

Chapter IV

The Assyrian Version

Part II of the Sabbath and Jubilee of 701/700 and 700/699 B.C.E.

The precise dating of the sabbath and Jubilee of Hezekiah's fifteenth and sixteenth years is uncovered in the records of the Assyrian king Sennacherib. Sennacherib reports the conquest of the cities in Judah and the reception of tribute from King Hezekiah during his third campaign.

Dating the Third Campaign

Sennacherib's third campaign can be dated by the following information: To begin with, this study is in complete agreement with the accepted dating of the Nineveh dynasty of Assyria, from Tiglath-pilneser III (745/744–727/726 B.C.E.) until the end of that line under Sin-sarra-ishkun (622/621–613/612 B.C.E.).¹ The Assyrians, like the ancient Israelites, reckoned their year from Nisânu (March/April) in the spring.² Their records prove that Sennacherib ascended to the throne upon the death of his father, Sargon, on Abu (July/Aug.) 12 of Sargon's seventeenth year (705/704 B.C.E.).³ His first regnal year, therefore, began in March/April of 704 B.C.E., the same first month as the Hebrew Abib (Nisan). He reigned twenty-three regnal years and died at the hands of one of his rebellious sons on Tebetu (Dec./Jan.) 20, 681 B.C.E.⁴

The *Bellino Cylinder* inscription, dated to the eponymy (year-name) of Nabuli (limmu *Nabuli of Arbailu*)—being the third regnal year of Sennacherib,⁵ which began with Nisânu (Nisan, Abib) of 702 B.C.E.—is the earliest record of Sennacherib's first two campaigns. In this document only the first and second campaigns are discussed.⁶

The earliest mention of the third campaign, wherein the expedition against King Hezekiah is given, comes on the *Rassam Cylinder*. It is dated in the eponymy of Metunu (limmu *Metunu of Isana*)—being the fifth regnal year of Sennacherib,⁷ which began with Nisânu 1 of 700 B.C.E.

The *Babylonian Chronicle* reports that in the third year of the Babylonian king Belibni, Sennacherib invaded Akkad and set his own son Assur-nadinshumi on the Babylonian throne.⁸ According to the limmu-chronicle, this event took place in the limmu of Metunu—beginning with Nisânu 1, 700 B.C.E.⁹ Sennacherib's own records make this event his "fourth campaign."¹⁰

¹ CAW, pp. 7f; and see our forthcoming text *The Golden Age of Empires*.

² ARAB, 2, p. 499; HBC, p. 30.

³ JCS, 12, p. 97.

⁴ ANET, p. 302.

⁵ ARAB, 2, p. 438.

⁶ AS, pp. 55–60; ARAB, 2, #268–282.

⁷ ARAB, 2, #283–284a, and p. 438.

⁸ ABC, p. 77, ℓ. 26–32.

⁹ CAW, p. 43.

¹⁰ AS, pp. 34f, 71; ARAB, 2, #241–243.

Sennacherib's first campaign began on the twentieth of Shabatu (Heb. "Shebat," Jan./Feb.).¹¹ The *Babylonian Chronicle* also states that in the first year of Belibni (i.e. the year beginning Nisânu 1, 702 B.C.E.) Sennacherib destroyed the cities of Hirimma and Hararatum.¹² Sennacherib's own records make this destruction part of his first campaign and part of the same expedition wherein he placed Belibni over the throne of Akkad.¹³ Yet the Babylonian kings were not officially recognized with a regnal year until the first of Nisânu (March/April), when they had to "take the hand of Bel."¹⁴

It is clear from these records that Sennacherib's first campaign extended from the month of Shabatu, near the end of his second regnal year (703/702 B.C.E.), and continued beyond the first of Nisânu, 702 B.C.E., the beginning of Sennacherib's third regnal year. His third regnal year, therefore, equals the first regnal year of Belibni, who Sennacherib placed upon the throne of Akkad in Babylonia during his first campaign.

Since the second campaign of Sennacherib had to be accomplished after his first (which took place in the first few months of 702 B.C.E.), yet before the *Bellino Cylinder*, which reported the second campaign, was composed (dated to the limmu of 702/701 B.C.E.), it is clear that the second campaign was also completed in the year 702, in Sennacherib's third regnal year. Neither was this a short-lived expedition. Sennacherib not only invaded the land of the Kassites, east of Babylonia, but marched further east into the distant lands of the Ellipi and then into the lands of the distant Medes, where he received heavy tribute (regions lying in what is today called Iran).¹⁵ Considering 25 miles per day as an average march (a liberal figure), and counting in time for sieges, battles, and rest periods, a campaign lasting three to four months is indicated.

This evidence proves that Sennacherib's third campaign, which included his expedition against King Hezekiah, must have taken place in the period AFTER the *Bellino Cylinder* was published, sometime in the year 702/701 B.C.E., Nisânu (Abib) reckoning, yet BEFORE the composition of the *Rassam Cylinder* inscription, published sometime in the year 700/699 B.C.E.—and still before his fourth campaign mentioned in that same inscription and falling within the third regnal year of Belibni of Akkad.¹⁶

Sennacherib's first campaign started in Shabatu and continued until at least the beginning of Nisânu of 702 B.C.E. Therefore, his second campaign must have been three to four months long during that same year, with a reasonable period between each event to allow his army to recoup and prepare for the next expedition. Allowing a minimum six weeks for repose between each expedition, the earliest possible chronology would be as follows:

- After April, 702 B.C.E., Sennacherib returns from his first campaign.
- The month of May, 702 B.C.E., Sennacherib rests and prepares for his second campaign.

¹¹ ARAB, 2, #255-258; AS, p. 50, *l.* 20.

¹² ANET, p. 301; ABC, p. 77, *l.* 26-28.

¹³ ARAB, 2, #232-238, 270-282.

¹⁴ CAW, p. 7; HBC, pp. 85f.

¹⁵ ARAB, 2, #236-238, 277-282.

¹⁶ Also see the discussion in CIOT, 1, pp. 307-310; SIP, pp. 2-4.

- June to September (or possibly until as late as October), 702 B.C.E., Sennacherib conducts his second campaign.
- The month of October (or possibly as late as November), 702 B.C.E., Sennacherib rests and prepares for his third campaign.

These limitations mean that Sennacherib, at the earliest, could not possibly have begun his campaign against Judah before late October of his third regnal year. At the same time—since his army was destroyed shortly after the beginning of spring—Sennacherib’s great defeat must have occurred at the beginning of his fourth regnal year. These details mean that Sennacherib’s third campaign got under way sometime between late fall of 702 and late winter of 701 B.C.E.: a period consisting of only about four months.

These details mean that Sennacherib’s third campaign must have taken place shortly after his second, and therefore in the winter. Indeed, even though Hezekiah had revolted from his Assyrian overlord and had not paid tribute, he was nonetheless surprised at Sennacherib’s invasion. This fact is indicated when Hezekiah had to hastily build fortifications after hearing of Sennacherib’s drive into the region, and even then conceded in his own mind that it would now be fruitless to continue the revolt.¹⁷ This detail would imply that a strike by Sennacherib would not have been expected at least until the spring, the usual time for military expeditions because of weather considerations.

In mid-702 B.C.E. Sennacherib was on his second campaign against the Kassites, Ellipi, and distant Medes far to the east. Hezekiah and the Judahites saw no reason for alarm. They had already been successful in their revolt for several years and in the present year others in the West were joining them.¹⁸

¹⁷ 2 Chron., 32:2–8; 2 Kings, 18:13–16; Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:1:1; cf. CIOT, 1, p. 299; CAH, 3, p. 72.

¹⁸ The assumption is often made that the nations of Phoenicia, Palestia, and Judah all revolted from Assyria upon the death of Sargon in Abu (July/Aug.) of 705 B.C.E. (e.g. AATB, p. 69; HI, p. 265). This conjecture, however, has no substance. Sargon’s records report that it was during his reign that “the lands of the Palestim, Yahudahi (Judahites) Edomites and Moabites” revolted and sent presents to Pharaoh of Egypt to become his ally (ARAB, 2, #195). In response, the Assyrian king crossed the Euphrates at the time of the spring floods (ibid.). This expedition took place in Sargon’s 11th year (711/710 B.C.E.), see ARAB, 2, #29f. Since his response to the revolt was in the spring, i.e. at the beginning of his 11th regnal year, the revolt took place sometime before this year began, and most probably in conjunction with the revolt of Israel in 712/711 B.C.E. (2 Kings, 18:9).

Sargon only mentions the overthrow of Iamani, king of Ashdod, the northernmost coastal city of Palestia, and two nearby cities, Gimtu and Asdudimmu (ARAB, 2, #29f, 195). [*Gi-im-tu* certainly is not Gath, as Luckenbill and others speculate. The Judahites held Gath at this time (see below). B. Mazar-Maisler connects this name with Gittaim of 2 Sam., 4:3, (JCS, 12, p. 83, n. 242); but גַּתִּיַּם (*G-b-t-u-n; m = b*) of Josh., 19:44, 21:23, located northeast of Ashdod, is phonetically much more suited]. Both the Assyrian accounts and the record in Isa., 20:1, report that Sargon’s chief military officer or *turtanu* (turtan, tartan) overthrew Ashdod. Nothing is mentioned of the recovery of Judah, Edom, Moab, or the other Palestia city-states. This data agrees with the ancient evidence that Hezekiah revolted from Assyria early in his reign (2 Kings, 18:1–9; Jos., *Antiq.*, 9:13:3). As part of this revolt, Hezekiah seized control of the Palestia (Philistia) states from Gath to Gaza (2 Kings, 18:8; Jos., *Antiq.*, 9:13:3, cf. 9:8:4, & 2 Kings, 12:17). For the time being Judah and the rest of Palestia remained free and their recovery was not undertaken until Sennacherib made the attempt. It was Sennacherib who stripped Judah’s control away from the Palestim city-states (AS, p. 33, 3:27–36, p. 70, ℓ. 27–30).

A previous revolt of Phoenicia occurred in 707/706 B.C.E. and lasted for five years, until 703/702 B.C.E. (Jos., *Antiq.*, 9:14:2; and see below n. 36). This evidence reveals that Phoenicia revolted again in 702 B.C.E. Ashdod would also have joined at this time. The revolt of Phoenicia and Ashdod were seen as far more of a concern for Assyria, who up until this time still

They felt secure because of their alliance with the Egyptians and Ethiopians and because they believed Sennacherib's involvement in his eastern wars would, at least for the time being, distract the attention of the Assyrians. But Sennacherib did the unexpected. Upon returning to Assyria from the East and hearing of the failure of other western vassals to pay tribute, he did not wait for spring. Instead, he immediately prepared for a massive surprise winter offensive.

We also know that Sennacherib was willing to commit his forces during the heart of winter, rarely done by other Assyrian kings.¹⁹ His first campaign, for example, began in Shabatu (Shebat) of 702 B.C.E. It was against the districts of Babylonia lying south of Assyria.²⁰ Based upon the records from both Sennacherib and the Jewish sources, the indication is that Sennacherib's third campaign began no sooner than late fall, but more probably in the winter of 702/701 B.C.E., during the latter part of his third regnal year (i.e., in the months before Abib of 701 B.C.E.). The year 702/701 B.C.E., therefore, is equivalent to the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, being the third regnal year of Sennacherib.

The year 701/700 B.C.E., the fourth regnal year of Sennacherib, as a result, is equivalent to the fifteenth year of Hezekiah. Sennacherib's army was destroyed at the beginning of Sennacherib's fourth regnal year, in the month of Abib (Nisan), on the fourteenth day, the first day of Passover, in the first part of that day, being nighttime. This year was a sabbath. The next year, 700/699 B.C.E., the sixteenth year of Hezekiah and the fifth year of Sennacherib, was the year of Jubilee.

retained control over them and through them held the Mediterranean Sea and kept Egypt in check. The fact that Ashdod submitted to the Assyrians immediately after the fall of Phoenicia, while the remaining Palestim (Philistine) states held out with Judah, demonstrates that the other Palestim states were in alliance with Judah. The revolt of Phoenicia and Ashdod best fits the description of Honor, who admits, "If we assume that the plans for revolt were not made in 705 but in 702-701, it is possible to surmise that Sennacherib learned of the conspiracy that was being planned against him before it was fully hatched; that Sennacherib advanced into Palestine with remarkable speed and surprised his foes before they were fully ready" (SIP, p. 65).

Luckenbill calculates that trouble doubtlessly began in the West as soon as the reports of Sargon's violent death reached these regions. Yet, it is also true that, because Sennacherib had been "kept occupied for some time after his accession by events in Babylonia," by the year 701 we find "respect for the Assyrian authority rapidly disappearing" (AS, p. 10). The fact that Sargon died would not, in itself, serve as an impetus strong enough to convince the petty western states to defect from such a powerful overlord as the Assyrian empire, whose military might during this period was immense. The evidence better suggests that it was only after the revolt of the eastern countries in Babylonia, Merodach-Baladan of Babylon (who formed an alliance with the Elamite empire), and some tribes east of the Tigris (the Kassites, Iasubigallai, and Ellipi) in late 703 B.C.E. (the nations towards which the first and second campaigns of Sennacherib were directed) that Phoenicia and Ashdod saw a chance. Their opportunity came while Sennacherib was consumed with his second campaign in mid-702 B.C.E.

¹⁹ There is an Assyrian inscription which tells of an expedition by Adad-Nirari II against the province of Dûr-Kurigalzu in Babylonia during the month of Shabatu (Jan./Feb.) (ARAB, 1, #390). The region of Babylonia laid in the low country south of Assyria. Therefore, neither distance nor severe climate would have served as too great an obstacle for this isolated event. Otherwise, until we arrive at the time of Sennacherib and his own invasion of Babylonia, which began on the twentieth of Shebatu during his first campaign, expeditions at this time of year are unknown. Before Sennacherib, no expeditions are reported either for the month of Tebetu (Dec./Jan.) or Addaru (Feb./March). Further, when Sennacherib attempted a march against Babylonia in the month of Tebetu during his seventh campaign, he was turned back by a severe rain and snow storm (ARAB, 2, #351). His attempt, nevertheless, demonstrates the willingness of Sennacherib to campaign during the heart of winter.

²⁰ ARAB, 2, #255-267.

We also must conclude that after Sennacherib's humiliating defeat before the walls of Jerusalem (where he lost 185,000 men) he would need an extended period of time to recoup from his losses in order to commit new troops to his fourth campaign in 700 B.C.E. It is not unreasonable to allow for approximately a year to accomplish this task.²¹ Interestingly, it was during this post-Jerusalem period that Sennacherib suffered from a major revolt of his Babylonian vassals, i.e. Belibni and other subkings. This revolt was temporarily successful because of the large military setback suffered by the Assyrian king during the end of his third campaign. Sennacherib's fourth campaign in 700 B.C.E. was, in part, against Belibni to recover Akkad for the Assyrians.²²

The Length of Sennacherib's Third Campaign

Another item of evidence that substantiates the fact that Sennacherib's third campaign was of no short duration, and therefore extended from the latter part of his third year into the early part of his fourth, comes from this Assyrian king's own records on this expedition. These inscriptions show that it was not just Judah that revolted but the whole of Phoenicia-Palestine (Chart F).

Sennacherib was forced to invade Khatti-land (Syria-Phoenicia), going against King Luli of Sidon and capturing all the fortified cities of his country.²³ Coming to Ushû (mainland Tyre), he received heavy tribute from the Phoenician city-states of Shamsimuruni, Sidoni, Arvadi, the Gubli (Byblos), the Palestim (Philistine) people of Ashdod, and the Trans-Jordan states of the Ammoni, the Moabi, and the Edomi²⁴ (these last three tribes residing just east of Judah).

Most of the Palestim people living in Palestia (Philistia) and their overlords of Judah, which ruled Palestia at the time,²⁵ still refused to submit. So Sennacherib next marched south along the coast and went to war against the king of Ashkelon. Along the way, he besieged and conquered Ashkelon's tributary cities of Beth-Dagon, Joppa, Banaibarka, and Asuru, carrying off their spoils.²⁶ With the submission of Ashkelon, the Assyrians were now on the borders of Judah.

Sennacherib's attack on Judah was especially violent. The ferocity of his onslaught was no doubt brought on because King Hezekiah of Judah was considered the ringleader of the revolt.²⁷ This fact is revealed when Sennacherib reports that the nobles and people of Ekron in Palestia had delivered up their own king, named Padi, a loyalist to the Assyrians, in iron fetters to Hezekiah to keep in confinement.²⁸

²¹ E.g., after Nebuchadnezzar took heavy losses in his campaign against Egypt during his fourth year, he was forced to stay home for the entire part of year five to refit "his numerous horses and chariotry" (ABC, p. 101, ℓ. 5-9).

²² CAW, p. 43.

²³ ARAB, 2, #239, 309, 326, 347.

²⁴ ARAB, 2, #239, 310; AS, pp. 30, 69.

²⁵ 2 Kings, 18:7-8, reveals that Hezekiah conquered the Palestim country "as far as Gaza and its borders" shortly after he had revolted from the Assyrians. Josephus states that Hezekiah seized all the Palestim cities "from Gaza to Gitta (Gath)" (Jos., *Antiq.*, 9:13:3). In the Assyrian records, Hezekiah is the ringleader of the revolt. Padi the king of Ekron, Palestia, to demonstrate, was thrown into iron fetters and given to Hezekiah to keep in confinement at Jerusalem (AS, pp. 31f, ℓ. 2:73-77, 3:14-17, pp. 69f, ℓ. 22-27).

²⁶ ARAB, 2, #239, 310; AS, pp. 30f, 69.

²⁷ AHI, p. 283; HI, p. 265. Also see above n. 25 and Chap. V, p. 57, n. 37.

²⁸ ARAB, 2, #240, 311; AS, p. 31, 2:73-77, p. 69, ℓ. 22f.

When the soldiers of the Assyrian king came against the land of Judah they captured 46 of its walled cities and innumerable smaller cities.²⁹ Among these overthrown fortified cities were Lachish and Libnah.³⁰ Sennacherib then claimed to have shut up Hezekiah in Jerusalem “like a caged bird.”³¹ Hezekiah, of course, had already submitted to Sennacherib before the blockade began. Further, he had paid the Assyrians a substantial amount of tribute and was forced to release King Padi of Ekron. Some Judahite territory was also taken away and given to the kings of Palestia.³² Nevertheless, Sennacherib reneged on the treaty and blockaded Jerusalem in hopes of deporting its entire population into a distant country and with an eye on sacking the wealthy city.

When the rebellious people of Ekron had heard that Sennacherib was coming, they called for military assistance from the Egyptians and Ethiopians. It was at this moment that these forces arrived. Sennacherib, therefore, was obliged to meet this “countless host” in battle. He defeated them on the plain of Altakû (Eltekeh)—a claim obviously referring to an initial victory over the Egyptians and Ethiopians before the plague at Pelusium and the arrival of the army of Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia.³³ Sennacherib then besieged the cities of Altakû (Eltekeh) and Tamnah, capturing them. He also took the city of Ekron, placing Padi back on the throne.³⁴ At this point, Sennacherib’s records finish.

The list of conquests and battles itemized in the records of Sennacherib compels us to conclude that his third campaign could not have been a short one. When we compare his records with those from ancient scriptural and Jewish accounts,³⁵ it is clear that the expedition lasted at least two to three months. Since his first and second expeditions took up most of the year 702 B.C.E., we are forced to look for his third campaign in the latter part of the king’s third year, possibly beginning as early as late fall (Oct./Nov.) but no later than Shebat (Jan./Feb.) of 702/701 B.C.E., during the same time of the year as when he had previously and successfully attacked the Babylonians. Once again we are led to the conclusion that Sennacherib’s army at Jerusalem was destroyed during the first month of the new year (Abib) of 701 B.C.E., the fifteenth year of Hezekiah.³⁶

²⁹ ARAB, 2, #240, 312, 327, 347; AS, pp. 32f, 3:18–27, p. 70, ℓ. 27f, p. 77, ℓ. 20f, p. 86, ℓ. 15.

³⁰ Lachish and Libnah are specifically mentioned in 2 Kings, 18:14, 17, 19:8; Isa., 36:2, 37:8; and 2 Chron., 32:9. In place of the discussion of these battles, Josephus only reports that the Assyrian king “took the field against the Egyptians and Ethiopians” while leaving behind Rabshakeh and his forces to sack the city of Jerusalem (Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:1:1). This information reflects the fact that the Assyrian king heard of the coming of the Egyptian and Ethiopian troops as he was taking Lachish and in response sent his troops to Libnah to prepare the region for the upcoming conflict (Libnah being very near Eltekeh and the site of the battle).

³¹ ARAB, 2, #240, 312; AS, p. 33, 3:27f, p. 70, ℓ. 28f.

³² ARAB, 2, #240, 312, 327, 248, 284a.

³³ AS, pp. 31f, 2:73–1:7; p. 69, ℓ. 22–25; ARAB, 2, #240, 311. A formidable response from the king of Kush came later, when the army led by Tirhakah came out to fight against the Assyrians (2 Kings, 19:9; Isa., 37:9; Jos., *Antiq.*, 10:1:4).

³⁴ AS, p. 32, 3:6–17, p. 70, ℓ. 25–27; ARAB, 2, #240, 312.

³⁵ See Chart F and above Chap. III, pp. 32f.

³⁶ Support for this arrangement is also found in the reconstruction of the reign of Shalmaneser III. (This reconstruction shall be demonstrated in our forthcoming book entitled *Old World Chronologies*.) These findings show that the five year blockade of Tyre and their king Eluli (Luli), which Shalmaneser III began in 707/706 B.C.E., his twenty-first year, ended the year prior to its

Addressing the Opposing View

Those who will oppose the conclusion that 701/700 B.C.E. was a sabbath year are compelled to argue that, instead of the fifteenth year of Hezekiah, the sabbath year had to be equivalent to his fourteenth year (702/701 B.C.E.). To do so they must ignore the evidence that the destruction of the Assyrian army occurred towards the beginning of the year, which would place it in Abib of 701 B.C.E. Clearly, Sennacherib's invasion could not have taken place during the early part of 702/701 B.C.E. Sennacherib was just then completing his first campaign and beginning his second. Therefore, when the prophet Isaiah observed that a sign for Hezekiah was the fact that his people would eat "that which is sown of itself," in "this year," those who oppose our view must submit to the idea that such was spoken in reference to the fall or winter of the year—which, if correct, makes little sense, since harvest time would have already passed.

Another factor to consider is that most experts in Assyrian history place the entire episode of Sennacherib's third campaign in the year 701 B.C.E.³⁷ Delbert Regier, for example, remarks that "the generally accepted date of this campaign into Palestine is about 701."³⁸ Spring of 701 B.C.E. is also the date arrived at by this study for the end of this campaign. The first edition of the *Cambridge Ancient History* went so far as to place this invasion in early 700 B.C.E.,³⁹ but this period, based upon a detailed analysis of the records, is now recognized as far too late.

If the advocates of a sabbath year for the fourteenth year of Hezekiah are correct, and the year 702/701 B.C.E. would be the sabbath year, then the records are in disagreement with a campaign in 701 B.C.E. In that implausible case, possibly the Talmudic Jews might have confused the Feast of Tabernacles for the Passover Feast as the day that the Assyrian army is said to have perished. Yet, it does not explain the sign of eating "that which is sown of itself," for crops would have already been harvested for that year.

Nevertheless, the very fact that Hezekiah was unprepared for Sennacherib's invasion, even though Hezekiah had revolted and allied himself to the Egyptians, would indicate that Sennacherib had moved against the West shortly after his return from his second campaign, which extended into the districts far to the east of Assyria. This detail compels us to conclude that Sennacherib undertook a winter campaign in late 702/701 B.C.E., Abib reckoning, and his army at Jerusalem was destroyed in early spring of 701/700 B.C.E., Abib reckoning.

The truth of the matter is that regardless of which set of facts one wishes to choose, system "B," which would make the sabbath year Tishri, 703 until Tishri, 702 B.C.E. has little possibility of working. There is simply not enough time for Sennacherib to finish his first campaign, carry out a second, and endure a third before the arrival of Tishri, 702 B.C.E.

revolt and its defeat by Sennacherib (See Jos., *Antiq.*, 9:14:1-2; and cf. Shalmaneser III's records for his twenty-first year with those of Sennacherib's third campaign in ARAB, 1, #578, 614, 2, #239, 309, 326, 347, etc.). Also cf. above n. 18.

³⁷ E.g. CIOT, 1, pp. 307-310; NOT, p. 55; HBC, p. 198; ARAB, 2, p. 136; AS, pp. 10-14; NBD, p. 1159; etc.

³⁸ SIJ, p. 20.

³⁹ CAH, 3, pp. 72f, 277f, 389f.

System “D,” Abib, 702 until Abib, 701 B.C.E., has some possibility only if one discounts the evidence that Sennacherib’s army was destroyed at the beginning of the year. Under this system Sennacherib would come against Judah very late in 702 B.C.E. His army would have to be destroyed before the first of the next year (March/April of 701 B.C.E.). Yet this interpretation has difficulty with the problem of the Jews eating those things which grew of themselves in “this year.” Springtime is certainly indicated, not fall or winter.

System “C” (Tishri, 702 until Tishri, 701 B.C.E.) and System “A” (Abib, 701 until Abib, 700 B.C.E.) both cover a period of time that would meet the requirements; but as we have already pointed out (and shall further prove as we proceed) the Jews of this early period observed an Abib beginning for their year. There is no evidence for the Talmudic interpretation of a Tishri beginning for a regular sabbath year prior to the second century C.E. This fact gives the nod to system “A.”

Conclusion

The weight of the evidence strongly indicates that Sennacherib’s expedition got under way in the winter months of 702/701 B.C.E., in the latter part of the fourteenth year of Hezekiah. The sabbath year, in turn, took place in the spring, in the opening of Hezekiah’s fifteenth year, which began on the first of Abib (March/April) of 701 B.C.E. As a result, the year 700/699 B.C.E., Abib reckoning, Hezekiah’s sixteenth year, was a Jubilee. These dates establish the system “A” sabbath-Jubilee cycle,⁴⁰ and, as this study shall demonstrate throughout, this cycle is fully supported by the evidence for a number of other sabbath years.

⁴⁰ Charts A and B.

CHART B

System “A”

From 750 B.C.E. to 150 C.E.

CHART B (System "A" 750 B.C.E. to 150 C.E.)

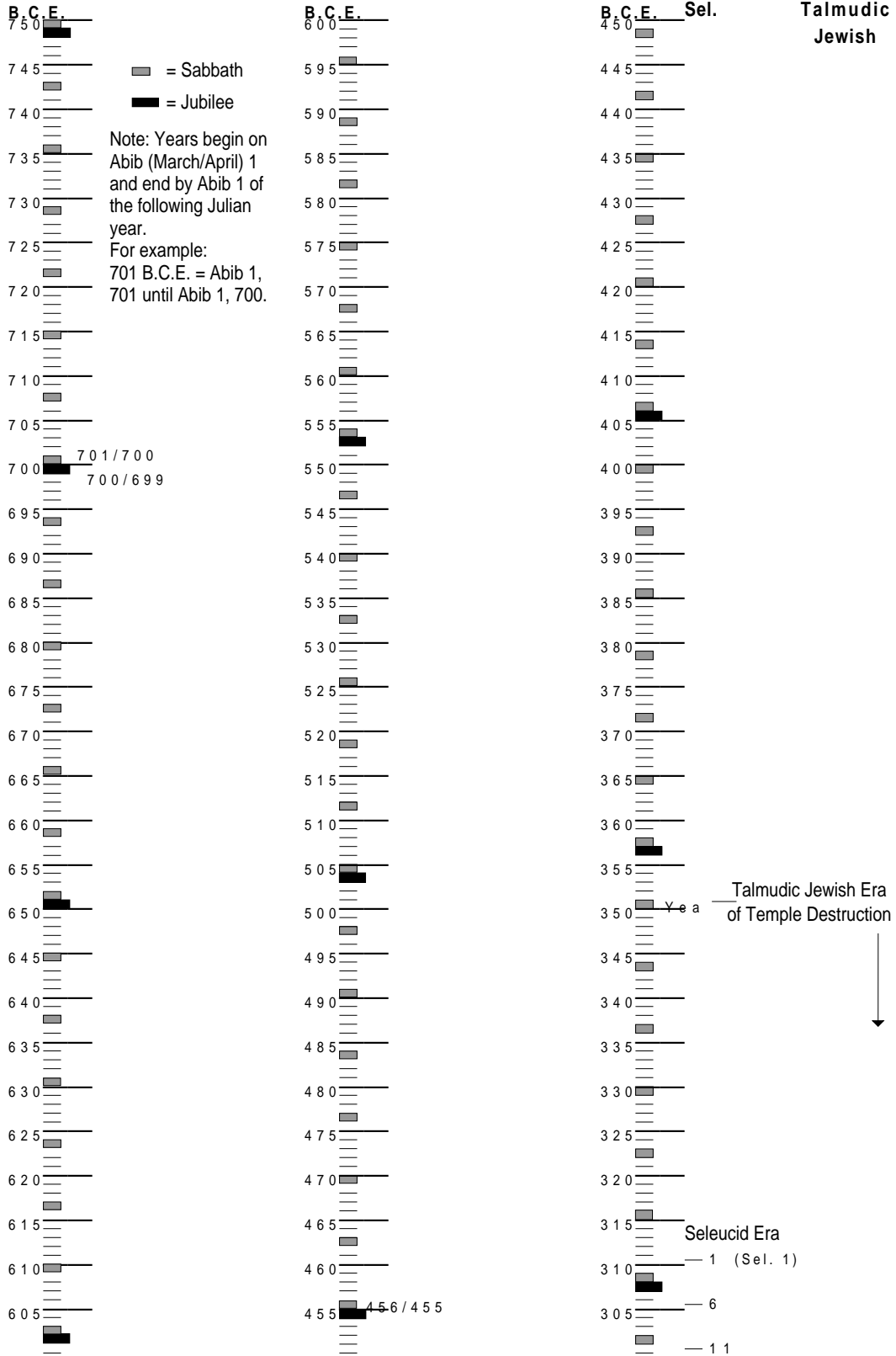


CHART B (System "A" 750 B.C.E. to 150 C.E.)

