



Purim

Putting things in PERSPECTIVE

Megillas Esther tells of how King Achashveirosh made a party in the third year of his reign and the gemara, in *Masechta Megillah*, explains that this party was to celebrate Achashveirosh's erroneous belief that the 70 years of exile that Hashem had decreed on His people had lapsed without our being redeemed and that Hashem had, *chas v'shalom*, abandoned us. Achashveirosh wasn't the first to come to this conclusion and to make a celebration; Balshatzar, a previous ruler, had done the same thing. Let's take a closer look at the miscalculations by Balshatzar and Achashveirosh, as well as the correct calculation of the 70 year period of exile. **BY ROBERT SUSSMAN**

0 (3318) Nevuchadnetzar becomes king by conquering Ninveh, which was where the head of the Kingdom of Assyria, Esser Chidon, was located. *Malchus Bavel* (the Kingdom of Babylonia) begins.

1 In the second year of his reign, Nevuchadnetzar conquers Yerushalayim, plunders the *Beis HaMikdash* (the Temple), but doesn't destroy it, and exiles Yehoyakim, the king of Yehudah (Judea), to Bavel, along with Daniel, Chananya, Mishael, and Azaria. This took place during the third year of the reign of Yehoyakim. Nevuchadnetzar subsequently returns Yehoyakim to Yerushalayim to rule over Yehuda, under his dominion.¹

4 After three years, Yehoyakim rebels against Nevuchadnetzar.

7 Three years after it began, Nevuchadnetzar crushes Yehoyakim's rebellion, killing him and appointing his son, Yehoyachin, in his place.

8 (3327) Yehoyachin rules for only 3 months before rebelling against Nevuchadnetzar. Nevuchadnetzar exiles Yehoyachin to Bavel, thus beginning *Galus Bavel*, the Babylonian Exile, and appoints Tzidkiyahu in place of Yehoyachin.²

19 (3338) Nevuchadnetzar destroys *Bayis Rishon* (the First Temple), which stood for 410 years, and takes all of the vessels from there. Nevuchadnetzar blinds and exiles Tzidkiyahu. Only a small number of Jews remain in Eretz Yehuda (Judea), with those who weren't killed or died of hunger and disease being taken into exile to Bavel.³

45 After reigning for 45 years, Nevuchadnetzar dies and is succeeded by his son, Ehvil M'rudach.⁴

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46

Balshatzar's calculation: 70 years from Malchus Bavel (the Kingdom of Babylonia)

Achashveirosh's calculation: 70 years from Galus Bavel (the Babylonian Exile)

The correct calculation: 70 years from Churban Bayis Rishon (the destruction of the First Temple)

The numbering 0 to 89 refers to the counting of the years from the beginning of Malchus Bavel, the Kingdom of Babylonia, which began with the reign of Nevuchadnetzar (numbers in brackets refer to years in the Hebrew Calendar).

71 Following Daryavash I, Koresh becomes king and grants permission for the Jews living in Bavel to return to Eretz Yisrael and to rebuild the *Beis HaMikdash* (what will be the Second Temple). Over 40 000 people return with Zerubavel, but the majority remain behind. Three *nevi'im* (prophets) rise up: one testifies as to the location of the *Mikdash* (the Temple); one testifies as to the location of the *mizbeyach* (altar); and one testifies that they could begin offering *korbanos* (offerings) in the absence of the actual Temple structure. Zerubavel and Yehoshua, the Kohen Gadol, build the altar and begin offering the *korban tamid* (the daily offering). The rebuilding of the Temple structure subsequently begins. The *Kutim* (aka Samaritans) disrupt and sabotage the rebuilding, eventually convincing Koresh to withdraw his authorisation to build, resulting in the construction being halted. For 18 years – until the completion of the 70 year period from the destruction of the First Temple – the construction is put on hold.

74 Following the death of Koresh, who reigned for 3 years*, Achashveirosh becomes king.

76 (3395) At the start of the third year of his reign, convinced that the 70 years of the Jewish exile has passed* and wanting to celebrate the Jews having not been redeemed, Achashveirosh makes an elaborate banquet at which he dons the clothing of the Kohen Gadol and uses the vessels from the *Beis HaMikdash* that had been previously captured by Nevuchadnetzar and used by Balshatzar.

86 In the twelfth year of Achashveirosh's reign, the events of Purim take place.

88 After reigning for 14 years, Achashveirosh dies and his son from Queen Esther, Daryavash II (aka Daryavash HaFarsi, Koresh II, and Artachshasta) becomes king.

89 (3408) Daryavash II gives permission for the building of *Bayis Sheini* (the Second Temple) to resume.

3412 *Bayis Sheini* is completed. Daryavash II insists that an image of Shushan, the capital city, be displayed there.

70 Daryavash I (aka Daryavash HaMedi) rules for one year.

69 (3388) In the third year of his reign, convinced that the 70 years of exile has expired and that the Jewish people have not been redeemed, Balshatzar makes a banquet and uses the holy vessels from the *Beis HaMikdash* that had been previously captured by Nevuchadnetzar. On that night, the Medians under Daryavash I and the Persians under Koresh engage the Babylonians in battle and Balshatzar is killed.⁵ Daryavash I becomes king.⁶

67 Ehvil M'rudach reigns for 22 years*, after which his son, Balshatzar, becomes king.

47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89

Based on Megillah 11b (with Rashi), The Jewish Timeline Encyclopedia, Charts For Learning The Daily Daf by Kollel Iyun Hadaf, and Seder HaDoros Footnotes and * on pg 44



THE ORDER OF THE RELEVANT KINGS:

MALCHUS BAVEL:

(The Kingdom of Babylonia)

Nevuchadnezzar

Ehvil M'rudach

Balshatzar

MALCHUS PARAS U'MADAI:

(The Kingdoms of Persia and Media)

Daryavash I

Korech

Achashveirosh

Daryavash II



THE CALCULATIONS:

Balshatzar's calculation:

Based on the verse (29:10) in Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah), which says, "So says Hashem, when it is fulfilled in *Bavel* (Babylonia) 70 years, I will remember you," Balshatzar thought that the 70 year exile was to be counted from when Nevuchadnezzar took the kingship from Esser Chidon, the king of Assyria, thus beginning *Malchus Bavel* (the kingdom of Babylonia).

Balshatzar counted: 45 years of Nevuchadnezzar's reign + 23 years* of Ehvil M'rudach's reign + 2 years of his own reign for a total of 70 years.

Achashveirosh's calculation:

Achashveirosh believed that Balshatzar had erred by a total of 8 years because the verse in Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah) doesn't say *l'malchus Bavel* (to the kingship of Babylonia), but *l'Bavel* (to Babylonia), meaning that the 70 years should be counted from the beginning of *Galus Bavel* (the Babylonian Exile), which started with the exile of Yehoyachin.

To get these 8 extra years, Achashveirosh counted: One year from the last year of Balshatzar (who ruled for a total of 3 years) + 5 years* from a combination of Daryavash I and Korech + 2 from years from his own reign for a total of 70 years.

The correct calculation:

The 70 years should be counted from the destruction of *Bayis Rishon* (the First Temple). Achashveirosh miscalculated by a total of 11* (really 13 years because of the partial years that he miscounted). To get these 13 extra years, we count: 12 years from Achashveirosh's reign + 1 year from the reign of his and Esther's son, Daryavash II. So the correct calculation looks like this:

26 years of Nevuchadnezzar's reign (45 minus 19, as *Bayis Rishon*, the First Temple, was destroyed in the 19th year of Nevuchadnezzar's reign) + 22 years of Ehvil M'rudach's reign + 3 years of Balshatzar's reign + 4 years from the combination of Daryavash I's and Korech's reign + 14 from Achashveirosh's reign + 1 from Daryavash II's reign for a total of 70 years.

*Rashi explains that Achashveirosh made two errors in counting the reigns of previous kings, due to the overlapping of years of their reigns when counting. In other words, a single calendar year can have two different kings within it, with each one subsequently having that same year count towards his reign – in essence, causing a double counting of the same calendar year when measuring time by the kings who reigned during a particular period rather than by the actual passage of time. Achashveirosh's two errors were: (1) He counted an extra year between the reigns of Nevuchadnezzar and Ehvil M'rudach, ascribing to Ehvil M'rudach a total of 23 years instead of 22 years [seemingly, Balshatzar made this same error (in addition to his beginning the counting of the 70 years from the wrong event) – with the result being that he wound up with a total of 69 years instead of 70 years]; and (2) He counted 5 years for the combined reigns of Daryavash I and Korech, when we find that there were only 4 years between them. As a result, Achashveirosh thought that it had been 78 years since *Galus Bavel* began (in the 8th year of Nevuchadnezzar's reign), when it had really only been 76, making it not 70, but 68 years since the exile began. Regardless, Achashveirosh was still calculating the 70 years from the wrong event! So, the gemara explains that Achashveirosh's calculation was 11 years off, which was really 13 years off because of the partial years that resulted in his miscounting an extra year towards Ehvil M'rudach and an extra year towards the reigns of Daryavash I and Korech. **III**

¹In 3321, *Yirmiyahu HaNavi* (Jeremiah the Prophet) wrote *Eicha*, Lamentations, which foretold of the impending destruction of *Bayis Rishon* (the First Temple), as well as the utter devastation and exile of the Jewish people. Upset by what Yirmiyahu had written, Yehoyakim burned *Eicha* (which was subsequently rewritten).

²As discussed in *Masechta Megillah*, this date is 7 years from the conquering of Yehoyakim and 8 years from the kingship of Nevuchadnezzar.

³As discussed in *Masechta Megillah*, this date is 18 years from the conquering of Yehoyakim and 19 years from the kingship of Nevuchadnezzar.

⁴See 2 Melachim (Kings) 25:27, which explains that Ehvil M'rudach became king 37 years after the exile of Yehoyachin, which was in the 8th year of Nevuchadnezzar's reign.

⁵Rashi explains that this was 69 years to the day from when Nevuchadnezzar conquered Yehoyakim.

⁶Rashi explains that Daryavash I completed the remaining time of the 70 years of *Galus Bavel*.