the title page in the Swedish *NWT* translation that it was “carefully compared with the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek original text,” indicates that the translator knew Hebrew and therefore chose the correct preposition.

## WHEN DID “THE SEVENTY YEARS” START?

The question when the “seventy years” started has already been answered above. The Babylonian armies finally crushed the Assyrian empire in 609 BCE and took over its territories. This was the start of the “seventy years for Babylon.” The servitude of these territories, then, began 22 years before the destruction of Jerusalem. Some nations, however, were not subjugated until a few years later.

The reason was that the countries in the west, Syro-Palestine, at that time called “Hattu”, had been taken over by Egypt after the fall of Assyria, and not until 605 BCE did Nebuchadnezzar defeat the Egyptians at Carchemish. Immediately thereafter he started to conquer Hattu. And next year, in 604 BCE, when he was made king of Babylon after his father’s death, he marched back to Hattu to continue the operations. The Babylonian chronicle B.M. 21946 reports:



“The first year of Nebuchadnezzar: In the month of Sivan he mustered his army and marched to Hattu. Until the month Kislev he marched about victoriously in Hattu. All the kings of Hattu came into his presence and he received their vast tribute.” – A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (1975; reprinted by Eisenbrauns in 2000), p. 100.

Thus, in 604 BCE the lands in the west, too, had been subjugated and were forced to serve the king of Babylon. This was 17 years *before* the desolation of Jerusalem.

The authors of the *Watchtower* article, however, try to find support for their interpretation by quoting Ezra’s statement at 2 Chronicles 36:20, 21:

“He [Nebuchadnezzar] carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power. The land enjoyed its Sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah.” (NIV)

The authors of the *Watchtower* article conclude:

“Thus, the 70 years were to be a period when the land of Judah and Jerusalem would enjoy ‘sabbath rests’.”

The authors not only go on to explain that the sabbath rests of the land of Judah started after the desolation of Jerusalem, but they also use Ezra’s statement to argue that the seventy years started at the time. But is this really what Ezra said?

A careful examination of 2 Chronicles 36:20, 21 reveals that Ezra does not mention *the start* of the seventy years at all. But he does mention *the end* of the seventy years of servitude. He says that the Jewish exiles “became servants of him [Nebuchadnezzar] and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power.” This reflects the statement in Jeremiah 27:7 that “All nations will serve him [Nebuchadnezzar] and his son and his grandson until the time for his land comes”.

The time “for his land” came, as Ezra explains, when “the kingdom of Persia came to power.” Persia came to power in 539 BCE, when Cyrus’s armies captured Babylon and took over its territories. That year, therefore, ended the seventy years of service to the Babylonian kings. Of course, it would not be possible to serve the king of Babylon after 539 BCE, as its last king, Nabonidus, had been dethroned that year and his son and viceroy Belshazzar had been killed. (Daniel 5:30, 31) This agrees with Jeremiah’s statement at Jeremiah 25:12 (a verse not quoted by the *Watchtower* authors):

“ ‘But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt,’ declares the LORD.” (NIV)

When was the king of Babylon punished? In 539 BCE. At that time, and not later, “the seventy years [would be] fulfilled,” according to Jeremiah’s prophecy.

In view of this, the claim that the seventy years did not end until 537 BCE when the Jewish remnant is supposed to have returned to Jerusalem clearly conflicts with the Bible. The seventy years ended in 539 BCE when the Jewish exiles were still in Babylon, as had also been predicted at Jeremiah 29:10: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you ... to bring you back to this place.”

Nor does Ezra say that the “desolation of Jerusalem” and the “sabbath rests” would last seventy years. He only says that the land would be desolated and enjoy its sabbath rests “until the seventy years *were completed*”. He does not say that the land was desolated and began to enjoy its sabbath rests *at the beginning of the seventy years*. As both the Bible and the extra-Biblical sources show, the seventy years “for Babylon” began many years *before* the desolation of Judah and Jerusalem, when “all the nations” began to serve the king of Babylon. (For a more detailed examination of 2 Chronicles 36:20, 21, see *GTR4*, pages 220-225.)

## **WHEN DID “THE SEVENTY YEARS” END?**

This question, too, has already been answered. As shown above, the “seventy years for Babylon” ended in October, 539 BCE, when Cyrus’ armies took Babylon. The idea that they ended two years later, in 537 BCE, has no support whatsoever in the Bible. Babylon did not fall that year, nor did the nations continue to serve the king of Babylon until that year. The seventy years, therefore, cannot be added to 537 BCE. The statement on page 29 of the *Watchtower* that “the inspired Scriptures clearly point to 607 B.C.E. for Jerusalem’s destruction” is quite simply false.

The authors of the *Watchtower* article next go on to ask, “why do many authorities hold to the date 587 B.C.E.?” Their answer is: “They lean on two sources of information – the writings of classical historians and the canon of Ptolemy.”

This statement is *thoroughly false*. Historians today base their chronology of the Neo-Babylonian period primarily on cuneiform tablets, most of which go back to or date from the Neo-Babylonian period itself! These include chronicles, king lists, royal inscriptions, and many thousands of economic-administrative and legal documents dated to the reigns of the Neo-Babylonian kings. In addition, there is a number of astronomical tablets recording numerous observations dated to the various Neo-Babylonian reigns which establish the absolute chronology of the whole period. (*GTR4*, chapters 3 and 4)

The attempt by the authors of the *Watchtower* article to tone down this enormous witness by claiming that authorities lean on *secondary* sources, like classical historians who lived hundreds of years later, is utterly dishonest.

## CLASSICAL HISTORIANS – HOW ACCURATE? – BEROSSUS

In a box on page 29 the authors give four examples of late classical historians who show figures for the Neo-Babylonian reigns:



**NEO-BABYLONIAN KINGS**  
If these historians are reliable, why do they disagree?

Kings	BEROSSUS c. 350-270 B.C.E.	POLYHISTOR 105-7 B.C.E.	JOSEPHUS 37-7100 C.E.	PTOLEMY c. 100-170 C.E.
Nabopolassar	21	20	—	21
Nebuchadnezzar II	43	43	43	43
Amel-Marduk	2	12	18	2
Neriglissar	4	4	40	4
Labashi-Marduk	9 months	—	9 months	—
Nabonidus	17	17	17	17

Length of king's reign (in years) according to classical historians

Of these, the works of Cornelius Alexander Polyhistor (first century BCE) are lost and only fragments have survived in the form of quotations by Josephus and Eusebius. He is known to have quoted Berossus, but his figures have survived in a distorted condition.

The authors also present the distorted figures given in Josephus' *Ant.* X:xi,1-2, but they avoid to mention that in his last work, *Against Apion* I:19-21, he quotes Berossus' figures, emphasizing that his statement "is both correct and in accordance with our books [i.e., the Bible]. For in the latter it is recorded that Nabuchodonosor in the eighteenth year of his reign devastated our temple, that for fifty years it ceased to exist, that in the second year of the reign of Cyrus the foundations were laid, and lastly that in the second year of Darius it was completed." The only mistake here is the statement that the work on the temple was completed in the 2nd year of Darius, while the work was actually restarted in that year. It was completed in Darius' 6<sup>th</sup> year.

Berossus' figures for the Neo-Babylonian reigns agree with those given by the so-called "Canon of Ptolemy". The only difference is that the Canon omits the brief reign of Labashi-Marduk, because the Canon reckons whole years only and leaves out the brief reigns of a few months that only embraced their accession-years. Berossus gives him 9 months, which is regarded as a later copying error for 2 or 3 months shown by contemporary Neo-Babylonian contract tablets and the Uruk king list. The important thing is that the overall chronology of Berossus and the Canon agrees with the Neo-Babylonian cuneiform sources. The evidence is that both of these sources were based on Neo-Babylonian chronicles and king lists and had been compiled independently of each other. (*GTR4*, pp. 92-98)

In an attempt to undermine the confidence in Berossus' figures the authors quote what Stanley Mayer Burstein says in his translation of the extant fragments of Berossus' *Babyloniaca*:

“In the past Berossus has usually been viewed as a historian ... Considered as such his performance must be pronounced inadequate. Even in its present fragmentary state the *Babyloniaca* contains a number of surprising errors of simple fact ... In a historian such flaws would be damning, but then Berossus' purpose was not historical.” (*The Babyloniaca of Berossus*, Malibu: Undena Publications, 1978, p. 8)

What is important here is what the authors of the *Watchtower* article have left out. They have selected only the parts of Burstein's statement they need and omitted the parts they find embarrassing. What Burstein really says is this (the omitted parts of the sentences are underlined):

“Even in its present fragmentary state the *Babyloniaca* contains a number of surprising errors of simple fact of which, certainly, the most flagrant is the statement that Nabopolassar ruled Egypt.” ... “In a historian such flaws would be damning, but then Berossus' purpose was not historical, it was apologetic.”

Just a few sentences later, Burstein makes another important observation, which the authors did not find suitable to quote:

“If Berossus exercised little criticism on his sources, the fragments make it clear that he did choose good sources, most likely from a library at Babylon, and that he reliably reported their contents in Greek.”

Burstein finds that, when it comes to the Neo-Babylonian period, “most of the material in book three, both in terms of its style and its contents, seems to be based on texts similar to but not identical with those we call the Neo-Babylonian chronicles.” (Burstein, p. 8)

These observations explain why Berossus' chronology for the Neo-Babylonian kings agrees with that given by the contemporary cuneiform sources.

What about the “most flagrant” error of Berossus, namely, “the statement that Nabopolassar ruled Egypt”?

From a Babylonian perspective, this “error” was not so flagrant as Burstein felt it was. In *GTR4*, p. 207, note 23, I quoted Dr. Menahem Stern's comment on this. He says:

“From the point of view of those who regarded the neo-Babylonian empire as a continuation of the Assyrian, the conquest of Coele-Syria and Phoenicia by the

Egyptian ruler might be interpreted as the rape of Babylonian territory.” (M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, Vol. I, Jerusalem, 1974, p. 59)

Other scholars have expressed themselves similarly. In the work *Empires. Perspectives from Archaeology and History*, edited by Susan E. Alcock et al (Cambridge University Press, 2001), Mario Liverani has written a chapter on “The fall of the Assyrian empire: ancient and modern interpretations,” in which he discusses the transition from the Assyrian to the Neo-Babylonian empire. He starts by saying on page 374:

“The Assyrian empire reached its peak in the seventh century BCE. Under the great Ashurbanipal it dominated the entire Near East, including Egypt to the west and Elam to the east, even subduing the surrounding nomads ...”

From a Babylonian perspective, the fall of Assyria meant that they had inherited the Assyrian empire and regarded its states and provinces as their vassals that from now on should accept the Babylonian yoke. Resistance to this was regarded as rebellion that had to be quenched. Liverani explains:

“In subsequent years, Nabopolassar’s and Nebuchadnezzar’s campaigns were aimed at ensuring that the new Babylonian kingdom possessed as much as possible of the former Assyrian territories, leaving to the Medes just the unproductive and ever-rebellious highlands, and excluding Egypt from the Levant. *In their view, the new empire inherited the old one with no major break, apart from a change in capital city and ruling dynasty.*” (p. 383.)  
Emphasis added.

For the Babylonians to regard Necho II as a “rebellious satrap”, then, was not such a serious error after all. It seemed most natural for them to do so.

## **CLASSICAL HISTORIANS – HOW ACCURATE? – THE CANON OF PTOLEMY**

The section in the article that deals with the so-called “Canon of Ptolemy” bristles with errors and distortions, and also misrepresentations of the views of scholars. The authors start by claiming on page 30:

“Ptolemy’s list of kings is considered the backbone of the chronology of ancient history, including the Neo-Babylonian period.”

Although this was true in the past, it is not true today. As was pointed out above, historians today base their chronology of the Neo-Babylonian period primarily on cuneiform tablets, including astronomical tablets and many thousands of economic-administrative and legal documents from the Neo-Babylonian period itself that are dated to the reigns of the Neo-Babylonian kings.

The next statement, that “Ptolemy compiled his list some 600 years after the Neo-Babylonian period ended” is just as false. Scholars have for a long time concluded that the list is much older. In 1899 Eduard Meyer pointed out that, “as it belonged to the traditional material of knowledge of the astronomers, it was inherited from scholar to scholar; *not even Hipparchus* [2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE] *could have gone without the Babylonian list.*” – *Forschungen zur alten Geschichte*, Halle a. S., 1899, pp. 453-454. Emphasis added.

In 1924 F. X. Kugler concluded that the canon “had evidently been drafted by one or more experts in Babylonian astronomy and chronology, and through its use in the Alexandrian school successfully had passed scrupulous indirect tests.” (*Sternkunde und Sterndienst in Babel*, II. Buch, II. Teil, Heft 2. Münster in Westfalen, 1924, p. 390.)

This observation may also be found in some encyclopedias. Hastings *Encyclopaedia* emphasizes that Claudius Ptolemy was *not* the author of the Canon:

“It was carried further for several centuries after Christ. *Claudius Ptolemaeus* is *by no means the author*; he had collected the traditions and preserved them in their true form.” – James Hastings (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. I (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1951), p. 186, note †. Emphasis added.

This is the reason why Professor Otto Neugebauer termed the expression ‘Ptolemy’s Canon’ “*a misnomer*”, pointing out that “Ptolemy’s ‘Almagest’ never contained such a canon”. (*GTR4*, p. 96) It was later included in some manuscripts of his *Handy Tables*, probably not by Ptolemy himself, but by the 4<sup>th</sup> century mathematician and astronomer *Theon of Alexandria* in his revision of *Handy Tables*.

The authors next quote the statements of two scholars in a way that give the false impression that both of them question the reliability of Ptolemy’s Royal Canon. The first is Christopher Walker, former deputy keeper of Western Asiatic Antiquities at the British Museum. He is quoted as saying that “Ptolemy’s canon was ‘an artificial scheme designed to provide astronomers with a consistent chronology’ and was ‘not to provide historians with a precise record of the accession and death of kings.’ ”

But the authors do not reveal that Walker adds: “Nevertheless it has served as the backbone of the chronology of the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid periods, and *served reliably*.” Also that Walker goes on to explain that “*there is no difficulty in correlating Ptolemy’s chronology with the vast accumulation of data now available from cuneiform sources*. The explanation must lie in the nature of the data to which he had access.” – C. B. F. Walker, “Achaemenid Chronology and the Babylonian Sources,” in John Curtis (ed.), *Mesopotamia and Iran in the Persian Period* (London: The British Museum Press, 1997), p. 18. Emphasis added.

Clearly, the authors conceal Walker’s real view of the canon, namely that it is *reliable* and in full agreement with the “vast accumulation of data now available from cuneiform sources.”

The view of the second scholar, Professor Leo Depuydt, is misrepresented in a similar way. Depuydt is a renowned Egyptologist who teaches Egyptology at Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, USA. He is also a specialist on the chronology of the ancient Near East. He has been examining the history and reliability of the Royal Canon for many years. In the *Watchtower* article he is quoted as saying that “It has long been known that the Canon is *astronomically* reliable, but this does not automatically mean that it is *historically* dependable.” He is further quoted as stating that, “As regards the earlier rulers [who included the Neo-Babylonian kings], the Canon would need to be compared with the cuneiform record on a reign by reign basis.” – This is quoted from Depuydt’s article, “‘More Valuable than All Gold’: Ptolemy’s Royal Canon and Babylonian Chronology,” published in the *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, Vol. 47 (1995), pp. 97-117.

The quotations are selected so as to give the impression that Leo Depuydt believes the Canon may be historically unreliable, which is not true. On the contrary, he states in the very same paragraph that, “No one has, to my knowledge, refuted any aspect of the Canon on good grounds.” (p. 106) Why did not the authors of the *Watchtower* article quote this?

Depuydt’s article was published in 1995. Ten years later, he once again discussed the Canon in an article entitled “The Shifting Foundation of Ancient Chronology.” In the article he points out that the foundation of ancient chronology is shifting, from the Canon to ancient cuneiform sources:

“To the extent that the Canon’s veracity is proven as the foundation of first millennium B.C.E. chronology, to that extent the Canon will also become superfluous as the foundation. And even more remarkably, to the extent that its veracity is not proven, for those parts it remains fundamental to first millennium B.C.E. chronology.”

Depuydt goes on to emphasize that the Canon has never been shown to be wrong:

“Is there any chance that the Canon is false? For four centuries, now, the Canon has been put through countless contacts with countless individual sources. To my knowledge, no one has ever found any serious reason to suspect that the Canon is not true. A kind of common sense about the Canon’s veracity has therefore grown over the centuries. This common sense guarantees, in my opinion, that the Canon will remain fundamental to ancient chronology.” – Leo Depuydt in Amanda-Alice Maravelia (ed.), *Modern Trends in European Egyptology: Papers from a Session Held at the European Association of Archaeologists Ninth Annual Meeting in St. Petersburg 2003* (British Archaeological Reports S1448). Oxford: Archaeopress, pp. 53-62.

Other leading scholars agree. Professor Abraham J. Sachs, who up to his death in 1983 was the foremost authority on the astronomical observational tablets, explains how the ancient cuneiform

sources have provided an independent confirmation of the Canon. Thanks to these sources it has been possible to securely fix the absolute chronology for the Babylonian, Persian, and Seleucid periods. In the statement quoted below, Sachs speaks of the Royal Canon as “Theon’s royal list” because it has traditionally been held that Theon of Alexandria included the list in his revision of Ptolemy’s *Handy Tables*. Sachs makes the following comparison between the king list and the cuneiform sources:

“The absolute chronology of the Babylonian first group of kings is easy to establish because, as has been mentioned, Ptolemy quotes the report of an eclipse in the time of king Mardokempados [the Biblical Merodach-Baladan II, Isaiah 39:1]. Even more important, this absolute chronology has been independently confirmed by cuneiform texts from Babylon which contain astronomical observations. These number more than 1000 pieces of day-to-day astronomical observations of positions and phases of the Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, beginning around 650 B.C. and continuing, in increasingly dense numbers, into the first century before the beginning of our era. ***Thanks to these astronomical diaries, numerous overlaps with the royal list in Theon’s Handy Tables have been established, always in agreement.*** In other cases, the lengths of the reigns of individual kings in Theon’s royal list can be confirmed by the careful study of the dates given in contemporaneous economic and administrative texts found in Babylonia; this is possible because for parts of the period covered by the royal list, we have so many of these texts that they average out to one every few days. In this way – namely, by using Theon’s royal list, Babylonian astronomical diaries, and Babylonian dated tablets – ***one is able to establish with confidence the absolute chronology back to the middle of the eighth century B.C.***, i.e. the reign of king Nabonassar of Babylon.” – A. J. Sachs, “Absolute dating from Mesopotamian records,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, Ser. A, Vol. 26, 1971, p. 20. Emphasis added.

## THE CANON OF PTOLEMY AND THE URUK KING LIST

In a box on page 30 the authors of the *Watchtower* article give the names of the kings in the first part of “Ptolemy’s Canon”, including those of the Neo-Babylonian period, together with the part of the “Uruk King List” that gives the names of the Neo-Babylonian kings. They ask, “How Does Ptolemy’s Canon Compare With Ancient Tablets?” They state on pages 30 and 31:

“Notice that Ptolemy lists only four kings between the Babylonian rulers Kandalanu and Nabonidus. However, the Uruk King List – a part of the cuneiform record – reveals that *seven* kings ruled in between. Were their reigns brief and negligible? One of them, according to cuneiform economic tablets, ruled for seven years.”



For a reader not acquainted with the Assyro-Babylonian history in this period, these statements may seem to show that the “Canon of Ptolemy” is in conflict with the “Uruk King List” – a cuneiform tablet that on the obverse contains a list of kings and their reigns from Kandalanu to Darius I (647-486 BCE). See *GTR4*, pp. 105-107. The authors of the article give only the names of kings on the two lists. By omitting the lengths of reign recorded on the lists, the readers are not given the opportunity to compare the Neo-Babylonian chronology shown by the two lists.

The fact is that the presentation given by the *Watchtower* writers is deceptive. To show this, the Neo-Babylonian lengths of reign given by both sources are presented below:

The Canon of Ptolemy		The Uruk King List *	
Kandalanu	22 years	21 years	Kandalanu
		1 year	Sin-shumu-lishir Sin-sharra-ishkun
Nabopolassar	21 years	21 years	Nabopolassar
Nebuchadnezzar	43 years	43 years	Nebuchadnezzar
Amel-Marduk	2 years	2 years	Amel-Marduk
Neriglissar	4 years	‘3’ [yrs +] 8 months	Neriglissar
		(..) 3 months	Labashi-Marduk
Nabonidus	17 years	‘17 (?)’ (yrs)	Nabonidus
<b>Total</b>	109 years	108 years and 11 months	<b>Total</b>

\* The Uruk King List is here translated from the transcription of A. K. Grayson in *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*, Vol. VI (1980), page 97, which is the best presentation of the list. (*GTR4*, p. 106) It agrees with that of Dr. J. van Dijk and with R. Borger’s collation of the original tablet in the Iraq Museum in the 1970’s. (*Archiv für Orientforschung*, Vol. 25, 1974/1977, pp. 165, 166.) – The version presented by A. J. Sack on page 3 in his book *Amel-Marduk 562-560 B.C.* (1972) is distorted. Unfortunately, the same distorted version is presented on page 3 of his book *Neriglissar – King of Babylon* (1994). Sack’s comments about the “inaccuracy of the lengths of reign”, therefore, are invalid. (Cf. also the critical review of Sack’s book on Neriglissar by Stefan Zawadzki in *Orientalia*, Vol. 66, 1997, pp. 111-116.)

The cuneiform signs in the Uruk King List for the regnal years of Amel-Marduk and Nabonidus are somewhat damaged and have been restored by Grayson as “3 years and 8 months” and “17 years”, respectively.

It is true that the Canon of Ptolemy shows only four kings between Kandalanu and Nabonidus, while the Uruk King List shows seven. So far the *Watchtower* writers are right. What they do not tell the readers, however, is that there is no conflict between the two lists about the length of Neo-Babylonian chronology! Why did they conceal this important information from the readers?

The different ways of presenting this chronology in the two lists are easily explained:

Kandalanu's reign lasted 21 years. As shown by the Babylonian chronicle BM 25127, his death was followed by about a year of battles between Assyrian pretenders and Nabopolassar, until the latter finally succeeded in ascending to the throne in Babylon. The chronicle states that "for one year there was no king in the land (Babylonia). On the twenty-sixth day of the month Marchesvan Nabopolassar ascended the throne in Babylon." (A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 1975, p. 88)

The kingless year was accounted for differently by the scribes. A couple of economic tablets have been found that are dated posthumously to *shattu 22<sup>kam</sup> arki Kandalanu*, that is, "year 22 after Kandalanu." (J. A. Brinkman & J. A. Kennedy in *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, Vol. 35, 1983, p. 49) This is evidently the procedure followed also in the Canon of Ptolemy, which gives Kandalanu a reign of 22 years.

The Uruk King List gives 21 years to Kandalanu and assigns the kingless year to two of the pretenders, Sin-shum-lishir and Sin-sharra-ishkun. Similarly, the Babylonian King List A, which covers the period from the first dynasty of Babylon to the beginning of the Chaldean Dynasty, shows the name of Sin-shumu-lishir after Kandalanu. (*Reallexikon der Assyriologie*, Vol. VI, 1980, p. 93) Unfortunately, the list breaks at this point, but it seems likely that it also mentioned Sin-shar-ishkun. Anyway, the "kingless" year was kept count of by both the Canon of Ptolemy and the Uruk King List.

The Uruk King List gives 3 months to Labashi-Marduk, who is left out in the Canon. But as was pointed out earlier, the Canon reckons whole years only and omits reigns of a few months that did not extend over a new year and therefore did not affect the total length of the period covered.

As is seen, the fact that the Canon has only four kings while the Uruk King List has seven is no contradiction and creates no problems for scholars who are at home with the subject.

What about the statement on page 31 of the *Watchtower* article that one of the kings in the Uruk King List "ruled for seven years"? In note 8 the authors state: "Sin-sharra-ishkun ruled for seven years, and 57 economic tablets of this king are dated from his accession year through year seven. See *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, Volume 35, 1983, pages 54-59."

The Uruk King List does not mention these seven years. The reason is that they are documented by economic tablets that refer to his rule *in Assyria*, not to his rule *in Babylonia*! The Uruk King List gives him and another pretender only *one* year, the "kingless" year, of rule in Babylonia. The seven years documented by about 60 economic texts refer to his rule in Assyria before the fall of that empire.

According to the *Adad-guppi' inscription* (*Nabon. H 1, B*), the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal ruled for 42 years. (*GTR4*, pp. 113-116) This is also supported by Berossus, who says that after the death of *Samoges* (Shamash-shum-ukin, the brother of Ashurbanipal and Assyria's vassal king in Babylonia) Assurbanipal (Berossus: *Sardanapallos*) "ruled over the Chaldeans for 21 years." (S. M. Burstein, 1978, *The Babyloniaca of Berossus*, pp. 24, 25) Cuneiform sources show that Shamash-shum-ukin died in the 21<sup>st</sup> year of Ashurbanipal, so if the latter continued to rule for

another 21 years, his total reign was 42 years. Berossus' statement would also indicate that Ashurbanipal, during the last 21 years of his reign, ruled both Assyria and Babylonia – in Assyria as Ashurbanipal and in Babylonia under the throne name *Kandalanu*. This is a view shared by a number of modern historians. His last regnal year, then, was 627 BC.

Cuneiform inscriptions show that Ashurbanipal was succeeded by his eldest son, Ashur-etel-ilāni, as ruler of *Assyria*. (Joan Oates, “Assyrian Chronology, 631-612 B.C.,” *Iraq*, Vol. XXVII, 1965, p. 135) He ruled for at least four years according to the economic tablets and was succeeded by his brother Sin-sharra-ishkun, who then continued as ruler of Assyria until the fall of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, in 612 BCE. The two brothers, Ashur-etel-ilani and Sin-sharra-ishkun, ruled in Assyria while Nabopolassar ruled in Babylonia, even if for some years they controlled a few cities in Babylonia. This is confirmed by the Babylonian Chronicle BM 21901, which covers the period from the 10<sup>th</sup> year of Nabopolassar until his 18th year (616/15–608/607 BCE). The chronicle describes the conquest and destruction of Nineveh in the 14<sup>th</sup> year of Nabopolassar and states: “At that time Sin-sharra-ishkun, king of Assyria, [*died*] ... .” – Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (hereafter *ABC*), (1975), Chronicle 3: 44, p. 94.

The same chronicle goes on to tell that after Sin-sharra-ishkun's defeat at the fall of Nineveh he was succeeded by Ashur-uballit, who “ascended the throne in [the Assyrian provincial capital] Harran to rule Assyria.” There, he was finally defeated in the 17<sup>th</sup> year of Nabopolassar (609 BCE), and with that Assyria ceased to exist. From then on Babylonia was in possession of the hegemony in the Near East. – Grayson, *ABC*, Chronicle 3: 49-75, pp. 94-96.

Thus Sin-sharra-ishkun was still “king of Assyria” in the 14<sup>th</sup> year of Nabopolassar. The attempt by the *Watchtower* writers to transfer his Assyrian reign into the Babylonian chronology just reveals that they are either historically ignorant about this period or are trying to deceive their readers. This is also reflected in their comments in notes 8, 9, and 10.

The statement in note 9 of the *Watchtower* article, that “the Harran Inscriptions of Nabonidus, (H1B), I, line 30, has him [Ashur-etel-ilani] listed just before Nabopolassar”, ignores the fact that H1B just says that Adad-guppi' was born in “the 20<sup>th</sup> year of Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria”, where she evidently lived “until the 42<sup>nd</sup> year of Ashurbanipal, the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of Ashur-etillu-ili, his son, the 21<sup>st</sup> year of Nabopolassar,” etc. As Dr. Joan Oates points out, this means that she must have moved from Assyria to Babylonia during the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of Ashur-etel-ilani, which does not mean that this must have occurred before the 1<sup>st</sup> year of Nabopolassar. If Ashur-etel-ilani began his rule in Assyria after his father's death in 627 BCE, his third year was 624/23 BCE. His second and third regnal years in Assyria, then, overlapped the first and second years of Nabopolassar in Babylon (625/24 and 624/23 BCE.) (See *GTR4*, pp. 330-332. See also Joan Oates' discussion in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Vol. III:2, 1991, pp. 162-193.)

The statements in note 10 are even more misleading. The authors say:

“Some scholars contend that certain kings were omitted by Ptolemy – who supposedly listed only kings of Babylon – because these were called by the title ‘King of Assyria.’ However, as you will note in the box on page 30, several kings included in Ptolemy's canon also had the title ‘King of Assyria.’

Economic tablets, cuneiform letters, and inscriptions clearly reveal that Ashur-etel-ilani, Sin-shumu-lishir, and Sin-sharra-ishkun ruled over Babylonia.”

What the authors do not tell is that during certain periods Babylonia was a vassal of Assyria, and some of the Assyrian kings ruled over both Assyria and Babylonia. This was true, for example, of Shalmaneser V (726-722 BCE). The Babylonian King List A (BM 95502) says: “For five years Shalmaneser (V) ruled Akkad [Babylonia] and Assyria.” (Grayson, *ABC*, Chronicle 1:30, p. 73) That is why the Canon of Ptolemy lists him as king of Babylon for five years.

The same holds true of Sargon II, who ruled in Assyria for 17 years (721-705 BCE), the last five of which he also ruled over Babylonia (709-705 BCE). That is why the Canon of Ptolemy gives him five years of reign. Likewise the Assyrian king Esarhaddon (680-669 BCE) also ruled in Babylonia for 13 years, which is the reason why he is listed in the Canon of Ptolemy. It is a fact – not just a supposition – that the Canon lists only kings of Babylon, from Nabonassar until Nabonidus (747-539 BCE).

With respect to Ashur-etel-ilani, Sin-shumu-lishir, and Sin-sharra-ishkun, however, they never “ruled over Babylonia”, as the *Watchtower* authors claim. They did try to retain Assyrian control over Babylonia after the death of Kandalanu, but failed, although the sons and successors of Ashurbanipal succeeded in controlling a few cities in Babylonia for some years during the reign of Nabopolassar. But the inscriptions never give them the title “King of Babylon.” Assyriologist Grant Frame, who is an authority on this period, gives the following information about the three:

**Ashur-etel-ilāni:**

“Assurbanipal was succeeded as ruler of Assyria by his son Aššur-etel-ilāni (or Aššur-etelli-ilāni). **No inscription ever calls Aššur-etel-ilāni ‘king of Babylon,’ ‘viceroy of Babylon,’ or ‘king of the land of Sumer and Akkad,’ nor is he included in the various lists of rulers of Babylonia,** which put Sin-šumu-lišir or Nabopolassar after Kandalanu. However, a number of royal inscriptions of Aššur-etel-ilāni do come from Babylonia and describe actions in that land and thus these must be included here. Over ten economic texts dated by his regnal years as **‘king of Assyria’ or ‘king of the lands’** come from Nippur and these attest to his accession, first, second, third, and fourth years.” – Grant Frame, *Rulers of Babylonia. From the Second Dynasty of Isin to the End of Assyrian Domination (1157-612 BC)* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1995), p. 261. Emphasis added.

**Sin-šumu-lišir:**

“No royal inscriptions of Sin-šumu-lišir are attested from Babylonia. At least seven Babylonian economic texts (including four from Babylon and one from Nippur) are dated by his accession year. In these he is either given no title, or called ‘king of Assyria’ or simply ‘king.’ ” (Frame, 1995, p. 269)

**Sin-šarra-iškun:**

“The last Assyrian king to exercise any control over at least part of Babylonia was Sin-šarra-iškun, a son of Ashurbanipal. Exactly when he became ruler of Assyria and when he held authority in Babylonia is unclear, but his reign over

Assyria ended in 612 BC. Only the Uruk King List includes him among the rulers of Babylonia, assigning the year following the reign of Kandalanu and preceding the reign of Nabopolassar (626 BC) to Sin-šumu-lišir and Sin-šarra-iškun jointly (Grayson, RLA 6/1-2 [1980] p. 97 obverse 4'-5'). **No known inscription gives him the title 'king of Babylon,' 'viceroy of Babylon,' or 'king of the land of Sumer and Akkad.'** ...

No Babylonian royal inscriptions of Sin-šarra-iškun are attested and his Assyrian inscriptions will be edited elsewhere in the RIM series [The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia] (as A.O.116). Approximately 60 economic texts were dated by his regnal years in Babylonia. These indicate that he controlled Babylon, Nippur, Sippar, and Uruk; the earliest texts come from his accession year and the latest from his seventh year. **None of these economic texts, however, gives him the title 'king of Babylon'; he is called instead 'king of Assyria,' 'king of the lands,' and 'king of the world.'** (Frame, 1995, p. 270.) Emphasis added.

It should be added that, although Nabopolassar's revolt was successful, it took some years before he had attained control over all cities of Babylonia. As stated, a few Babylonian cities remained under Assyrian control for some years after the accession of Nabopolassar to the Babylonian throne.

For additional information about these Assyrian rulers and their relation to Babylonia, see the following web review:

<http://kristenfrihet.se/kf3/review5.htm>

## THE CONCLUSION BASED ON THIS EVIDENCE

The authors of the *Watchtower* article claim that the Bible “clearly states that there was an exile of 70 years.” (Page 31) As has been shown above, this is not true. The Bible nowhere says so. It says that the “nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.” (Jeremiah 25:11) The 70 years would be a period of *servitude for the nations*, not the period of exile for the Jews. They would be 70 years “for Babylon”, not 70 years “for Jerusalem” after its desolation and the length of the Jewish exile that followed. (Jeremiah 29:10)

It has been demonstrated above that the 70 years “for Babylon” started after the fall of Assyria in 609 BCE and ended after the fall of Babylon in 539 BCE, when the king of Babylon was punished. According to Jeremiah 25:12 he was to be punished “when the seventy years are fulfilled”. As he was punished in 539 BCE, the 70 years had been fulfilled in that year. This is what the Bible clearly says. The view that the 70 years ended in 537 BCE, therefore, conflicts with the Bible.

The claim that authorities who date the destruction of Jerusalem to 587 BCE “lean on two sources of information – the writings of classical historians and the canon of Ptolemy” is demonstrably false. Further, the arguments used to undermine the reliability of Berossus and the

Canon were shown to be groundless. Although none of these sources is needed for establishing the date of the destruction of Jerusalem, both of them fully agree with the cuneiform documents, including the thousands of dated tablets from the Neo-Babylonian period.

The conclusion is that the arguments used by the *Watchtower* authors conflict both with the Bible and with the extra-Biblical sources. The article turns out to be nothing but a desperate and dishonest attempt to defend a date that simply is indefensible.















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