

8. *Historical Evidence for Jubilee Years?*

Another argument promoted by Glenn Moore in support of his position that the Jubilee cycle consists of 49 years involves what he believes to be supportive historical evidence. While I respect his desire to seek historical evidence, I feel I should point out that even if Glenn truly can pinpoint a specific year that was observed as a Sabbatical year, or even a Jubilee year, this does not automatically validate his position, for we must recognize the possibility that those who observed a certain Sabbatical year may have been observing it during the wrong year.

Shown below is Glenn's historical argument, as found in chapter six of his book *The Jubilee Code*:

Historical Alignments

There are many historically and chronologically verified dates in which it is recorded that Israel kept Sabbatical years both prior to and after the coming of the Messiah. This first reference clearly refers to a "seventh year," and the statement is made in the year in which Alexander began his invasion of the Persian empire. The date Alexander came into Judea on his mission to conquer all of Persia was the year 332/31 BCE. That year, according to our examination of the historical record, as pointed out also in the *Zuckermann Table*, was indeed a Sabbatical year—and can be proven as much. The *Zuckermann Table* is a list of Sabbatical years published by Benedict Zuckermann in 1866 CE, in which he offers substantial evidence of the Sabbatical years. In 1901, Emil Shurer reinforced the accuracy of the Zuckermann findings with his own research, and so we find their conclusions to be very reliable.¹

In the *Zuckermann Table*, one of the first mentioned Sabbatical year dates is 332/31 BCE. It is in this year that Alexander gives an exemption to the Jews from taxation because it is a Sabbatical year. The record of this event is found in *Antiquities of the Jews*, by the Jewish historian Josephus. In this account Josephus clearly suggests that this took place right after Alexander took Gaza:

when the seven months of the siege of Tyre were over, and the two months of the siege of Gaza, Sanballat died. Now Alexander, when he had taken Gaza, made haste to go up to Jerusalem²

Soon after this he states (concerning Alexander's generosity):

but the next day he called them to him, and bid them ask what favors they pleased of him; whereupon the high priest desired that they might enjoy the laws of their forefathers, and might pay no tribute on the seventh year. He granted all they desired.³

If indeed Alexander "granted all they desired" immediately, then both conditions were met. By implication, then, it was a Sabbatical year already. Alexander took Gaza in 332 BCE, during the month of November. Since the Jews were very concerned about being granted an exemption for

¹ Glenn Moore's footnote reads as follows: "In 1866 Benedict Zuckermann published his proposed table of sabbatical years throughout the second-temple period. While we do not use popular opinion to determine whether something is true or not, it should be noted that Zuckermann's views are considered the "orthodox" position. In the year 1973 Ben Zion Wacholder published his own table of sabbatical years ['The Calendar of Sabbatical Cycles During the Second temple and the Early Rabbinic Period,' *Hebrew Union College Annual* 44 (1973)]. Wacholder's dates are listed as *six months later* than the proposed dates of Zuckerman. While some chronologists (such as Wacholder and others) have attempted to contradict the findings of Zuckermann, a careful examination of Zuckermann's findings strongly suggest that his original conclusions are the correct ones all along."

² *Antiquities of the Jews*, by Josephus, Book 11, Chapter 8, Section 4-5.

³ *Ibid.*

Historical Evidence for Jubilee Years?

sabbatical years at this time, it strongly suggests that such an event was already in progress. This makes it very likely that 332/331 would be a sabbatical year.

There are many other sabbatical years which can be identified even more certainly from the time Greece conquered Palestine to the time Rome squelched the second Jewish revolt of Bar Kochba. All such evidence has already been presented in chapter 4, and together this evidence supports continuous Sabbatical year cycles. If these cycles were intended to be 50 year cycles, then such a difference between 49 and 50 year cycles would have been seen over a period of several hundred years. However, the cycles which can be demonstrated from this data are shown to be continuous 49 year periods and, therefore, Jubilee cycles associated with them can only be 49 year cycles (not 50 year cycles).

Sabbatical years have been documented and confirmed for BCE years 332/331, 164/163, 136/135, 38/37, and CE years 68/69 and 138/139. Zuckerman himself lists the years 136/135, 38/37, and 68/69 as having the strongest historical support. From my own research I find that years of Jubilee (while they were not generally kept at that time) can also be confirmed for the years 457/456 BCE and 132/133 CE. [Keep in mind that the purpose of this “double dating” is to indicate that the year in question begins in the fall of one year and ends in the fall of the next year.] This is based upon the fulfillment of the prophecy of Daniel 9, the timing of the Bar Kochba revolt, evidence found in the *Zuckermann Table* of 1856 and other evidence as I have presented in my book *Discovering the Jewish Messiah*.⁴

In reviewing the above explanation, I would like to focus on the claim that the year in which Alexander gave an exemption to the Jews from taxation was a Sabbatical year. As pointed out by Mr. Moore, and recorded by Josephus, when Alexander asked the Jews what favor he might grant them, the high priest asked that the Jews be granted an exemption from paying tribute during the seventh year. As we know from the historical record, Alexander granted this wish. Glenn concludes, “If indeed Alexander ‘granted all they desired’ immediately, then both conditions were met. By implication, then, it was a Sabbatical year already.”

This conclusion is more wishful thinking than reasonable conclusion. The high priest requested an exemption from tribute “on the seventh year.” Josephus did not add anything to the effect of, “For that year was indeed the seventh year” or “that year was indeed the Sabbatical year.” Glenn is left to *presume* that it was, and then, equipped with his presumption, expect his readers to believe that he has furnished us with evidence of a Sabbatical year. Truly, if the year 332/331 BCE was a Sabbatical year, I would have expected Josephus to have added such an important detail to his report. The fact that he did not leaves me with the impression that Josephus understood that the seventh year had not yet arrived, and the high priest’s request was in anticipation of an upcoming Sabbatical year. The two key words in the above quote, then, are the words “If” and “immediately.” Certainly, “IF” the Jews’ wish was granted for that “IMMEDIATE” year, it was a Sabbatical year, but to presume it was -- with no additional information to go on -- is no more than wishful thinking.

What makes the above examination so interesting is the fact that I took it straight from Glenn Moore’s chapter in which he addressed the historical evidence supporting his position. Presumably, if one is addressing historical evidence supporting one’s position, he will produce the *best* evidence, not the

⁴ Cf., Moore, W. Glenn, *The Jubilee Code*, 2008, chapter 6 “Jubilee Cycles—49 or 50 Years?”, pp. 64-66.

weakest evidence. In requesting this information from Glenn, he sent me chapter 6 from his book *The Jubilee Code*. At that time, there weren't any numbers to the pages, and only later did Glenn reveal to me the page-numbering for this chapter. This was the only portion of Glenn's book that I had access to, and it was given to me as a resource to help me to understand why he believes the Jubilee cycle consists of 49 years, not 50 years. In fact, the chapter is entitled "*Jubilee Cycles—49 or 50 Years?*" In spite of all this ... and how Glenn gave me what I should have presumed was his "best stuff," when he read the above commentary from our original version of this study, he suddenly downgraded the "historical evidence" in that chapter to the "*weakest*" evidence he has to offer. Here is what he wrote:

COMMENT: It is not enough to determine only one Sabbatical year observed in history, we must determine at least 2 or more. Attempting to focus all of our attention on what could be the "weakest" historical date for a Sabbatical year, while ignoring all of the other evidence which clearly points to several "confirmed" historical dates, is truly amazing!

In spite of Glenn's protest to the contrary, I focused on the *only* historical argument that he felt was compelling enough to expound upon in his chapter. *Now*, after exposing the weakness of his argument, he declares that I have focused all of my attention on his "weakest" historical date!/? An argument is only as strong as its weakest link, and we have just seen how strong (by his own admission) Glenn's "weakest" historical argument is. If the other arguments are stronger, why did Glenn not devote as much space to expounding upon them as he did the year in which Alexander gave an exemption to the Jews from taxation?