

THE WATCHTOWER SOCIETY'S 607 BCE FOUNDATION EXPOSED!

(Revision 2)

Doug Mason

The chronology illustrated in this Study results from applying the Watchtower Society's reasoning. In addition to help explain the associated text, this chronology provides a means to expose the Society's explanations.

Therefore the depicted chronology does not represent either the true chronology of the period nor does it present a chronology that the Watchtower Society has depicted pictorially. It is a tool to aid comprehension.

THE WATCHTOWER SOCIETY'S CLAIM FOR ITSELF

The Governing Body and its Watchtower Society claims that in 1919 it was appointed by Jehovah God and Jesus Christ to represent all of their earthly Kingdom interests, to be their unique voice and sole representative towards all people on earth. The Watchtower's authority lives or dies with that claim.

Jesus began to inspect the spiritual temple in 1914. That inspection and cleansing work involved a period of time ...

From 1914 to the early part of **1919**, Jesus accompanied his Father to the spiritual temple to do a much needed inspection and cleansing work. Then, starting in **1919**, it was time to begin gathering the wheat. Was it finally **the time for Christ to appoint one organized channel** to dispense spiritual food? Yes, indeed! ... Which channel would he use? ...

In 1919, a time of spiritual revival, **Jesus selected capable anointed brothers** from among them to be the faithful and discreet slave and appointed them.

From which group would **Jesus select and appoint** the faithful slave? ... They were pleased with a small band of loyal **Bible Students**. ... **In recent decades, that slave has been closely identified with the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses.**¹

Shortly after he was installed as King, **Jesus put in place a clearly recognizable channel** through which he has helped his followers to be spiritually clean. **That channel is the faithful and discreet slave, which Christ appointed in 1919.**²

In 1919, Jehovah used his power to deliver a small remnant of these anointed ones from captivity to false religion.³

In 1919 Jesus fulfilled his promise and recognized the small band of genuine anointed Christians as his "faithful and discreet slave."⁴

¹ *The Watchtower*, Study Edition, July 15, 2013, pages 11-12, 19, 20, 22, 23 (**bold** added)

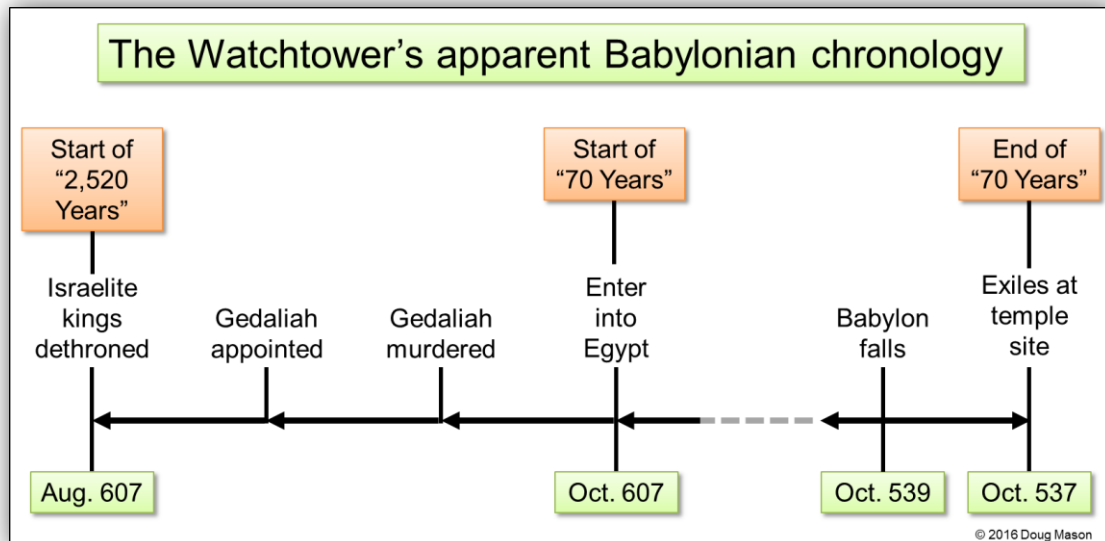
² *God's Kingdom Rules!* (2014), page 101, (**bold** added)

³ *The Watchtower*, March 15, 2009, page 23

⁴ *Revelation Its Grand Climax At Hand!*, page 63

THE FOUNDATION OF THE WATCHTOWER SOCIETY'S APPOINTMENT

THE WATCHTOWER'S STEPS



**The steps taken by the Society to show
that it was appointed by Jehovah and Jesus in 1919 CE**

THE STEPS QUESTIONED

Babylon falls

Where does The Watchtower Society obtain its date of 539 BCE for the Fall of Babylon?.

End of the "70 years"

Does the Bible explicitly state when the "70 years" ended?

Is there sufficient evidence that either supports or denies the Society's date of 537 BCE for the event it selected?

Start of the "70 years"

Does the Bible explicitly identify when the "70 years" commenced? If so, when did the period commence?

According to the Society, when did the "70 years" commence? Why did it select the date it assigned to that event?

Gedaliah murdered

In which year was Gedaliah murdered?

How long after Gedaliah's murder did the Jews enter Egypt?

Gedaliah appointed

How long after the destruction of Jerusalem was Mizpah selected by the Babylonians as the new site of administration?

How long after Jerusalem's destruction was Gedaliah appointed by Babylon?

How long after his appointment was Gedaliah murdered?

Israelite Kings dethroned

Exactly when was the Israeli kingship interrupted?

Start of the Watchtower Society's "2,520 years"

When does the Society commence its "2,520 years"?

Does it start its "70 years" and its "2,520 years" with the same event?

THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION

The Society's critical date of 1919 is calculated from the dates of events in the 6th century BCE. Does the Society provide consistent, objective, and undeniable evidence for its appointment in 1919? Is that evidence strong enough to make a person devote their life and energy to the Watchtower and to its Governing Body?

It is the Watchtower's duty to provide consistent, objective, undeniable evidence for their explanation of 1919. It is not good enough to work from possibilities and assumptions.

OUTLINE FOR THIS STUDY

THE PATH FOLLOWED BY THE WATCHTOWER

The Watchtower Society's foundation stone of 1919 CE relies on a path that begins in the 6th century BCE.

- 1) The Society starts its calculations with the date of 537 BCE which it assigns to the ending of Jeremiah's "70 years".
- 2) It locates the start of the "70 years", arriving at the 7th month of 607 BCE.
- 3) Using events in the life and death of Gedaliah as stepping stones, the Watchtower steps back until it arrives at its year for Babylon's destruction of Jerusalem, 607 BCE.
- 4) Creates a period of 2,520 years from its interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's Dream at Daniel chapter 4.
- 5) Commences its "2,520 year" period with the removal from the throne of the last Israelite king. (At times, the Society starts the "2,520 years" a few months later, when the Jews entered Egypt.)
- 6) This period reaches the month of October 1914 CE, where the removal of the last Israelite king is reversed through the inauguration of Jesus Christ as the King of God's Kingdom.
- 7) In 1919, Jehovah God and Jesus appoint the predecessors of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses as their sole earthly representative towards humankind.

THE PATH FOLLOWED BY THIS STUDY

This Study addresses the same 6th century BCE pathway. Aspects such as the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's Dream and the claimed activities during the 20th century lie outside the scope of this Study.

[The Watchtower Society's claim for itself](#) (page 1)

[The foundation of the Watchtower Society's appointment](#) (page 2)

[From 1914 CE to 607 BCE](#) (page 5)

[The Watchtower Society accepts its starting date from secular chronologists](#) (page 8)

[Exiles arrive at the Jerusalem Temple; The Watchtower Society ends the "70 years"](#) (page 10)

[The entry into Egypt: The Watchtower Society travels back in time to its start of the "70 years"](#) (page 13)

[From Gedaliah's murder to the entry into Egypt](#) (page 17)

[From Gedaliah's appointment until his murder](#) (page 23)

[The Israelite Kings Removed](#) (page 27)

[When does the Watchtower Society starts its "2,520 years"?](#) (page 30)

[Summary](#) (page 32)

[Conclusions](#) (page 34)

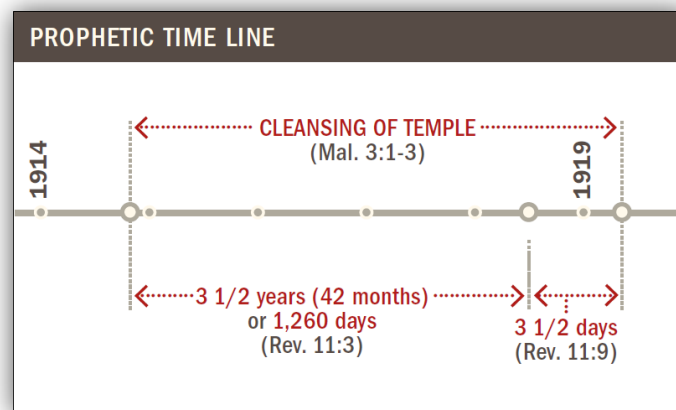
[Appendix: Date of the Jews' return](#) (page 35)

FROM 1919 CE TO 607 BCE

FROM 1919 TO 1914

The Watchtower Society arrives at its significant year of 1919 from its interpretation of Revelation and from the month of October 1914 CE. Although the Watchtower uses “days” at Revelation to mean “years” at Daniel 4, in this instance the 1,260 “days” are literal 30-day months and literal (if somewhat hypothetical) 360-day “years”. The “3½ days”, however, are *not* literal, but *symbolic*. This is interpretation to suit the predetermined outcome.

From 1914 to the early part of 1919. This period of time includes both the 1,260 days (42 months) and the **symbolic** three and a half days.⁵

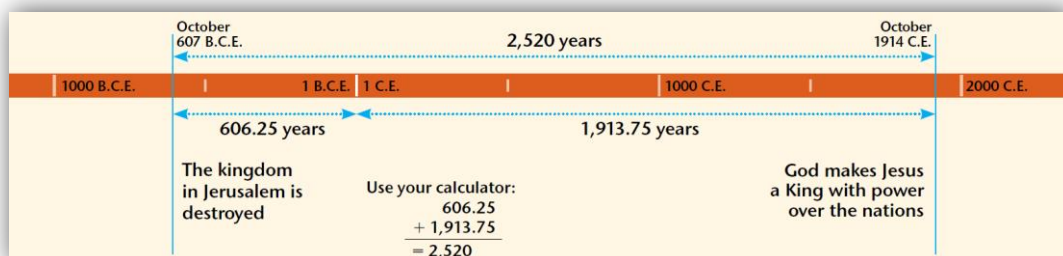


The Watchtower, November 15, 2014, page 30

FROM 1914 CE TO 607 BCE

To arrive at its significance of 1914, the Society travels back for 2,520 years, to the moment when “the kingdom in Jerusalem is destroyed”; “Jerusalem is destroyed, interrupting that line of Israelite kings”; “Jerusalem is trampled on by the nations”?

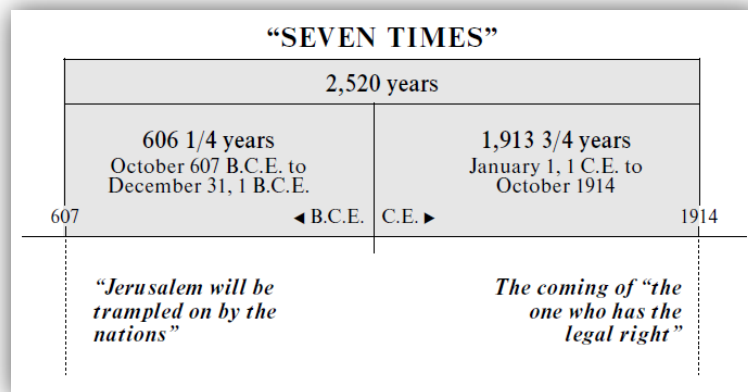
God enthroned Jesus as King in heaven in 1914, exactly 2,520 years after Jerusalem’s destruction.⁶



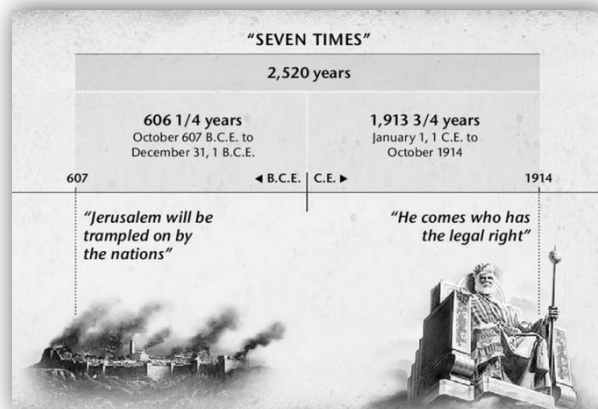
The Watchtower, August 1, 2012, page 17

⁵ *The Watchtower*, November 15, 2014, page 30

⁶ *The Watchtower*, August 1, 2012, page 17



What does the Bible Really Teach?, page 277, Large Print Edition



What does the Bible Really Teach?, page 216

Dates provided by the Society are not precise. It refers to "October 1914" but not to a specific day in that month. The above illustrations refer to "¾ year", which is 274 days and likely means 9 months of the Gregorian calendar (January – September). If that is the correct understanding, it means October 1 of 1914.

The Bible Students believed that "the times of the Gentiles," spoken of in Luke 21:24 (*King James Version*), would end **about October 1, 1914**. As October drew near, anticipation increased. Some Bible Students even carried a countdown card so that they could mark off each passing day. Many felt that they would be called beyond the veil, or to heaven, on that date.

On the **morning of October 2**, 1914, Brother Russell entered the Bethel dining room and announced to the Bethel family: “The Gentile Times have ended; their kings have had their day.” ... The Gentile Times, or “the appointed times of the nations,” had indeed *ended*. ... **By year’s end**, the Messianic Kingdom had been firmly established in the heavens.⁷

On **Friday morning, October 2, 1914**, Charles Taze Russell, who took the lead at that time among the Bible Students, strode into the dining room at Bethel in Brooklyn, New York. “Good morning, all,” he said cheerily. Then, before taking his seat, he joyfully announced: “The Gentile times have ended; their kings have had their day.”⁸

Return to [Outline for this Study](#) (page 4)

⁷ *2014 Year Book of Jehovah’s Witnesses*, pages 174-175 (**bold** added)

⁸ *The Watchtower*, November 1, 2007, page 24 (**bold** added)

THE WATCHTOWER SOCIETY ACCEPTS ITS STARTING DATE FROM SECULAR CHRONOLOGISTS

A community expresses dates in terms of its own calendar. Secular chronologists provide dates from Biblical calendars into terms of our own. The most common calendars in use today are the Julian and Gregorian Calendars.

To express a date from Biblical times, including from the Bible, in terms of a modern calendar, information has to be obtained from secular scholars. The Watchtower Society relies on secular chronologists and astronomers for the date of the Fall of Babylon. However, it does not accept the chronologies and Absolute Dates (such as provided through records of astronomical events) that are used by chronologists to arrive at the date of Babylon's Fall, yet it accepts the calculated derived date, nevertheless.

539 BCE IS CALCULATED FROM SECULAR SOURCES

The Watchtower acknowledges that it relies on secular sources that use secular chronologies:

The date 539 B.C.E. when Cyrus II conquered Babylon is calculated using the testimony of:

- Ancient historical sources and cuneiform tablets. ...
- Confirmation by a cuneiform tablet: A Babylonian astronomical clay tablet ...⁹

About 50,000 Babylonian tablets record all types of daily activities. Each tablet is dated with the name and year of a monarch. These tablets, in addition to astronomical records, historical records, and chronological lists such as the Adda-Guppi stelae, provide an accurate chronology of the period.

Business tablets: Thousands of contemporary Neo-Babylonian cuneiform tablets have been found that record simple business transactions, stating the year of the Babylonian king when the transaction occurred. Tablets of this sort have been found for all the years of reign for the known Neo-Babylonian kings in the accepted chronology of the period.¹⁰

This information is employed to date events such as Babylon's Fall in 539 BCE. The Watchtower Society accepts the conclusion but not the method used to arrive at that date.

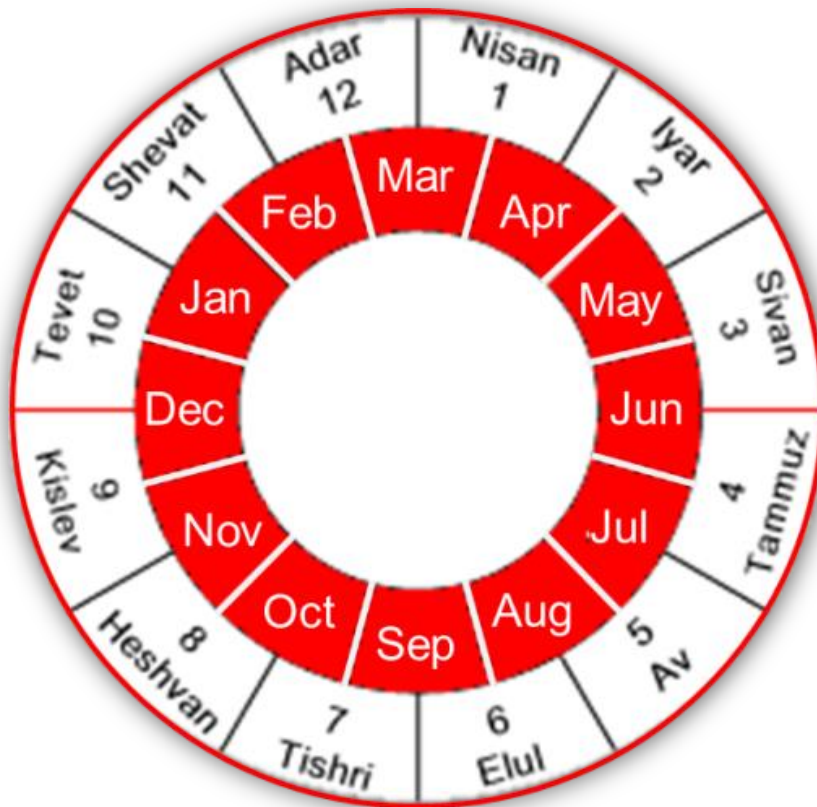
⁹ The Watchtower, October 1, 2011, page 28

¹⁰ *Let Your Kingdom Come*, page 187

THE HEBREW CALENDAR

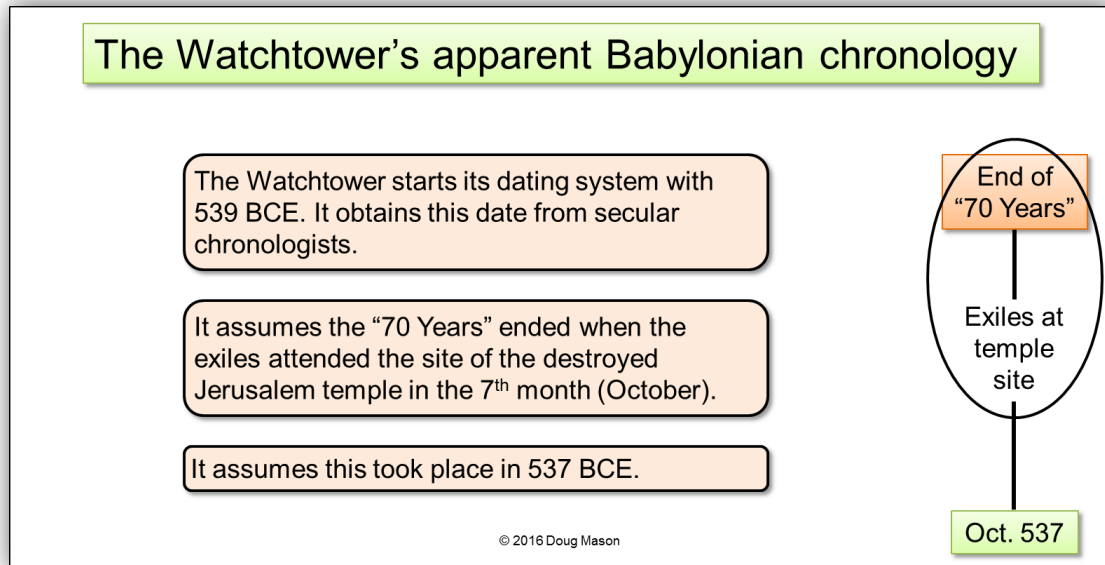
The expressions “5th month” and “7th month” appear throughout this Study.

The Hebrews had two calendars, ecclesiastical (beginning with Nisan – April/May) and civil (beginning with Tishri – September/October). Regardless of which calendar it was using, the numbering of a month always began with Nisan. This means that when a civil year commenced, its first month (Tishri) was still numbered as the 7th month. That is, Tishri was the 7th month in both calendars, even though the calendars started 6 months apart.



Return to [Outline for this Study](#) (page 4)

EXILES ARRIVE AT THE JERUSALEM TEMPLE; THE WATCHTOWER SOCIETY ENDS THE “70 YEARS”



**To work out the date of Jerusalem’s destruction,
the Watchtower starts with its date of the end of the “70 years”**

THE END OF THE “70 YEARS”: THE WATCHTOWER SOCIETY

The Society ends Jeremiah’s “70 years” with the return of Babylonian Exiles and the restoration of “true worship”. By this, it means the assembling of Jews at the site of the destroyed Jerusalem temple in the 7th month.

When Did “the Seventy years” End? ... Ezra reflected on the prophecies of Jeremiah and **linked the end of “the seventy years” to the time when “the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation.”** (2 Chronicles 36:21, 22, NIV) When were the Jews **released?** ... Thus, **by the fall of 537 B.C.E., the Jews had returned to Jerusalem** to restore true worship.¹¹

At Ezra 3:6 it is stated: “From the first day of the seventh month on they started to offer up burnt sacrifices to Jehovah, when the foundation of Jehovah’s temple itself had not yet been laid.” This would be, according to the **Gregorian Calendar, on September 28/29 of 537 B.C.E.** [footnote: Or, according to the Julian Calendar, October 4/5, 537 B.C.E. See *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.–A.D. 75* (edition of 1956), by Parker and Dubberstein, page 29]¹²

However, almost 50 years earlier the Society said that the “70 years” ended as soon as exiles *started* to return.

In 537 BC when King Cyrus released a Jewish remnant and they left Babylon and **began to repopulate the land** of Judah and break its desolation, the foretold **seventy-year period ended.**¹³

¹¹ *The Watchtower*, October 1, 2011, page 28 (**Bold** added)

¹² *The Watchtower*, September 15, 1965, pages 569-570 (**bold** added)

¹³ “*Babylon the Great Has Fallen*” *God’s Kingdom Rules!* (1963), page 167 (**bold** added)

THE END OF THE “70 YEARS”: THE BIBLE

The Bible explicitly and consistently says that the “70 years” was a period of servitude to Babylon that had to be accepted by Judah and by Judah’s neighbours. Since this was to be a period of *servitude* to Babylon, the “70 years” ended as soon as the Babylonian kingdom fell to the Persians in 539 BCE.

“When 70 years have been fulfilled, I will **call to account the king of Babylon** and that nation for their error,” declares Jehovah.¹⁴

All the nations will serve [Nebuchadnezzar] and his son and his grandson **until the time for his own land comes, when** many nations and great kings will make him their **slave**.¹⁵

[Nebuchadnezzar] carried off captive to Babylon those who escaped the sword, and they became servants to him and his sons **until the kingdom of Persia began to reign**.¹⁶

THE DATE OF THE END OF THE WATCHTOWER SOCIETY’S “70 YEARS”

There is no evidence that identifies which year the Jews returned or when they assembled at the site of the destroyed Jerusalem temple.

A loose stone in the Society’s foundation, including its contradictions—did the “70 years” end when the exiles started to repopulate the land or did the period end much later when they assembled at the site of the destroyed Jerusalem temple? It is of consequence for the Watchtower alone. It can only provide wishful thinking.

Cyrus’ decree must have been issued late in 538 BCE or early in 537 for two reasons. The desolation had to last until the 70th year ended, and the released Israelites would not be expected to travel in the winter rainy season, as would have been the case if the decree had been made a few months earlier.

Likely it was issued in the early spring of 537 BCE in order to give the Jews a chance to travel during the dry season, arrive in Jerusalem, and set up the altar on the first day of the seventh month (Tishri) of the year 537 BCE, September 29 according to the Gregorian calendar.¹⁷

Consider the following statements, where the Watchtower can offer **nothing more than guesses**, such as “evidently”, “probable”, “if”, and similar:

The decree of Cyrus **must have been made** toward the close of winter and the beginning of spring of 537 BCE.¹⁸

This decree was **evidently** issued late in 538 BCE or early in 537 BCE.¹⁹

It is **very probable** that the decree was made by the winter of 538 BCE or toward the spring of 537 BCE.²⁰

If Cyrus’ decree came late in his first regnal year.²¹

¹⁴ Jeremiah 25:12. (All Biblical references in this Study are from the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, 2013 edition) (**bold** added)

¹⁵ Jeremiah 27:7 (**bold** added)

¹⁶ 2 Chronicles 36:20-21 (**bold** added)

¹⁷ *Insight on the Scriptures* vol 1, page 800 “Ezra, Book of” (**bold** added)

¹⁸ The Watchtower, September 15 1965, page 567, “A Pivotal Date in History” (**bold** added)

¹⁹ All Scripture is Inspired of God and Beneficial [1990], page 85, “Bible Book Number 15—Ezra” (**bold** added)

²⁰ *Insight on the Scriptures*, vol. page 458, “Chronology” (**bold** added)

²¹ Let Your Kingdom Come, page 189, Appendix to Chapter 14 (**bold** added)

Exiles arrive at the Jerusalem Temple; The Watchtower Society ends the “70 years”

Cyrus’ issuing of the decree for the return of the Jews **must have taken place** before April, 537 BC.²²

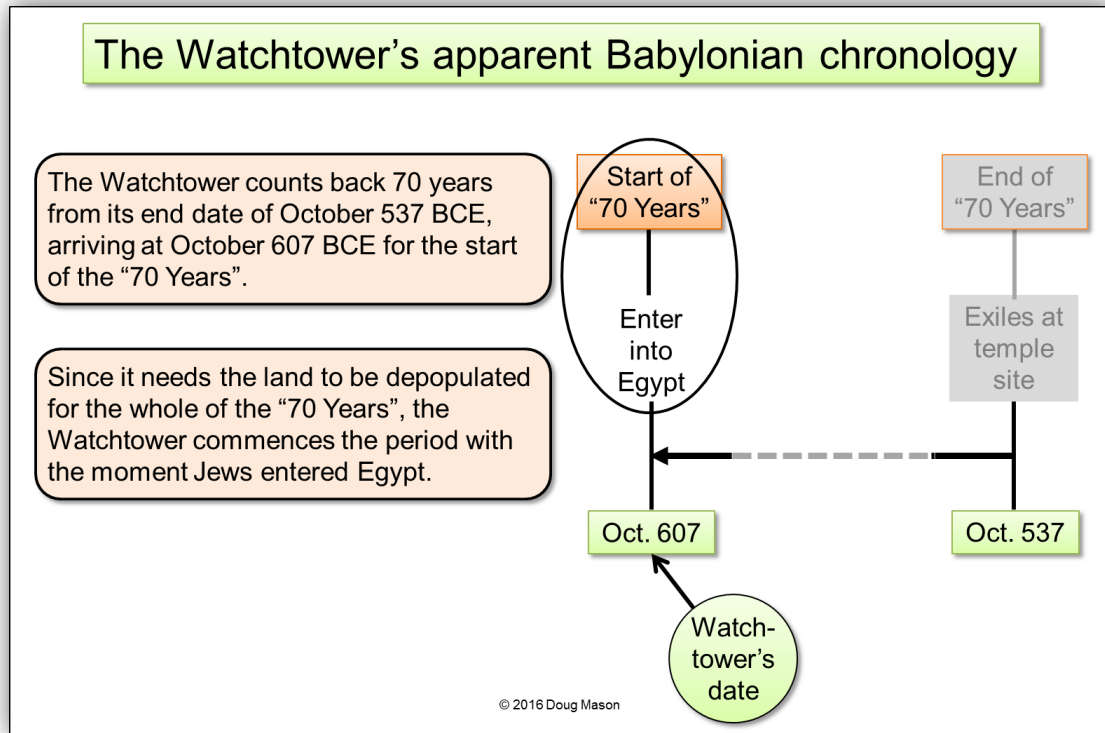
They can live in hope, but that provides no real foundation for the WTS’s claimed authority.

A discussion on the Watchtower Society’s date of the Jews’ return using chronological principles is provided as an Appendix to this Study.

Return to [Outline for this Study](#) (page 4)

²² *The Watchtower* February 1, 1955, page 94 “Questions From Readers” (**bold** added)

THE ENTRY INTO EGYPT: THE WATCHTOWER SOCIETY TRAVELS BACK IN TIME TO ITS START OF THE “70 YEARS”



The Society travels back to identify the year when its “70 years” commenced

THE ENTRY INTO EGYPT: THE WATCHTOWER SOCIETY

To arrive at its date for the destruction of Jerusalem, the Society travels back in time. This step is to identify the commencement of the “70 years”, which it says happened when Jews left the land of Judah and entered Egypt.

The **70 years** was a literal period of time that **ended in 537 B.C.E.** Counting back **70 years**, the **start date** of the period would be **607 B.C.E.**²³

When did the 70 years commence? ... A Jewish revolt brought the Babylonians back to Jerusalem. (2 Kings 24:20; 25:8-10) They razed the city, including its sacred temple, and they took many of its inhabitants captive to Babylon.

Within two months, “all the people [who had been left behind in the land]²⁴ from the least to the greatest, together with the army officers, **fled to Egypt** for fear of the Babylonians.” (2 Kings 25:25, 26, NIV) **Only then, in the seventh Jewish month**, Tishri (September/October), of that year could it be said that the land, now desolate and unworked, began to enjoy its Sabbath rest. ... So **this event evidently marked the starting point of the 70 years.** And **what year was that?** To answer, **we need to see when that period ended.**²⁵

²³ *The Watchtower*, October 1, 2011, pages 28-29 (**Bold** added)

²⁴ The words in brackets “[who had been left behind in the land]” do not appear in the NIV. These words have been inserted by the Watchtower. The context is Mizpah; some went to the Ammonites, others remained.

²⁵ *The Watchtower*, October 1, 2011, pages 27-28 (**Bold** added)

The entry into Egypt: The Watchtower travels back in time to its start of its “70 years”

Despite their illustrations showing that its “2,520 years” began with the destruction of the temple and the interruption of the Judean monarchy, the Watchtower Society also says that the entry of the Jews into Egypt marked the start of the “2,520 years”. With such looseness and confusion in this fundamental foundation, should anyone put their trust and dedication to an organization that says these steps prove it received the special appointment in 1919?

Seventy years back from the seventh month (Tishri) of the year 537 B.C. brings us to the month Tishri of the year 607 B.C.

In 607 B.C. the month Tishri began on September 22/23, the day for the observance of the festival of the new moon. **In that month of 607 B.C. the “seven times,” or, “the times of the Gentiles,” the appointed times of the nations,” began. This was two months after Jerusalem had been destroyed** and its temple plundered, wrecked and burned down, after which its two principal priests were killed.²⁶

With the **exit** of the insubordinate Jews from the land of Judah, the foretold **70 years** of desolation of the land without resident Israelite and domesticated beast **started off**.

Then, also, the symbolic “seven times” about which Jehovah caused King Nebuchadnezzar to dream and the prophet Daniel to offer an explanation **began** to run their course of **2,520 years**.²⁷

These loose, insecure stones form the base of the Watchtower’s foundation.

THE START OF THE “70 YEARS”: THE BIBLE

Students of the Bible offer several alternative suggestions for the moment when Jeremiah’s “70 years” commenced, but the Bible never explicitly identifies: “this is the event that commenced the ‘70 years’”. As shown above, the Bible says that the “70 years” ended when Babylon was defeated, so it is possible that the period began when Babylon was installed as God’s servant to inflict punishment on the wayward people.

There was no requirement for the land to be depopulated. Judah and its neighbours were instructed to “serve” Babylon. This instruction could be observed without the whole population of any nation leaving its lands.

Even well after Jerusalem had been destroyed and the “70 years” had long been decreed, God was absolutely determined that people had to remain in the land of Judah. God threatened reprisals if they disobeyed. And the Bible does not reveal the month when Jews entered Egypt.

THE TRUE NATURE OF THE “70 YEARS”: THE BIBLE

Judah and its surrounding nations had to serve Babylon for 70 years

The following passage is most likely the start of Jeremiah’s “70 years” because this is the moment Nebuchadnezzar was appointed by God and thus the moment when Judah and its surrounding nations were given the duty to serve Babylon:

“I am sending for all the families of the north,” declares Jehovah, “sending for King Nebuchadnezzar of **Babylon**, my servant, and I will bring them against **this land** and against its inhabitants **and against all these surrounding nations**. ... And **these nations** will have to **serve** the king of **Babylon for 70 years**.”²⁸

²⁶ “Babylon the Great Has Fallen” *God’s Kingdom Rules!* (1963), page 372 (**bold** added)

²⁷ *The Watchtower*, March 1, 1980, page 16 (**bold** added)

²⁸ Jeremiah 25:9, 11 (**bold** added)

The entry into Egypt: The Watchtower travels back in time to its start of its “70 years”

A nation could serve Babylon while remaining in its own land

The nation that brings its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serves him, I will allow to remain on its land,” declares Jehovah, “to cultivate it and dwell in”.²⁹

There was no need for Jerusalem to be destroyed

Also to King Zedekiah of Judah [Jeremiah] spoke in the same way, saying: “**Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him** and his people, and you will keep living.

Why should you and your people die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence, as Jehovah has said about the nation that will not **serve the king of Babylon**?

Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are saying to you, ‘You will not **serve the king of Babylon**,’ because they are **prophesying lies** to you.³⁰

Even after the destruction of Jerusalem and the assassination of Gedaliah, Jehovah commanded the people to remain on the land

“If you will indeed **remain in this land**, then I will **build you up** and not tear you down.” ... “For this is what Jehovah of armies, the God of Israel, says: ‘Just as my anger and my wrath were poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so **my wrath will be poured out on you if you go to Egypt**’” ... “Jehovah has spoken against you, O remnant of Judah. **Do not go to Egypt.**”³¹

²⁹ Jeremiah 27:11

³⁰ Jeremiah 27:12-14 (**bold added**)

³¹ Jeremiah 42: 10, 18, 19 (**bold added**)

The “70 years” in operation

To the king of **Edom**, the king of **Moab**, the king of the **Ammonites**, the king of **Tyre**, and the king of **Sidon**.

Now I have given all these lands into the hand of my servant King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. ... All the nations will serve him and his son and his grandson until the time for his own land comes.

Any nation or kingdom refuses to **serve** King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and refuses to put its neck under the **yoke of the king of Babylon**, I will punish that nation.

Do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your magicians, and your sorcerers, who are saying to you: “You will not **serve** the king of Babylon.” For they are prophesying lies to you.

The nation that brings its **neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serves him**, I will allow to remain on its land,” declares Jehovah, “to cultivate it and dwell in”.

Also to King Zedekiah of Judah I spoke in the same way, saying: “Bring your **necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him** and his people, and you will keep living. Why should you and your people die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence, as Jehovah has said about the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon? Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are saying to you, ‘You will not serve the king of Babylon,’ because they are prophesying lies to you. (Jeremiah 27:3, 6, 8-14)

In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim. Jeremiah 27:1
(*should be Zedekiah. See verse 14, also NIV and ESV*)

“I am sending ... **King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, my servant** ... against **this land and ... all these surrounding nations**.

... And **these nations will have to serve the king of Babylon for 70 years.**”
(Jeremiah 25:9, 11)

The fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, the king of Judah, which was the first year of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.
Jeremiah 25:1

To all the exiled people, whom I have caused to go into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.

‘Build houses and live in them. Plant gardens and eat their fruit. ...

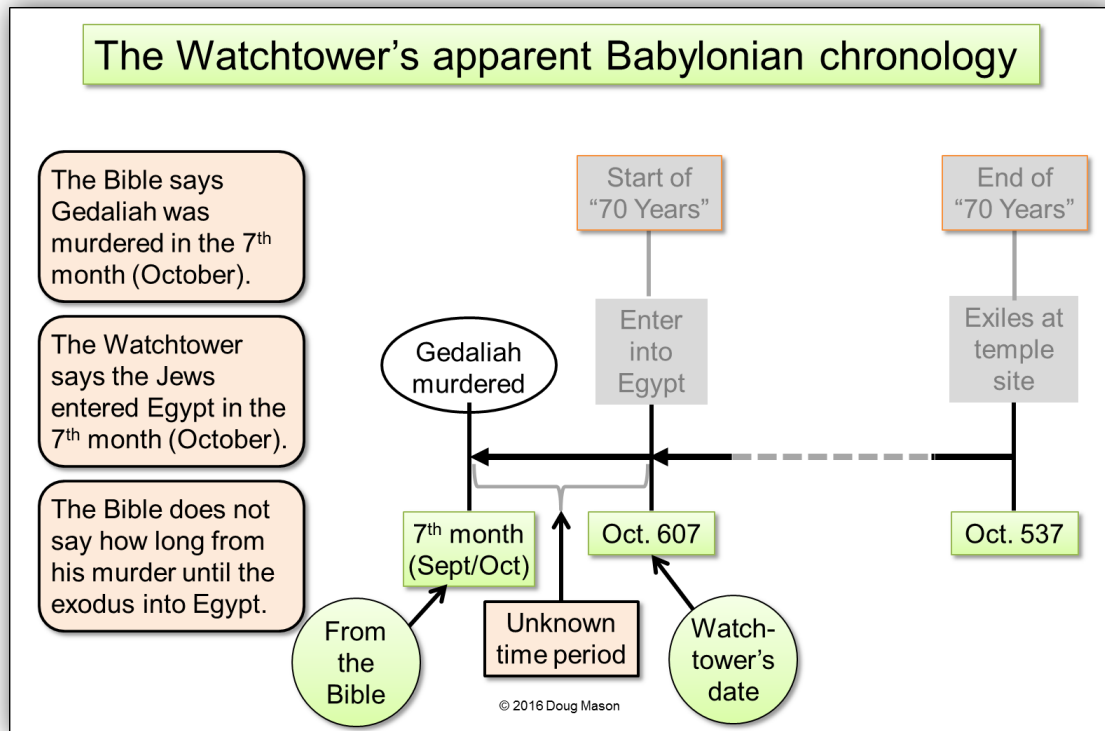
Seek the peace of the city to which I have exiled you, and pray in its behalf to Jehovah.

... ‘When **70 years at Babylon are fulfilled**, I will turn my attention to you, and I will make good my promise by bringing you back to this place.’ (Jer. 29:4, 5, 7, 10)

After King Jeconiah ... had gone out of Jerusalem.
Jeremiah 9:2

Return to [Outline for this Study](#) (page 4)

FROM GEDALIAH'S MURDER TO THE ENTRY INTO EGYPT



The Bible says that Gedaliah was murdered in the 7th month (September/October).

The Watchtower Society says that the Jews entered Egypt in the 7th month.

The events listed in the Bible strongly indicate a period much longer than 1 month elapsed

The Bible states that Gedaliah was murdered in the 7th month (September/October), but the Bible does not specify the year, although it does so with other events of the period. The Bible writer does not appear to be interested in the date of the entry into Egypt.

The length of the period from Gedaliah's murder to the entry into Egypt is not known. It includes several events that require an appreciable time to pass, far in excess of the short period of several days as stated by the Watchtower.

It locks in 537 and 607 for its "70 years", therefore using its process for determining the dates of prior events in the period, any longer period moves the date of Jerusalem's destruction earlier, thereby jeopardising the significance that the Society gives to 1919 and 1914.

THE FAST OF GEDALIAH

Jews commemorate the Fast of Gedaliah on the third day of the seventh month, Tishri. The Society would have done best if it had selected the murder of Gedaliah for the start of the "2,520 years" as this took place in the 7th month and it ended the Jews' rule of Judah. The difficulty for the Watchtower is that after Gedaliah was murdered, the land was still occupied.

Tzom Gedaliah / צום גדליה

The Fast of Gedalia (Hebrew: צום גדליה), also spelled Gedaliah, is a Jewish fast day from dawn until dusk to lament the assassination of the righteous governor of Judah of that name, which ended Jewish rule following the destruction of the First Temple.³²

FROM GEDALIAH'S MURDER TO THE ENTRY INTO EGYPT: THE WATCHTOWER SOCIETY

At length, the **Babylonians captured Jerusalem, burned it**, and took all except a few poor people into exile. Nebuchadnezzar appointed Gedaliah as governor. He was **murdered two months later**. The remaining Jews **planned to move to Egypt**, against the inspired advice of Jeremiah.³³

FROM GEDALIAH'S MURDER TO THE ENTRY INTO EGYPT: THE BIBLE

The Bible says that the following events took place after the murder of Gedaliah in the 7th month and before the Jews reached their intended destination, Egypt. The Bible does not say how long it took the caravan of men, women, children and their goods to arrive at the border, having travelled, with pauses, the full length of Judah from Mizpah. The Bible's silence over the total length of the period and its failure to identify the date of the Jews' entry into Egypt should indicate that the Bible writers did not consider these as significant.

Gedaliah murdered in the 7th month

And **in the seventh month**, Ishmael son of Nethaniah son of Elishama, who was of the royal line, came with ten other men, and they struck down Gedaliah and he died, along with the Jews and the Chaldeans who were with him in Mizpah. After that all the people, from small to great, including the army chiefs, rose up and went to Egypt, for they were afraid of the Chaldeans.³⁴

In the seventh month Ishmael son of Nethaniah son of Elishama, who was of the royal line and one of the principal men of the king, came with ten other men to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam at Mizpah. As they were eating a meal together in Mizpah, Ishmael the son of Nethaniah and the ten men who were with him rose up and struck down Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan with the sword. So he put to death the one whom the king of Babylon had appointed over the land. Ishmael also struck down all the Jews who were with Gedaliah in Mizpah, as well as the Chaldean soldiers who were there.³⁵

Two days later, 80 men come to worship; Ishmael slaughters them

On the second day after Gedaliah had been put to death, before anyone knew about it, there came 80 men from Shechem, from Shiloh, and from Samaria. Their beards were shaved off, their garments were ripped apart, they had cut themselves, and they had grain offerings and frankincense in their hand to bring to the house of Jehovah. So Ishmael the son of Nethaniah went out from Mizpah to meet them, weeping as he walked along.

When he encountered them, he said to them: "Come to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam." But when they came into the city, Ishmael the son of Nethaniah and his men slaughtered them and threw them into the cistern.³⁶

³² <https://www.hebc.com/holidays/tzom-gedaliah> (accessed 28 March 2016)

³³ *The Watchtower*, August 15, 2006, page 19 (**bold** added)

³⁴ 2 Kings 25:25-26

³⁵ Jeremiah 41:1-3

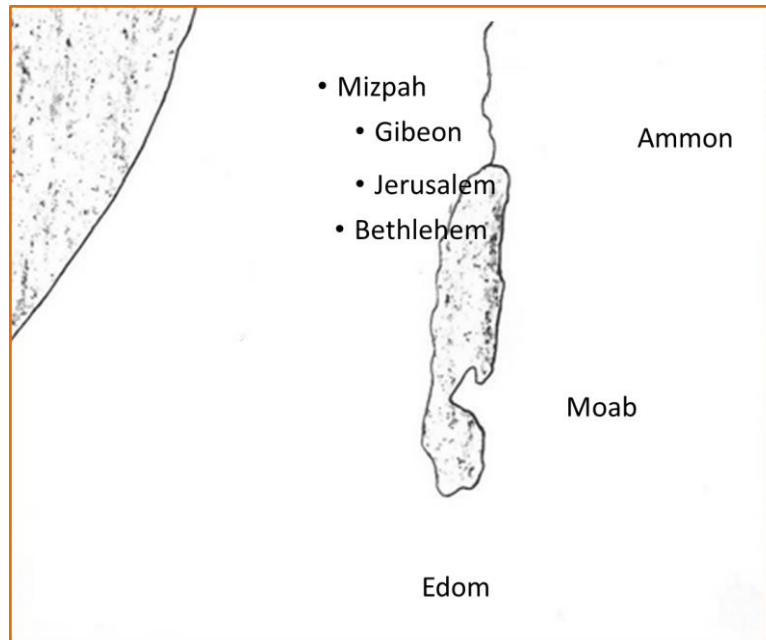
³⁶ Jeremiah 41:4-7

Ishmael takes captives; leaves to cross over to Ammon

Ishmael took captive all the rest of the people in Mizpah, including the daughters of the king and all the people left in Mizpah, whom Nebuzaradan the chief of the guard had put in the custody of Gedaliah the son of Ahikam. Ishmael the son of Nethaniah took them captive and went off to cross over to the Ammonites.³⁷

Johanan finds Ishmael by the great waters in Gibeon

When Johanan the son of Kareah and all the army chiefs who were with him heard about all the evil that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had done, they took all the men and went off to fight against Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and they found him by the great waters in Gibeon.³⁸



Gibeon lies in the direction of Ammon

Rescued people return from Gibeon to Mizpah but Ishmael goes to Ammon

Then all the people whom Ishmael had taken captive from Mizpah turned around and went back with Johanan the son of Kareah. But Ishmael the son of Nethaniah and eight of his men escaped from Johanan and went to the Ammonites. Johanan the son of Kareah and all the army chiefs who were with him took with them the rest of the people from Mizpah, those whom they had rescued from Ishmael the son of Nethaniah after he had struck down Gedaliah the son of Ahikam. They brought the men, the soldiers, the women, the children, and the court officials back from Gibeon.³⁹

They stay at a place near Bethlehem, intending to go on to Egypt

So they went and stayed in the lodging place of Chimham next to Bethlehem, intending to go on into Egypt because of the Chaldeans. For they had become afraid of them, since Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had struck down Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon had appointed over the land.⁴⁰

³⁷ Jeremiah 41:10

³⁸ Jeremiah 41:11

³⁹ Jeremiah 41:14-16

⁴⁰ Jeremiah 41:17

The remnant ask Jeremiah for instructions from God

Then all the army chiefs, and Johanan the son of Kareah, Jezaniah the son of Hoshaiah, and all the people, from the least to the greatest, approached and said to Jeremiah the prophet: "Hear, please, our request for favor, and pray in our behalf to Jehovah your God, in behalf of all this remnant, for just a few of many are left, as you can see. May Jehovah your God tell us the way we should walk and what we should do."⁴¹

Jeremiah's answer comes TEN days later

Now **ten days later** the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah. So he called for Johanan the son of Kareah and for all the army chiefs who were with him and for all the people, from the least to the greatest.⁴²

God instructs that they must stay in the land

He said to them: "This is what Jehovah the God of Israel says, to whom you sent me to present your request for favor before him:

If you will indeed remain in this land, then I will build you up and not tear you down, and I will plant you and not uproot you, for I will feel regret over the calamity I have caused you. Do not be afraid because of the king of Babylon, whom you fear.' "Do not be afraid because of him,' declares Jehovah, 'for I am with you, to save you and to rescue you out of his hand. And I will show you mercy, and he will have mercy on you and return you to your own land.

"But if you say, "No, we will not remain in this land!" and you disobey the voice of Jehovah your God by saying, "No, we will go instead to the land of Egypt, where we will not see war or hear the sound of the horn or hunger for bread; there is where we will live," then hear the word of Jehovah, O remnant of Judah. This is what Jehovah of armies, the God of Israel, says: "If you are absolutely determined to go to Egypt and you go there to reside, then the very sword you are afraid of will catch up with you there in the land of Egypt, and the very famine you fear will follow after you to Egypt, and there you will die. And all the men who are determined to go to Egypt to reside there will die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. None of them will survive or escape the calamity that I will bring on them."

"For this is what Jehovah of armies, the God of Israel, says: 'Just as my anger and my wrath were poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so my wrath will be poured out on you if you go to Egypt, and you will become a curse, an object of horror, a malediction, and a reproach, and you will never again see this place.'"⁴³

Jeremiah is told that he is lying, so they disobey God

When Jeremiah had finished speaking to all the people all these words from Jehovah their God, every single word that Jehovah their God had sent him to tell them, Azariah the son of Hoshaiah, Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the presumptuous men said to Jeremiah: "What you are saying is a lie! Jehovah our God has not sent you to say, 'Do not go to Egypt to reside there.' But Baruch the son of Neriah is inciting you against us to hand us over to the Chaldeans, to put us to death or to take us into exile in Babylon."

So Johanan the son of Kareah and all the army chiefs and all the people disobeyed the voice of Jehovah to remain in the land of Judah.

⁴¹ Jeremiah 42:1-3

⁴² Jeremiah 42:7-8

⁴³ Jeremiah 42:9-18

From Gedaliah's Murder to the entry into Egypt

Instead, Johanan the son of Kareah and all the army chiefs took with them all the remnant of Judah who had returned to reside in the land of Judah from all the nations where they had been dispersed.

They took the men, the women, the children, the daughters of the king, and everyone whom Nebuzaradan the chief of the guard had left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, as well as Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch the son of Neriah.

And they went into the land of Egypt, for they did not obey the voice of Jehovah, and they went as far as Tahpanhes.⁴⁴

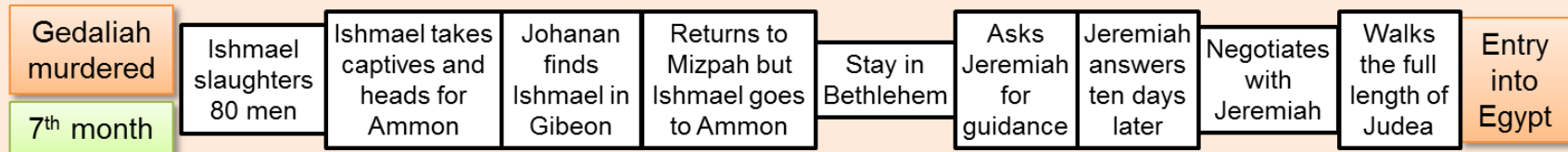


To reach Egypt, the people trekked the length of Judah

⁴⁴ Jeremiah 43:1-7

From Gedaliah's murder to the Jews' entry into Egypt

The Watchtower suggests all of this took just two weeks



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In the following explanation, the Society starts its “2,520 Year Gentile Times” with the entry into Egypt, after the destruction of Jerusalem and after the murder of Gedaliah. There is no symmetry between its “conferring of kingship in 1914 C.E.” and “entry into Egypt”.

The conferring of kingship over the nations on Christ Jesus took place in 1914 C.E., at the expiration of the “appointed times of the nations” or the Gentile Times. Those “appointed times” began **2,520 years earlier, after the destruction of Jerusalem in 607 B.C.E. and the assassination of the Jewish governor Gedaliah**

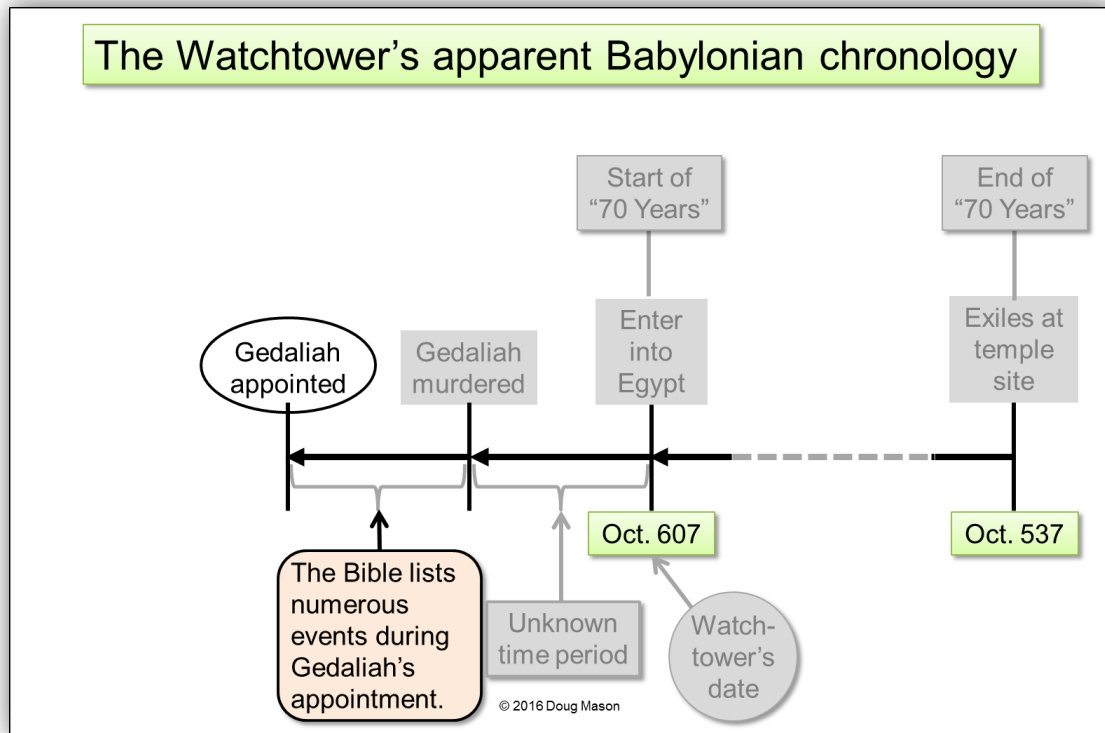
The murder of Gedaliah in the month of Tishri (September/October) prompted those Jews left remaining in the land of Judah to flee.

By the time the fearful Jews **fled to Egypt** it must have been **at least the middle of Tishri, to allow enough time** for the events mentioned in the Bible as taking place **between the assassination and the flight**. This would place the start of the Gentile Times **about Tishri 15, 607 B.C.E.**⁴⁵

Return to [Outline for this Study](#) (page 4)

⁴⁵ *The Watchtower* Jun 1, 1972, pages 351-352 (**bold** added)

FROM GEDALIAH'S APPOINTMENT UNTIL HIS MURDER



**The Bible provides a list of time-consuming events during Gedaliah's appointment.
The date of Gedaliah's appointment is not known.**

FROM GEDALIAH'S APPOINTMENT UNTIL HIS MURDER: THE BIBLE

The number and nature of the events taking place during Gedaliah's appointment require a period far in excess of two months. These longer periods lengthen the time span, moving the date of Jerusalem's destruction earlier, thereby jeopardising the significance that the Watchtower Society gives to 1919 and 1914.

Gedaliah appointed to represent the people left in Judah

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon appointed Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan over the people whom he had left behind in the land of Judah.⁴⁶

Jeremiah taken care of by Gedaliah

Now King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon gave Nebuzaradan the chief of the guard these orders concerning Jeremiah: "Take him and look after him; do him no harm, and grant whatever he asks of you."

So Nebuzaradan the chief of the guard, ... had Jeremiah taken out of the Courtyard of the Guard and handed him over to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan to be brought to his house.

"I [Nebuzaradan] am releasing you [Jeremiah] today from the handcuffs that were on your hands. If it seems good to you to come with me to Babylon, come, and I will look after you. But if you do not want to come with me to Babylon, do not come. See! The entire land is before you. Go wherever you choose."

⁴⁶ 2 Kings 25:22

While Jeremiah still had not turned back, Nebuzaradan said: "Return to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon has appointed over the cities of Judah, and stay with him among the people; or go wherever you choose."

The chief of the guard then gave him a food allowance and a gift and let him go. So Jeremiah went to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam at Mizpah and stayed with him among the people who were left in the land.⁴⁷

In time, people hear that Gedaliah had been appointed to represent the people to Babylon

In time all the army chiefs who were in the field with their men heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah the son of Ahikam over the land and that he had appointed him over the men, women, and children from the poor people of the land who had not been deported to Babylon. So they came to Gedaliah at Mizpah. In time all the army chiefs who were in the field with their men heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah the son of Ahikam over the land and that he had appointed him over the men, women, and children from the poor people of the land who had not been deported to Babylon. So they came to Gedaliah at Mizpah.⁴⁸

The people go to Mizpah where Gedaliah reassures them, "Live in the land and serve Babylon"

Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan swore an oath to them and to their men, saying: "Do not be afraid of serving the Chaldeans. Live in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it will go well with you. As for me, I will stay in Mizpah to represent you to the Chaldeans who come to us. But you should gather wine, summer fruits, and oil and put them in your storage containers and settle in the cities that you have taken over."⁴⁹

News reaches Moab, Ammon and Edom that Nebuchadnezzar has left a remnant in Judah, where they gather an abundant Summer harvest

And all the Jews who were in Moab, Ammon, and Edom, as well as those who were in all the other lands, also heard that the king of Babylon had let a remnant stay in Judah and that he had appointed over them Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan. So all the Jews began returning from all the places to which they had been dispersed, and they came into the land of Judah, to Gedaliah at Mizpah. And they gathered wine and summer fruits in very great quantity.⁵⁰

Gedaliah is warned of a plot by the King of Ammon to kill him

Johanan the son of Kareah and all the army chiefs who were in the field came to Gedaliah at Mizpah. They said to him: "Do you not know that Baalis, the king of the Ammonites, has sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to kill you?"

But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam did not believe them.

Then Johanan the son of Kareah secretly told Gedaliah in Mizpah: "I want to go and strike down Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and no one will know. Why should he kill you, and why should all the people of Judah who have gathered to you be scattered and the remnant of Judah perish?"

But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said to Johanan the son of Kareah: "Do not do this, for what you are saying concerning Ishmael is a lie."⁵¹

⁴⁷ Jeremiah 39:11-14; 40:4-6

⁴⁸ Jeremiah 40:7-8; see also 2 Kings 25:23

⁴⁹ Jeremiah 40:9-10; see also 2 Kings 25:24

⁵⁰ Jeremiah 40:11-12

⁵¹ Jeremiah 40:13-16



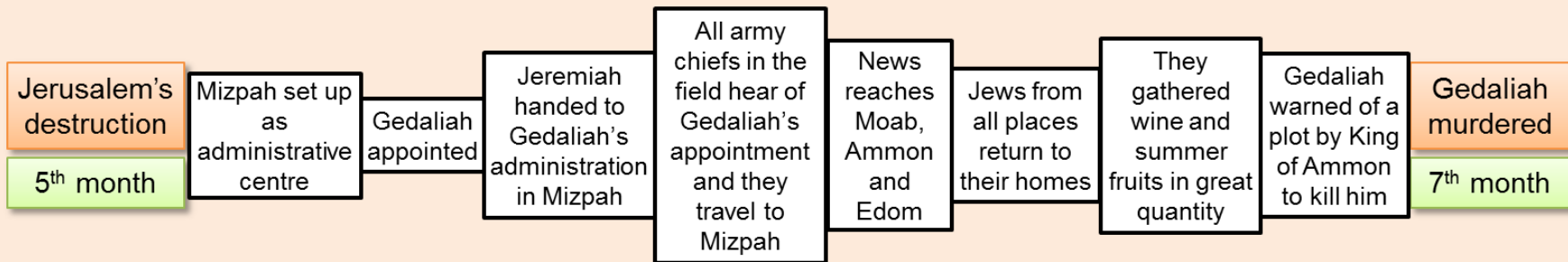
And all the Jews who were in Moab, Ammon, and Edom, as well as those who were in all the other lands, also heard that the king of Babylon had let a remnant stay in Judah and that he had appointed over them Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan.

So all the Jews began returning from all the places to which they had been dispersed, and they came into the land of Judah, to Gedaliah at Mizpah. And they gathered wine and summer fruits in very great quantity.⁵²

⁵² Jeremiah 40:11-12

From Jerusalem's destruction to Gedaliah's murder

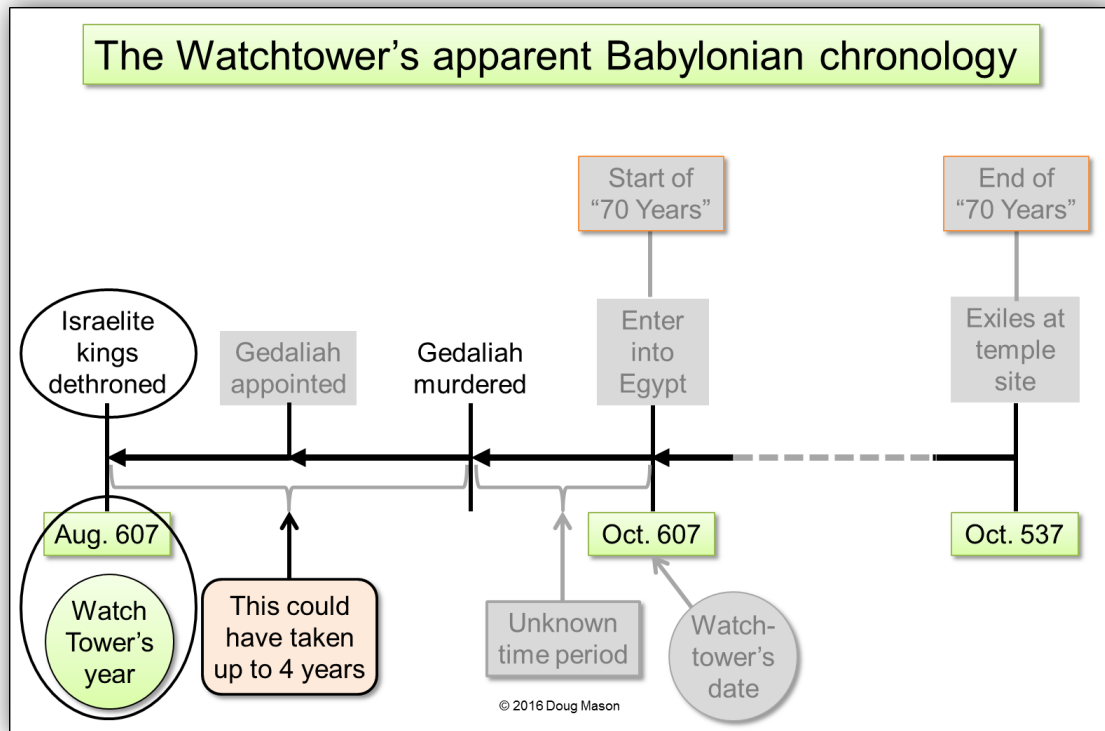
The Watchtower says all of this took only two months



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Return to [Outline for this Study](#) (page 4)

THE ISRAELITE KINGS REMOVED

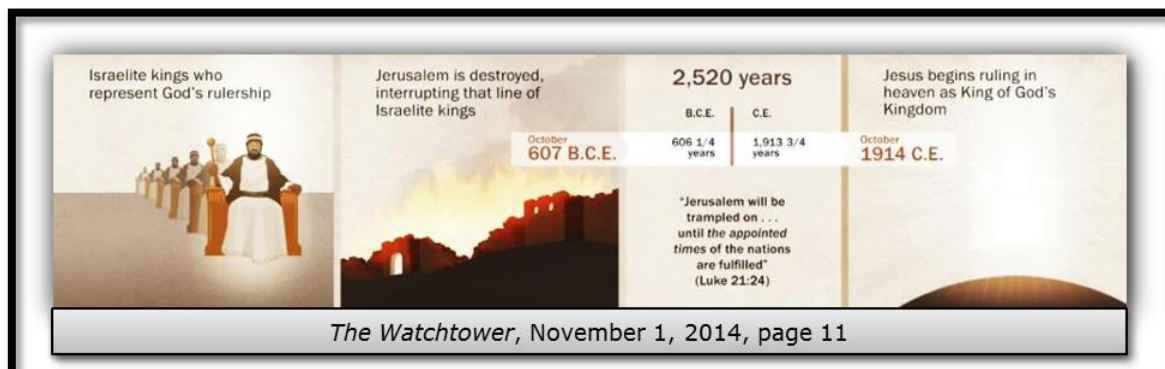


The Bible says that Jerusalem was destroyed in the 5th month (July/August)

THE ISRAELITE KINGS REMOVED: THE WATCHTOWER SOCIETY

Even though the Society identifies that Jerusalem was destroyed in the **5th month**, which corresponds with our July/August, the following typical illustration shows: "Jerusalem is destroyed, interrupting that line of kings" in October, which equates to the Bible's **7th month**.

The picture shows that 1914 is inextricably linked to the interruption of the Israeli monarchy and not to the entry into Egypt.



THE ISRAELITE KINGS REMOVED: THE BIBLE

Description at 2 Kings of Jerusalem's destruction

In the **ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month**, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came with all his army against Jerusalem. He camped against it and built a siege wall all around it, and the city was under siege until **the 11th year of King Zedekiah**.

On the **ninth day of the fourth month** the famine was severe in the city, and there was no food for the people of the land.

In the **fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, that is, in the 19th year of King Nebuchadnezzar** the king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan the chief of the guard, the servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem.

He burned down the house of Jehovah, the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem; he also burned down the house of every prominent man. And the walls surrounding Jerusalem were pulled down by the entire Chaldean army that was with the chief of the guard.

Nebuzaradan the chief of the guard took into exile the rest of the people who were left in the city, the deserters who had gone over to the king of Babylon, and the rest of the population. But **the chief of the guard left some of the poorest people of the land** to serve as vinedressers and as compulsory laborers.⁵³

Description at Jeremiah 39 of Jerusalem's destruction

In the ninth year of King Zedekiah of Judah, in the tenth month, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and all his army came to Jerusalem, and they besieged it.

In the 11th year of Zedekiah, in the **fourth month**, on the ninth day of the month, they broke through the city wall.

The Chaldeans then burned down the king's house and the houses of the people, and they tore down the walls of Jerusalem.

Nebuzaradan the chief of the guard took into exile to Babylon the rest of the people who were left in the city, the deserters who had defected to him, and anyone who remained. But Nebuzaradan the chief of the guard left in the land of Judah some of the poorest people, those who had nothing at all. On that day he also gave them vineyards and fields to work.⁵⁴

When King Zedekiah of Judah and all the soldiers saw them, they fled, going out of the city by night by way of the king's garden, through the gate between the double wall, and they continued by the way of the Arabah. But the Chaldean army chased after them, and they overtook Zedekiah in the desert plains of Jericho. They captured him and brought him up to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he passed sentence on him.

The king of Babylon had the sons of Zedekiah slaughtered before his eyes there at Riblah, and the king of Babylon had all the nobles of Judah slaughtered. Then he blinded the eyes of Zedekiah, after which he bound him with copper fetters to bring him to Babylon.⁵⁵

⁵³ 2 Kings 25:1-3, 8-12 (**bold and bold underline** added)

⁵⁴ Jeremiah 39:1-2, 8-10 (**bold underline** added)

⁵⁵ Jeremiah 39:4-7

Description at Jeremiah 52 of Jerusalem's destruction

In the **ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month**, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came with all his army against Jerusalem. They camped against it and built a siege wall all around it. And the city was under siege until the 11th year of King Zedekiah.

In the **fourth month, on the ninth day of the month**, the famine was severe in the city, and there was no food for the people of the land.

In the **fifth month, on the tenth day of the month, that is, in the 19th year of King Nebuchadnezzar** the king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan the chief of the guard, who was an attendant of the king of Babylon, came into Jerusalem. He burned down the house of Jehovah, the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem; he also burned down every large house. And the walls surrounding Jerusalem were pulled down by the entire Chaldean army that was with the chief of the guard.

Nebuzaradan the chief of the guard took into exile some of the lowly people and the rest of the people who were left in the city. He also took the deserters who had defected to the king of Babylon as well as the rest of the master craftsmen. But Nebuzaradan the chief of the guard left some of the poorest people of the land to serve as vinedressers and as compulsory laborers.⁵⁶

The chief of the guard also took Seraiah the chief priest, Zephaniah the second priest, and the three doorkeepers. And he took from the city one court official who was the commissioner over the soldiers, seven close associates of the king who were found in the city, as well as the secretary of the chief of the army, the one mustering the people of the land, and 60 men of the common people of the land who were yet found in the city. Nebuzaradan the chief of the guard took them and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. The king of Babylon struck them down and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath.

Thus Judah went into exile from its land.⁵⁷

Puppets of Babylon

The last two kings were mere puppets of the Babylonian administration, as was Gedaliah. In the 37th year of the exile, Judean King Jehoiachin was still alive and he experienced a return to favour.

In the 37th year of the exile of King Jehoiachin of Judah, in the 12th month, on the 25th day of the month, King Evil-merodach of Babylon, in the year he became king, released King Jehoiachin of Judah and brought him out of prison.

He spoke kindly with him and put his throne higher than the thrones of the other kings who were with him in Babylon.

So Jehoiachin took off his prison garments, and he regularly ate before him all the days of his life. A regular allowance of food was given him from the king of Babylon, day after day, until the day of his death, all the days of his life.⁵⁸

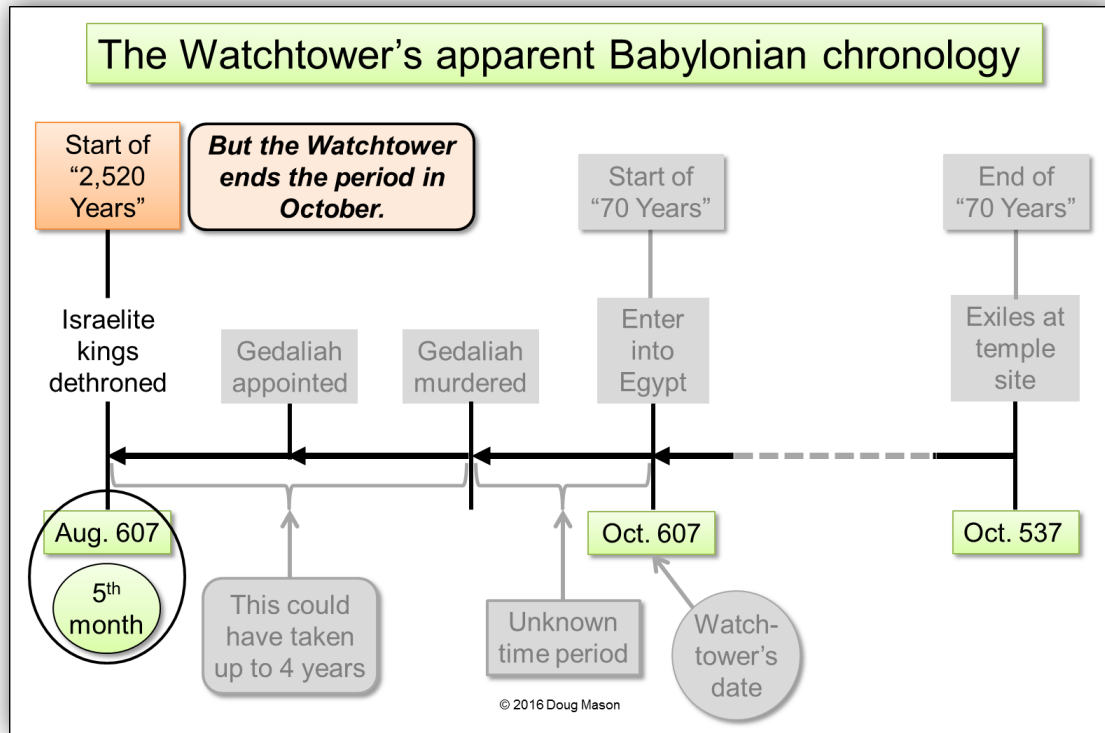
Return to [Outline for this Study](#) (page 4)

⁵⁶ Jeremiah 52:4-6, 12-16 (**bold** and **bold underline** added)

⁵⁷ Jeremiah 52:24-27 (**bold** added)

⁵⁸ Jeremiah 52:31-33

WHEN DOES THE WATCHTOWER SOCIETY STARTS ITS “2,520 YEARS”?



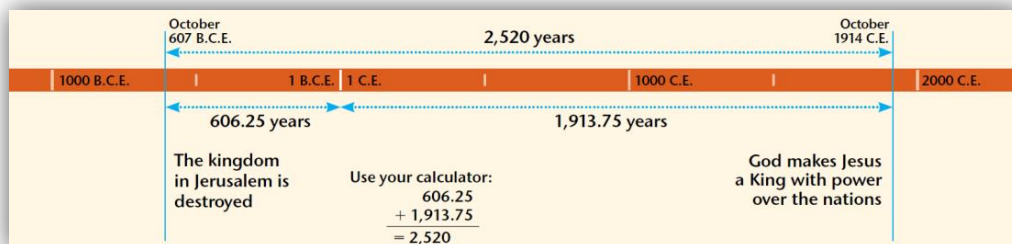
The Society commences its “2,520 years” when Jerusalem was destroyed in the 5th month (July/August) but it also says the “2,520 years” began in the 7th month (September/October)

The previous Biblical statements show, and the Watchtower acknowledges, Jerusalem fell in the 5th month (July/August).

The Babylonians ... razed the city, including its sacred temple. ... Within two months, “all the people ... fled to Egypt” ... in the seventh Jewish month, Tishri (September/October).⁵⁹

The Watchtower commences its “2,520 years” with the destruction of Jerusalem and the interruption of the Judean monarchy.

God enthroned Jesus as King in heaven in 1914, exactly 2,520 years after **Jerusalem's destruction**.⁶⁰



61

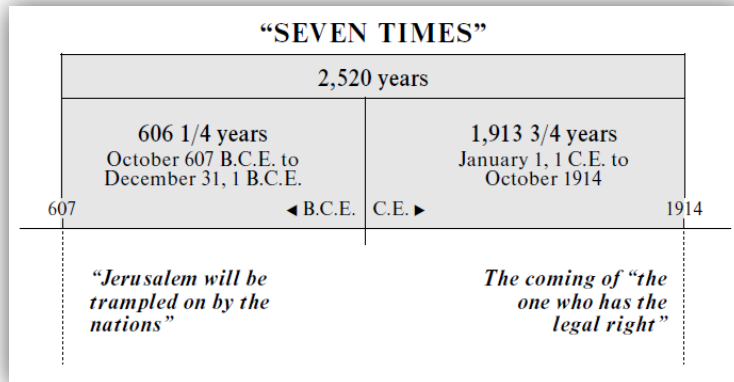
⁵⁹ The Watchtower, October 1, 2011, page 27

⁶⁰ The Watchtower, August 1, 2012, page 17 (**bold added**)

⁶¹ The Watchtower, August 1, 2012, page 17

When does The Watchtower starts its “2,520 years”?

This illustration also shows that the Watchtower Society commences its “2,520 years” with “Jerusalem ... trampled on”. No mention is made of Jews entering Egypt later.

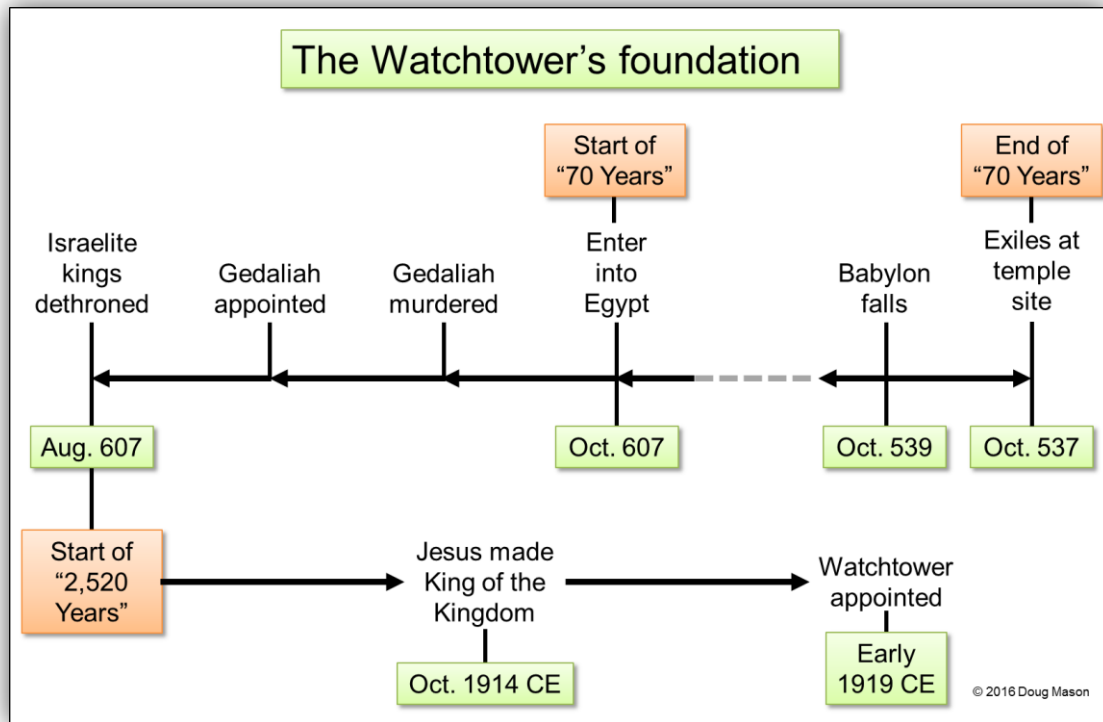


However, in this and other illustrations, the Watchtower commences its “2,520 years” in October, which corresponds with the Hebrew 7th month. But the Bible only states that Gedaliah was murdered in that month.

The Society lays its foundation with this self-contradictory situation, and good, honest, genuine people are required to accept the Watchtower’s word because it claims it was appointed in 1919.

Return to [Outline for this Study](#) (page 4)

SUMMARY



The Watchtower Society's claim that it is appointed by God as his earthly representative rests on its claim that its appointment occurred in 1919 CE. To arrive at that date, and the significance that the Society ascribes to it, requires a chronological journey spanning more than 2,500 years. If a person does not understand or agree with the statements made regarding dates of events in the 6th century BCE, then that person has no justification for devoting their life, their energy, their commitment to the Watchtower Society.

To arrive at these dates of the early 20th century, the Watchtower starts with the date of the Fall of Babylon, which is generally agreed with as 539 BCE. The story then moves slightly forwards in time to the return of Exiles from Babylon. Without providing any objective justification, the Watchtower assigns October 537 BCE to the moment when Jews assembled at the site of the destroyed Jerusalem. Further, without any direct statement from Scripture, it says this moment marked the end of Jeremiah's decreed "70 years".

Having settled upon the fixed date of 537 BCE for the end of the "70 years", the Watchtower steps back to the start of that period, dating it as 607 BCE. While the Society says the event being marked is the entry into Egypt (it needs the land to be depopulated for the duration of the "70 years"), the Bible is silent, only saying that a 7th month marked the murder of Gedaliah.

Examination of the events that took place after Gedaliah's murder through to the entry into Egypt shows that quite a time passed. Since the Society is working *from* its 537 BCE, the only option is to move the date of Gedaliah's murder further back into history. Further, when the events that took place from the time Gedaliah was appointed until his murder, it becomes clear that again another long period is involved. This moves the dates of earlier events even further back in time.

There is no information on how long the Babylonians took after they destroyed Jerusalem before they appointed Gedaliah. All these add to the time, which, using the Watchtower's methodology, pushes its calculated date of Jerusalem's fall further and further back to an unknown date.

When does The Watchtower starts its “2,520 years”?

This is critical for the Watchtower because it says that Jesus was installed as King of God’s Kingdom exactly 2,520 years after Jerusalem was destroyed. Using the Society’s methodology this means that it was not appointed in 1919 as it claims.

The situation is murky indeed, which is not good for a foundation, which is further confounded because the Watchtower also says that the “2,520 years” commenced when Jews entered Egypt. Not that it has any idea of the date of that entry into Egypt. Likely because of this uncertainty, the Watchtower can only offer a non-specific “October 1914”, although it sometimes suggests October 1 and also October 15.

Is its evidence so strong that a person could devote their life and energy to the Watchtower?

The reality, of course, is that the true date of Jerusalem’s destruction in 587/586 BCE is well known and accepted by everyone apart from the Watchtower Society. Ironically, it is of survival importance to the organization’s authority that they get it right. For anyone else it is no more than a matter of academic interest.

Return to [Outline for this Study](#) (page 4)

CONCLUSIONS

The dates and events in the 6th century have to be understood by and agreed with before anyone devotes their life and their energy to the Watchtower Society. One has to know and accept the foundation that the Society is founded on and continues to rely on.

At several steps, the Watchtower Society lacks precise, objective and verifiable facts. It is not sufficient to reason from possibilities and unverifiable assumptions. A person's commitment cannot rely on "it could have happened in this manner", "it is likely this took place at that time". Such assumptions have to be put aside, so that confidence can rest on provable objective evidence and information, where there is no room for any doubt or questions.

The Watchtower Society's doubtful explanations with the foundation of its authority leave too much room for doubt.

This Study has focused on the foundation stones that create the Watchtower Society's self-declared position as Jehovah's one and only channel for all humankind. This Study replicated the method used by the Watchtower Society to arrive at its keystone dates in the 6th century for

- the end of the "70 years" (claimed by the Watchtower Society as 537 BCE)
- the beginning of the "70 years" (claimed by the Watchtower Society as the 7th month of 607 BCE)
- the year when Jerusalem was destroyed and hence the beginning of the "2,520 years". (claimed by the Watchtower Society as the 5th month of 607 BCE)

Return to [Outline for this Study](#) (page 4)

APPENDIX: DATE OF THE JEWS' RETURN

Babylon fell during Tishri 539 BCE

Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians about three weeks after the start of the civil Tishri New Year, 539 BCE.

Tishri reckoning of the Fall of Babylon

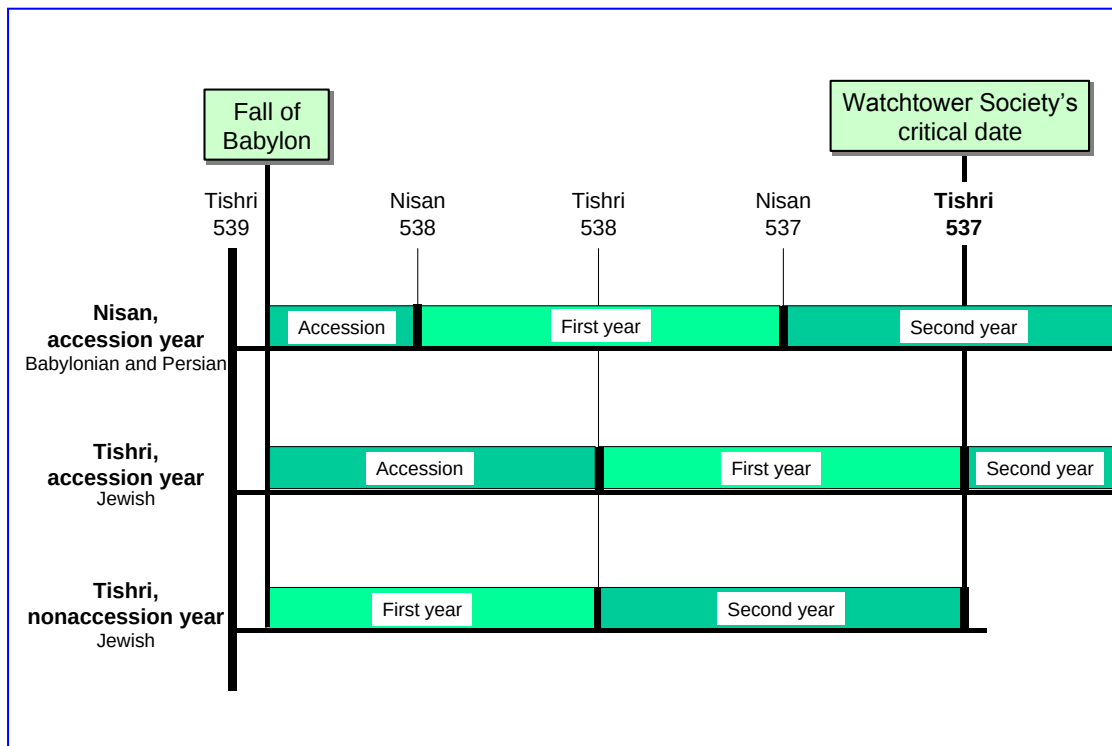
Influential Jews, such as Daniel and Ezra, used the Tishri calendar when recording events, even of rulers of other nations.

- If they used nonaccession reckoning, then Cyrus' first year ran from the time he ascended the throne, probably shortly after defeating Babylon (Oct 539 BCE) and continued until the last day before Tishri 1 (Sept) 538 BCE.
- If they used accession reckoning, then Cyrus' first year ran from Tishri 1 (Sept) 538 BCE and continued until the last day before Tishri 1 (Sept) 537 BCE.

Nisan reckoning of the Fall of Babylon

The Babylonians used the Nisan calendar, with accession-year reckoning. For them, Cyrus' "first year" ran from Nisan 1 (March) 538 BCE and continued until the last day before Nisan 1 (March) 537 BCE. Ezra 6 records the rediscovery of the Decree by the Persians. When the Persians speak of the "first year" they followed the Babylonian system.

The following diagram shows the relationships between these Tishri and Nisan systems.



Cyrus' "First Year" according to various chronological systems

Cyrus' Decree and the journey

At some point during his “first year”, Cyrus issued his Decree that permitted the captives held by Babylon to return to their homelands.

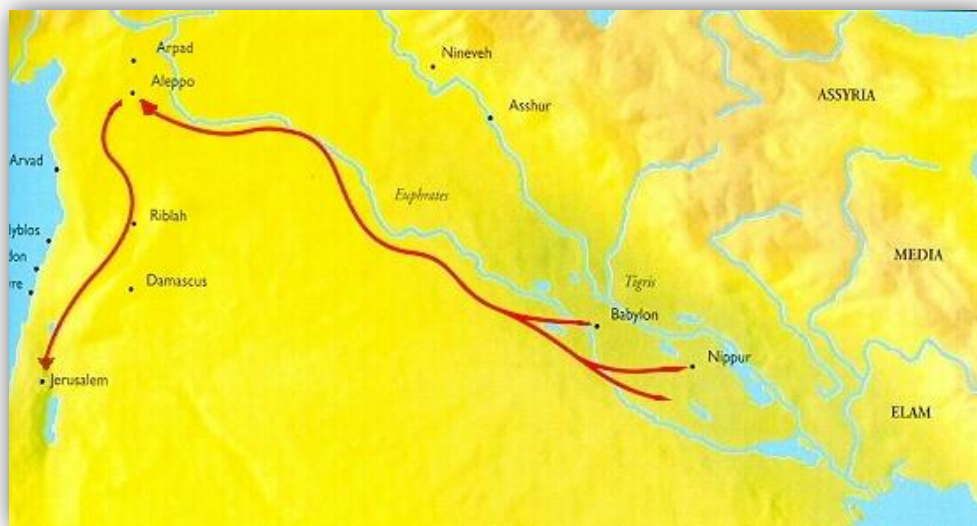
There is nothing that shows when Cyrus made his decree during his first year. If it was very early, they could have returned in 538 BCE. He might have issued it very late during his first year, thus suiting the WTS's requirements.

Hope is thin ice for a foundation. For anyone but the WTS, the date does not matter. For the WTS, it is critical. It is for the WTS to prove their desired date.

The Jews travelled on a journey taking from two to four months. At the start of the seventh month (Tishri, September/October), the Jews congregated at the site of the Temple.

The trek from Babylon to Judah and Jerusalem, undertaken by tens of thousands, was a journey that required preparation and it is not known how long that actually took.

It would take some time to complete all preparations for 49,897 people, and it was a good four months' journey back to the land of Judah.⁶²



Almost 50,000 people returned home

The WTS follows Babylonian practice

Without providing proof, the WTS states that the record in the Bible of Cyrus' first year⁶³ followed the Babylonian Nisan calendar, with accession-year reckoning.

The **accession year** (an incomplete lunar year) of Cyrus as king of Babylon began on **October 23 of 539 BCE**, when he entered the city (by day) after its capture by his troops. Hence **his first regnal year** (a full lunar year) **began on Nisan 1 of 538 BCE**, or on March 17/18 of 538 BCE, Gregorian time.⁶⁴

While this was the practice in Babylon, Ezra provides the Bible record, and he used the Tishri calendar. Ezra would use the Tishri calendar for the king of another nation, regardless of the system in use by that kingdom.

Using its typical emotive and derogatory language and without providing any reasons or proof, the WTS dismisses out of hand any research that shows patriotic Jews such as Daniel and Ezra used the

⁶² *The Watchtower*, September 15 1965, page 567, “A Pivotal Date in History”

⁶³ This means his “first year as ruler of Babylon”. He had long been king of the Persians.

⁶⁴ *The Watchtower* September 15 1965, page 567 “A Pivotal Date in History” (**bold added**)

Jewish system of reckoning. Bluff and bluster are certain signs of insecurity and lack of tangible evidence.⁶⁵

Some who have tried to explain away the problem have in a strained manner claimed that in speaking of “the first year of Cyrus” Ezra and Daniel were using some peculiar *Jewish* viewpoint that differed from the official count of Cyrus’ reign. But that cannot be sustained, for both a non-Jewish governor and a document from the Persian archives agree that the decree occurred in Cyrus’ first year, even as the Bible writers carefully and specifically reported.⁶⁶

These examples from “a non-Jewish governor and a document from the Persian archives” only show that the Decree was issued during the time when the “first year” as recorded by the Jewish system used by Ezra overlapped the “first year” of the system used by the Persians.

To remove an opportunity for a diversion, the following discussion and diagrams are based on the WTS’s assumption that the New Year began on Nisan 1 and that accession-year reckoning was used. In the end, the only impact is in the guess when the Decree might have been issued.

The WTS begins Cyrus’ first regnal year on Nisan 1 538 BCE

Babylon fell during Tishri (October) 539 BCE. As the balance of the defeated Babylonian king’s final year was completed by the incoming king, in accordance with Nisan reckoning the first year of the new king commenced on Nisan 1 538 BCE.

Cyrus’ accession year began after his overthrow of Babylon in 539 BCE. During his first regnal year (which ran from Nisan 538 BCE to Nisan 537 BCE), Cyrus issued the decree of liberation for the Jews.⁶⁷

The WTS says it can calculate when the Decree was issued

In the following, the WTS writes, once more without proof, that the Decree was issued during 537 BCE. It then agrees that in accordance with Persian and Babylonian reckoning, Cyrus’ first year ran from Nisan (Sept) 538 BCE to Nisan (Sept) 537 BCE. If that were the case, to suit the WTS’s needs, Cyrus had to have issued his Decree during the latter part of his first year. But the WTS does not know if that is the case.

From this known date (539 BC) we are then able quickly to understand Ezra 1:1, that the year **537 BC was the time when the decree was issued** by King Cyrus for the return of the Jews to Palestine and that the temple was begun to be rebuilt in the fall of this same year 537 BC.

How is this calculated? In Assyria, Babylon and Persia, when a king first came to the throne, the year was usually called **the king’s accession year**, and not until the first day of the first month of the next year did the king begin counting events in his own first regnal year.

Cyrus as a Persian ruler counted his regnal years from spring to spring or from Nisan to Nisan. **From October, 539 BC, to the spring of 538 BC would be his accession year** as the ruler of the fourth world power with the collapse of Babylon as the third world power.

Therefore, his first regnal year as “King of Babylon and King of Lands” ran approximately from April, 538 BC, to April, 537 BC. Actually, a clay tablet has been found dated [to] what amounts to our April 4, 538 BC, indicating Cyrus’ first regnal year.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ “Attack is the best defence”

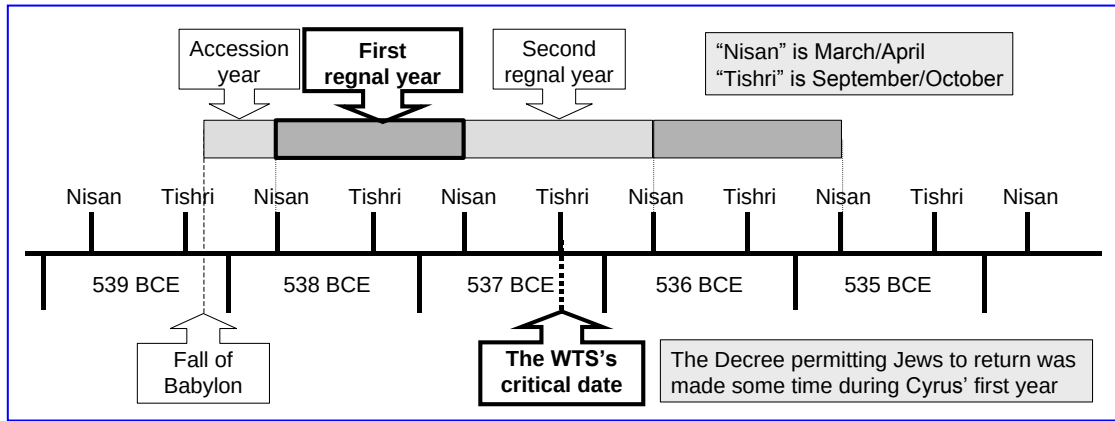
⁶⁶ *Let your Kingdom Come* (1981), page 189 Appendix to Chapter 14

⁶⁷ *Kingdom Ministry*, October 2004, page 7, Theocratic Ministry School Review.

⁶⁸ *The Watchtower* February 1 1955 page 94, “Questions from Readers” (**bold added**)

Summary and Conclusions

This really does not explain how the WTS “calculates” that the Decree was issued at the right time during 537 BCE.



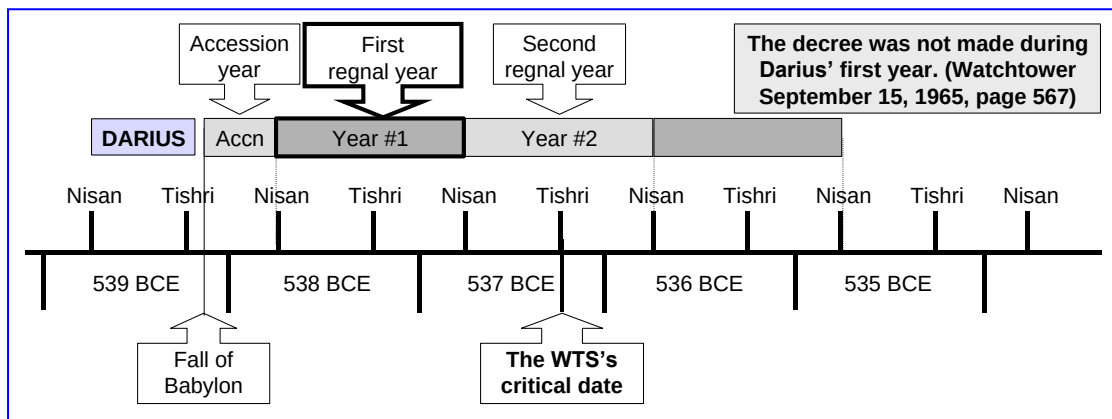
It is critical for the WTS that the Jews returned during 537 BCE

The WTS insists Darius ruled alone at the start

Based on its ability to interpret Scripture, the WTS insists that immediately following the Fall of Babylon, Darius the Mede ruled Babylon. Darius had a “first year”, and the WTS writes that the Decree was not issued during that year.

Darius the Mede ruled first at Babylon immediately after its fall. Daniel, at Babylon, speaks of the “first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus of the seed of the Medes” ... The liberation decree was not made in this year.⁶⁹

In this scenario, again without any proof, the WTS insists that “the liberation decree was not made in” the first year of Darius, Nisan 538 BCE to Nisan 537 BCE.



The WTS insists the Decree was not made during Darius' “first year”

WTS insists Cyrus ruled after Darius' “first year”

The above references from the WTS say that Cyrus came to the throne of Babylon shortly after its defeat, that he had an *accession year* until Nisan 1 (March) 538 BCE, and his *first regnal year* ran from Nisan 538 to the last day before Nisan 537.

In the following reference, and without any proof or evidence, the WTS says that Cyrus came to the throne **after** Darius reached his “first year”. Since Darius would have reached his “first year” on Nisan 1 538 BCE, Cyrus reached the throne after Nisan 538 BCE.

Again without facts, the WTS says that Cyrus “followed” Darius by late 538 BCE. If that were so, Cyrus' first year would have commenced on Nisan 1 537 BCE, presumably as co-regent with Darius.

⁶⁹ The Watchtower September 15 1965, page 567, “A Pivotal Date in History”

The reign of Darius I was brief; mention of “the first year” of his reign **infers** he was king **for at least a full year**. (Dan. 9:1; 11:1) Cyrus **followed him** on the throne by late 538.⁷⁰

This is not helpful to the WTS, for it creates the situation in which Cyrus’ first year would commence on Nisan 1 (March) 537 BCE.

Using reasoning that defies description, the WTS inserts at least a full year for Darius after the Fall in Tishri (Oct) 539 yet is still able to say that Cyrus’ first year started 6 months later on Nisan 1 (March) 538 BCE!

So with at least one year and **possibly a part of a second year for Darius** the Mede, the first year of King Cyrus the Persian **may not** have begun until the year 538 BCE to extend into the following year, 537 BCE.⁷¹

The WTS also assumes Darius and Cyrus were coregents at some time, but it does not know if that were so. It has no evidence, no facts, no dates, no information about Darius. (See: *Insight on the Scriptures*, Volume 1, pages 581 – 582, “Darius”)

WTS: “Cyrus’ first year started on Nisan 1, 538 BCE”

Apart from demonstrating what WTS scholarship looks like, their reference to Darius is a diversion, because the WTS states that regardless of anything, Cyrus’ “first regnal year” commenced on Nisan 1 (March) 538 BCE.⁷²

“The first year of Darius,” ... **may** have intervened between the fall of Babylon and “the first year of Cyrus” over Babylon. **If** it did, this would mean that the writer was **perhaps** viewing Cyrus’ first year as having begun late in the year 538 BCE. However, **if** Darius’ rule over Babylon were to be viewed as that of a viceroy, so that his reign ran concurrent with that of Cyrus, Babylonian custom would place Cyrus’ first *regnal* year as running from Nisan of 538 to Nisan of 537 BCE.⁷³

That is the strength of its foundation – “may”, “if”, “perhaps” and “if”. The WTS **does not know**. It provides no supporting evidence to show:

- Cyrus reigned concurrently with Darius
- When that supposed coregency commenced
- The “Babylonian custom” that operated in the way it claims.

Why did they introduce a problem for themselves, then have to try and wriggle out of it? And it was all so unnecessary.

WTS: “Decree might have been issued late in Cyrus’ first year”

Cyrus’ “first year” ran from Nisan 1 (March) 538, but at what point during his first year did Cyrus issue his Decree? If he issued it at the start, the Jews returned during 538 BCE. If he issued it late during the year, the Jews returned during 537 BCE. That is the most that can be said, since there is no evidence.

This, however, is **the** vital issue for the WTS. All they can do is hope, guess and assume. There is nothing else available but to hope that maybe one day some archaeologist might unearth the find that answers the WTS’s wishes. But that find might do the exact opposite and dash the WTS’s reasoning and hopes to pieces. Naturally, the WTS wants Cyrus to issue his Decree late during his first year.

⁷⁰ *The Watchtower*, August 15, 1968, page 493 “The Book of Truthful Historical Dates” (**bold added**)

⁷¹ *The Watchtower*, September 15 1965, page 567, “A Pivotal Date in History” (**bold added**)

⁷² Which is not in contest (Babylonian reckoning, of course)

⁷³ *Insight on the Scriptures* Vol 1, page 568 “Cyrus” (**bold added**)

Summary and Conclusions

Cyrus' decree freeing the Jews to return to Jerusalem **likely** was made **late** in the year 538 or early in 537 BCE.⁷⁴

Historians accept that Cyrus conquered Babylon in October 539 BCE and that Cyrus' first regnal year began in the spring of 538 BCE. **If** Cyrus' decree came late in his first regnal year, the Jews **could** easily be back in their homeland by the seventh month (Tishri) as Ezra 3:1 says; this would be October 537 BCE.⁷⁵

This decree was **evidently** issued late in 538 BCE **or** early in 537 BCE.⁷⁶

It is **very probable** that the decree was made by the winter of 538 BCE or toward the spring of 537 BCE.⁷⁷

Return to [Outline for this Study](#) (page 4)

⁷⁴ *Insight on the Scriptures* Vol 1, page 568 "Cyrus" (**bold** added)

⁷⁵ *Let your Kingdom Come* (1981), page 189 Appendix to Chapter 14 (**bold** added)

⁷⁶ *All Scripture is Inspired of God and Beneficial* page 85 para. 3 Bible Book Number 15—Ezra (**bold** added)

⁷⁷ *Insight on the Scriptures* vol 1, page 458, "Chronology"