

# Chapter 4

## Chronology of Ahaz and Hezekiah

The lesson from the long and checkered history of interpretation of the chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah is that the moment a wise man departs from a single numeral of the present Masoretic text he is made to look a fool sooner or later. --Leslie McFall

Since some interpretations of Isaiah 7:14 take Immanuel, the predicted son to be born of the עֵלְמָה (‘*almah*), to be Hezekiah, the date of Hezekiah's birth relative to the Syro-Ephraimite War and to Isaiah's meeting with Ahaz become of paramount importance. However, the chronological problems related to the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah are the most difficult of all the kings of the divided monarchy. This chapter discusses those problems and offers a solution. Scripture citations are from the New American Standard Bible.

### The Chronology of the Kings of Israel and Judah

1 Kings 12 through 2 Kings 25 presents the history of the divided monarchy. Of critical importance to this chapter is the *accession statements* found in this history. Here are two examples, one for Hoshea, a king of Israel, and one for Hezekiah, a king of Judah.

In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea the son of Elah became king over Israel in Samaria, and reigned nine years.<sup>1</sup>

Now it came about in the third year of Hoshea, the son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah became king. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup>

In determining the chronology of the reigns of these kings, three types of data must be taken into account.

(1) Biblical accession statements about the age and length of reigns of kings in Israel and Judah.

For example:

He [Hezekiah] was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup>

(2) A biblical accession statement is called a *synchronism* if in separate clauses it states the relationship of the reign of one king to the reign of the king of the other kingdom.

For example, here the accession statement for a king of Judah is synchronized with the year of reign of the

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1 2 Kgs. 17:1.

2 2 Kgs. 18:1-2.

3 2 Kgs. 18:2.

current king of Israel:

Now it came about in the third year of Hoshea...that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah became king.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, the accession statement for a king of Israel is synchronized with the year of reign of the current king of Judah:

In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea...became king over Israel in Samaria.<sup>5</sup>

(3) Extra-biblical data, such as the extant records from Assyria and Babylon.

According to John Oswalt,

These numbers [in 1 and 2 Kings] had long defied any kind of harmonization, both among themselves and with extra-biblical literature. This fact had been adduced as evidence of the fictionalized nature of the accounts.<sup>6</sup>

### **Edwin R. Thiele and *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings***

All this changed in 1951:

Up until the appearance of *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* by Edwin Thiele in 1951, the possibility of the harmonization of the dates for the Hebrew kings as given in the Book of Kings seemed impossibly remote, if not actually irreconcilable.<sup>7</sup>

Thiele's methodology was remarkably successful in harmonizing these numbers, both among themselves and with extra-biblical sources. In addition,

Thiele's work has demonstrated another principle that is often only reluctantly granted in the study of Scripture. This is that the statements of Scripture shall--until proven otherwise--be regarded as correct and as being capable of harmonization with the data from other spheres of investigation. This assumption will result in work like Thiele's, which will undertake, not to *prove* Scripture, but to understand the ways in which it corresponds to truth in other areas. K. A. Kitchen has shown that this is the approach scholars of the ancient Near East ordinarily take toward their texts. Ironically, in part because of the destructive criticism of the 19th and 20th cents., the opposite tendency is manifested in biblical studies, where a skeptical attitude is taken toward every scriptural statement until it is rigorously proven to be correct. This means that the energies of many scholars are spent in the direction of proving their assumption, with the result that much scholarship continues to fragment and reconstruct the Bible. Since the assumption in large part determines the approach, it is imperative that the student of OT chronology hold the appropriate assumption.<sup>8</sup>

The principles used by Thiele enabled him to solve every problem related to these "mysterious numbers" of the divided monarchy except for the reigns of Ahaz and his son, Hezekiah. That is, he was able to demonstrate the accuracy of all the synchronisms in the books of Kings except the four related to Hoshea and Hezekiah in 2 Kings 17 and 18.<sup>9</sup> With virtually every *exegetical* issue concerning Isaiah 7:14 debated among scholars, how

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4 2 Kgs. 18:1.

5 2 Kgs. 17:1.

6 John N. Oswalt, "Chronology of the OT," *ISBE*, I:673; brackets added.

7 Harold G. Stigers, "The Interphased Chronology of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah and Hoshea," *BETS* 9 (Spring 1966):81.

8 Oswalt, "Chronology of the OT," I:673; emphasis original.

9 Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "The Promise of Isaiah 7:14 and the Single-Meaning Hermeneutic," *EJ* 6 (1988):55: "Edwin Thiele, that great solver of every other synchronism and chronological fact in the chronologies of the Hebrew kings simply gave up when he came to this one..." Actually, he did propose a solution in each of the three editions of his book, but at the

curious it is that the chronological problems related to Hezekiah should also prove the most intractable!

Here are the four problem synchronisms:

In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea the son of Elah became king over Israel in Samaria, and reigned nine years. (2 Kgs. 17:1)

Now it came about in the third year of Hoshea, the son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah became king. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem... (2 Kgs. 18:1-2)

Now in the fourth year of King Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria and besieged it. (2 Kgs. 18:9)

At the end of three years they captured it; in the sixth year of Hezekiah, which was the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was captured. (2 Kgs. 18:10)

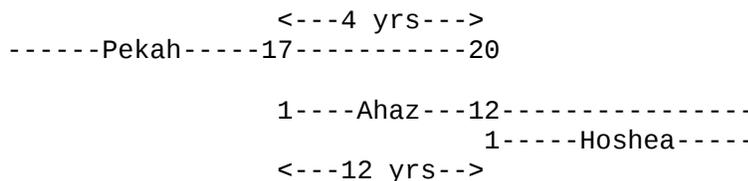
Two example problems with these verses can easily be seen.

(1) The problem with 2 Kings 17:1

- Year 17 of Pekah = year 1 of Ahaz (2 Kgs. 16:1)
- Pekah reigns 20 years (2 Kgs. 15:27)
- Year 20 of Pekah = year 4 of Ahaz

But:

- Year 1 of Hoshea = year 12 of Ahaz (2 Kgs. 17:1)
- Hoshea assassinated Pekah in his 20th year, ending Pekah's reign and becomes king himself (2 Kgs. 15:29-30)
- Therefore, year 20 for Pekah = year 12 of Ahaz



The problem is that the fourth year and twelfth year of Ahaz are the same year! Thiele assumed that 2 Kings 17:1 was incorrect.

(2) The problem with 2 Kings 18:1-2, 9, 10

According to 2 Kings 18:23, "the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah" is linked with Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem, which occurred in 701 B. C. Hoshea was captured by Shalmaneser and Samaria fell in Hoshea's ninth year (2 Kgs. 17:3-6). Yet according to 2 Kings 18:9-10, Hoshea's ninth year was Hezekiah's sixth year. If Samaria fell in 723 or 722 in Hezekiah's sixth year, his fourteenth year would be 715 or 714, not 701.

In the third edition of *Mysterious Numbers*, Thiele writes,

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cost of the accuracy of 2 Kgs. 17 and 18, as discussed in this chapter.

The dates for Assyrian kings for the period in which the most frequent contacts between Assyria and Hebrew history occur are quite definitely established....There is...[a] discrepancy of some thirteen years between the fourteenth years of Hezekiah, when Sennacherib invaded Judea (2 Kings 18:13), and the Assyrian date for this event [701 B.C.]. The biblical date for the beginning of Hezekiah's reign is secured from the synchronism of his accession with the third year of Hoshea of Israel (2 Kings 18:1). Since Hoshea ruled nine years (2 Kings 17:1), and since his reign terminated with the fall of Samaria, 723/22 B.C., Hoshea must have begun his reign in 732/31 B.C., which brings his third year and Hezekiah's accession to about 729/28 B.C. And if 729/28 B.C. was the accession year of Hezekiah, his fourteenth year would be 715/14 B.C. But this is nine years before Sennacherib began his reign [705 B.C.] and thirteen years before his famous third campaign against the land of the Hitti in which he went up against the cities of Judah [701 B.C.]. This period of Hezekiah, Ahaz, and Jotham is particularly difficult to synchronize with the events of Assyrian history. It presents the single greatest problem in the chronology of the kings...<sup>10</sup>

Actually, Thiele did propose a chronology for the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah in Judah and Pekah and Hoshea in Israel, but only by denying the accuracy of the above four synchronisms.

In a discussion of the regnal data of Hezekiah, it is of paramount importance that the synchronisms between him and Hoshea [2 Kgs. 17:1; 18:1-2, 9, 10] be recognized as late and artificial. These synchronisms came into being because the final editor of Kings did not understand dual dating for Pekah. Because of this he began the twenty years of Pekah in 740, the fifty-second year of Azariah [Uzziah]...But the twenty years actually began in 752....Having thrust the commencement of Pekah twelve years ahead, from 752 to 740, the editor also thrust the beginning of Hoshea twelve years ahead, from 732 to 720. In such a case the nine years of Hoshea would terminate in 711, not in 723 as they actually did. But with Hoshea being given the terminal date of 711 his years would overlap those of Hezekiah, who began in 715. This brought into being the synchronisms of 2 Kings 17 and 18.

There was no overlap between Hoshea and Hezekiah [in contrast to the overlap stated in 2 Kgs. 18:1, 9, 10]. Hoshea was dead and the kingdom of Israel was no longer in existence when Hezekiah took the throne. The siege of Samaria ended in 723 and Hezekiah did not begin till 716/15.<sup>11</sup>

It must be emphasized that Thiele was not a liberal or radical critic. As Leslie McFall points out,

Despite this one exception Thiele's work has restored the biblical student's confidence in the text of the Hebrew Bible to a degree never before achieved except in the precritical period of the Reformation. This is his lasting legacy to biblical scholarship in general and to biblical chronologists in particular.

Thiele's view of 2 Kings 17-18 seems oddly out of place when set against his confidence in the integrity of the Hebrew text and his belief in the contemporaneity of the written report, namely, that the present text was written on the basis of contemporary written documents or national diaries.

If it can be demonstrated that 2 Kings 17-18 is not an exception to the method employed throughout 1 and 2 Kings, then complete confidence can be restored regarding the entire account of Israel's kings

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10 Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, new revised ed. [3rd ed.] (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1983), pp. 38-39; brackets added.

11 *Ibid.*, pp. 174-75; brackets added. Thiele makes similar statements at various points throughout his book. "When the editors of Kings were bringing that book into its final shape, they did not understand dual dating for Pekah; and this fact was responsible for the synchronisms of 2 Kings 17 and 18" (p. 134). "Thus it is only when the synchronisms of 2 Kings 17 and 18 are seen as late and artificial that the true picture of Hebrew history of this important time can be reconstructed" (p. 136). "Another instance of a misunderstanding of chronological data is that involved in...the creation by late redactors of the synchronisms of 2 Kings 17:1 and 18:1, 9-10" (p. 199). "To an editor of a later day unaware of the exact historical situation during the closing years of Israel's history, it must have seemed strange to find a king of Judah without a synchronization....We can conclude that a final redactor felt it his duty to supply the synchronism [in 2 Kgs. 18:1]" (p. 201). "We now know that the final redactors of Kings did not understand the chronological data of those years" (p. 202). "These synchronisms [2 Kings 18:1, 9-10] were then added to the records of Hezekiah and Hoshea by the final redactors of Kings" (p. 204).

without any qualification or reserve.<sup>12</sup>

The question therefore arises: is it possible to harmonize the four synchronisms in 2 Kings 17 and 18 with the rest of the biblical data and the known dates of Assyrian history? The answer is yes, and it is presented below in the section, "The Solution to the Four Synchronisms." Some material must be introduced first, however, to fully understand the solution and its relationship to Thiele's methodology.

## The Fundamental Principles That Harmonize the "Mysterious Numbers"

### Important Aspects of a King's Reign

The term, *accession formula*, refers to the way in which a biblical text describes the accession of a king. 2 Kings 18:1-2 is an example:

Now it came about in the third year of Hoshea, the son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah became king. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem.

The key that Thiele used in solving almost all of the chronological and synchronism problems was the recognition and use of the following aspects of a king's reign. These facts directly effect the numbers given in the accession texts:

1. There were a number of *coregencies* during which a son became a "coregent" while his father was still reigning.
2. There were two distinct methods used for numbering the years that a king reigned, accession-year dating and nonaccession-year dating.
3. Regnal years are in some texts reckoned from Nisan to Nisan (a Spring month, running roughly from the middle of March to the middle of April) and in other texts from Tishri to Tishri (a Fall month, from the middle of September to the middle of October).

In a useful glossary in the third edition of *Mysterious Numbers*, Thiele defines these two methods of reckoning accession in item 2 as follows:<sup>13</sup>

- *Accession-year dating*: The method employed for numbering the years of a king when the year in which he comes to the throne is termed his *accession year*, and his first official year is that which begins with the new year's day after his accession.<sup>14</sup> Also called *postdating*.
- *Nonaccession-year dating*: The method of numbering the years of a ruler in which the year he comes to the throne is termed his first official year, and his second official year begins with the new year's day following his accession.<sup>15</sup> Also called *antedating*.

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12 Leslie McFall, "Did Thiele Overlook Hezekiah's Coregency?" *BSac*, 146 (October-December 1989):394.

13 Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, p. 231.

14 Thiele actually gives a simpler explanation on pp. 47-48 of *Mysterious Numbers*: "According to the accession-year method, that portion of the last calendar year during which a king reigned was assigned to him as his last year, and the balance of that year--the period during which the succeeding king reigned--was termed the accession year of the new king. Not until the termination of the calendar year during which the previous king died and the beginning of the new year did the new king begin reckoning his first year of reign."

15 Similarly, a simpler explanation by Thiele is given on p. 48 of *Mysterious Numbers*: "When, however, the nonaccession-year system was used, that portion of the final calendar year during which a king reigned was assigned to him as his last year, and the remaining portion of the year during which his successor reigned was termed that king's first year." There was an overlap in the counting. Thus the same year is reckoned as the last year of one king and the first year of the next king. Fortunately for the period of interest in this chapter, both Israel and Judah used the accession-year

Assyria and Babylonia both used the accession-year system.<sup>16</sup> For Israel and Judah, it was a bit more complicated. To secure harmonization, Thiele drew the following conclusions:

Israel at the time of the schism followed the nonaccession-year system and continued its use to the close of the ninth century B.C. when under Jehoash a shift was made to the accession-year system, which continued to be used to the close of Israel's history. Judah at the time of the schism used the accession-year system and continued its use to the middle of the ninth century; from Jehoram to Joash reigns are reckoned according to the nonaccession-year system; and from Amaziah, at about the beginning of the eighth century, to the close of Judah's history the accession-year system was again in use.<sup>17</sup>

Note with the accession-year system, a coregency does *not* have an "accession year": the year a son was made a coregent was considered year 1 of his coregency, not his accession year.<sup>18</sup> At some later point, he has an accession year when he assumes sole reign, with the following year reckoned as year 1 of his sole reign. However, there are two possible points of confusion.

First, the use of "accession year" is not always restricted to a father and son context. For example, Stigers uses the phrase "accession year" for the beginning of Pekah's rival reign in Gilead.<sup>19</sup> Pekah, of course, is a special case. Stigers' use of the term "accession year" for Pekah in Gilead interprets that reign as the beginning of a sole reign. Thiele also attributes an "accession year" to Pekah in Gilead.<sup>20</sup> Pekah's rival reign in Gilead should not be considered a "coregency" even though there is another king reigning in Samaria.<sup>21</sup> Pekah and Menahem are rival kings on separate thrones in separate cities. It nevertheless remains true that normal coregencies between fathers and sons do not have an "accession year."

Second, the word "accession" when used alone does have a more general use, and this can cause confusion for the unwary reader. Thiele uses "accession" in the general sense of becoming associated with a throne, whether due to a coregency or to a sole reign. For example, he uses the phrase, "accession of Jotham," for the beginning of Jotham's coregency with his father Azariah.<sup>22</sup> However, the phrase "accession year" is limited to a sole reign.

In his glossary, Thiele also defines another term related to overlapping reigns, that is, dual dating:<sup>23</sup>

- *Dual dating*: in an overlapping reign [of two sequential kings, usually father and son] the datum for the length of reign includes both the period of overlap and the sole reign, but the synchronism of accession [between two kings, one from Israel and one from Judah] denotes the end of the period of overlap and the start of the sole reign. (Brackets added.)

Regarding item 3 in the above list, namely the starting month of the regnal year, it should first be noted that in

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system. However, it is of interest to note the difficulty encountered with the nonaccession-year system in Israel when it was in use. Thiele (pp. 50-51; cf. p. 121) gives an example using Ahaziah and Joram. From Assyrian records it is known that Shalmaneser III fought Ahab at the battle of Qarqar in his (Shalmaneser's) sixth year, and it is also known that he received tribute from Jehu in his eighteenth year, a span of twelve years. Those two years of Shalmaneser were Ahab's last and Jehu's first. Therefore, the reigns of Ahaziah (2 years) and Joram (12 years) must fit in those twelve years. But how can fourteen years fit into twelve years? Because in the nonaccession-year system, the transition year between two kings is counted twice. Therefore, Ahaziah's reign was two "official years" but only 1 "actual year," and Joram's reign was twelve "official years" but only eleven "actual years."

16 Ibid., p. 112.

17 Ibid., p. 60.

18 Oswald, "Chronology of the OT," 1:684. Note also Thiele's statement: "The year that begins a coregency is the first official year of that coregency" (*Mysterious Numbers*, p. 85).

19 Stigers, "The Interphased Chronology of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah and Hoshea," p. 84.

20 Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, p. 117, Chart 17.

21 Unfortunately, some writers use the word "coregency" too loosely. For example, McFall, "Did Thiele Overlook Hezekiah's Coregency?" p. 394, calls Pekah's reign in Gilead a "coregency."

22 Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, p. 131.

23 Not to be confused with "double dating," a method of dating often practiced during high school and college years.

the Hebrew Scriptures the months are numbered from Nisan as the first month regardless of which month was used to begin a regnal year.<sup>24</sup> Concerning the reign of the kings, however, Israel apparently ran its regnal year from Nisan to Nisan, while Judah ran its regnal year from Tishri to Tishri.<sup>25</sup>

How to Specify a Regnal Year for Israel and Judah  
With Our Julian Calendar

In passing, it should be noted that due to the difficulty of coordinating our modern Julian calendar with a regnal year on ancient calendars, it is often important to list both of the two Julian years that together span a single ancient year. For example, according to 2 Kings 15:27-30, year 20 for Pekah was also year 20 for Jotham. As is seen later in this chapter, that twentieth year for both Pekah and Jotham is designated "year 732/731," where 732 and 731 are each a Julian year. However, as already noted, in Israel the regnal year began in the month of Nisan, and in Judah the regnal year began in the month of Tishri. Therefore, the ancient regnal year from Nisan to Nisan (in Israel) that constituted year 20 for Pekah, and the ancient regnal year from Tishri to Tishri (in Judah) that constituted year 20 for Jotham are thus spanned as follows on the Julian calendar:

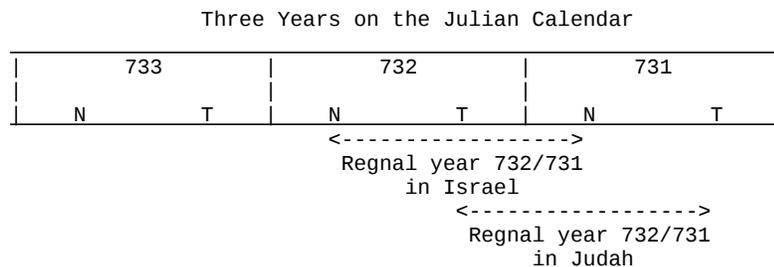
Nisan (March/April) of Julian 732 ---to--- Nisan (March/April) of Julian 731  
Tishri (September/October) of Julian 732 ---to--- Tishri (September/October) of Julian 731

Therefore, to capture or span the correct ancient year for the beginning of either Pekah's or Jotham's twentieth regnal year when using modern Julian years, it is stated as the "year" (*singular*) 732/731, and this notation is used throughout this chapter. (Quotations, of course, follow the author cited.) As Thiele points out,

In some instances when single [Julian] dates are used for ancient events, the time span of Julian years will differ by one year from the elapsed time given in the ancient record. When studied carefully it will be seen that this is because of the difference in calendars; it is not due to incorrect chronology.<sup>26</sup>

This demonstrates the importance of using the full notation of two Julian years, rather than a single, and thus ambiguous, Julian year.

However, due to the different months used in Israel and Judah to begin a regnal year (Nisan vs. Tishri, respectively), the year "732/731" does not by itself precisely define the one-year period of time within the two Julian years 732 and 731 for the regnal year of either Israel or Judah. This fact has implications when constructing a chronology of the Hebrew kings, as is seen later in this chapter in the section, "The Proposed Harmonization." Thus in constructing a chronology, it is necessary to delineate the exact regnal years for Israel (Nisan to Nisan) and for Judah (Tishri to Tishri) within the two-year span of the Julian years 732 and 731. This can be done graphically. In the graph below, each rectangle represents a Julian year, "N" refers to the month of Nisan (a Spring month) and "T" refers to the month of Tishri (a Fall month).



24 Thiele, *ibid.*, p. 52, n. 11, demonstrates this by citing Scriptures from Exodus to Zechariah.  
 25 *Ibid.*, p. 53.  
 26 *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88, n. 4; brackets added.

## The Parts to an Accession Formula

Accession formulas in 1 and 2 Kings assume a slightly different form depending on whether it describes the accession of a king of Judah or a king from Israel.<sup>27</sup> Consider this example in 2 Kings 15:32-33 for Jotham (Judah):

In the second year of Pekah the son of Remaliah king of Israel, Jotham the son of Uzziah [Azariah] king of Judah became king. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Jerusha the daughter of Zadok.

There are six essential parts comprising the formula for a king of Judah:

1. The synchronization with Israel's king ("in the second year of Pekah...king of Israel")
2. The name of Judah's new king plus verb ("Jotham...became king"; verb, מָלַךְ, *mālak*)
3. The age of the new king on accession ("he was twenty-five years old when he became king")
4. The number of years the new king reigned (" he reigned sixteen years")
5. The verb used for that period of reigning (" he reigned sixteen years"; verb, מָלַךְ, *mālak*)
6. The capital city for his reign ("he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem")

Now consider an example in 2 Kings 15:27 for a king of Israel (Pekah):

In the fifty-second year of Azariah [Uzziah] king of Judah, Pekah son of Remaliah became king over Israel in Samaria, *and reigned* twenty years.

Note that there are two differences for a king of Israel:

- It is a shorter formula and omits 3 and 5
- It reverses 4 and 6

Since there is no verb in the shorter formula for the length of reign (part 5 of Judah's formula), the *NASB* inserted "and reigned" in italics.

## Ambiguities in Accession Formulas

Returning to the three important aspects of a king's reign that enabled Thiele to perform his remarkable harmonizations, items 2 and 3 in the list can affect the calculation of dates of reigns, but only by plus or minus one year at most. They, of course, are still important in order to solve all the dating problems associated with the "mysterious numbers," and great care is taken in this chapter to apply these two items correctly. However, they are not critical when addressing simply the problem of interpreting Isaiah 7:14. Item 1 dealing with coregencies, on the other hand, is critical. Specifically, the previous subsection discussing the parts of an accession formula implies significant ambiguities in those accession texts with respect to coregencies. This current subsection discusses those ambiguities. Coregencies play a role with regard to the new king in an accession text as well as the the king of the other kingdom to which he is synchronized.

### *Coregency Options Regarding the New King*

Since the biblical texts that announce a new king make use of an *accession formula*, one would think that the synchronization in the formula gives the *accession year* of the new king in terms of a year in the reign of the king from the other kingdom. But that is not always the case. McFall points out four options the writer of an accession

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27 I am indebted to McFall, "Did Thiele Overlook Hezekiah's Coregency?" p. 398, n. 16 for this analysis.

formula has.<sup>28</sup> An accession statement must specify two items, but each item has two options for how to specify it:

- First, the point from which each king's reign is calculated

Option A: The first year of his sole reign  
 Option B: The first year of his coregency

- Second, the total years recorded for each king's reign

Option C: The total excludes coregency years  
 Option D: The total includes coregency years

Note that in Thiele's definition, dual dating is choosing A-D ("A" meaning that year 1 of the king's sole reign is given and "D" meaning that the total includes the coregency years). However, the writers of these accession texts do not always employ dual dating. McFall cites a number of examples showing the variety. The accession interpretations for a few of the following examples might be contested, but here is McFall's list:<sup>29</sup>

King	Accession Formula	Options Chosen
Jehoram	2 Kings 8:16-17	A-C
Jehoiachin	2 Kings 24:8	A-C
Omri	2 Kings 16:23	A-D
Jeroboam II	2 Kings 14:23	A-D
Pekah	2 Kings 15:27	A-D
Jehoash	2 Kings 13:10	B-C
Jehoiachin	2 Chronicles 36:9	B-C
Jehoshaphat	2 Kings 22:41-42	B-D
Jotham	2 Kings 15:32-33; 2 Chron. 27:1	B-D
Azariah	2 Kings 15:1	B-D
Manasseh	2 Kings 21:1	B-D

Consider the accession statement for Pekah in 2 Kings 15:27:

In the fifty-second year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekah son of Remaliah became king over Israel in Samaria, *and reigned twenty years.*

In this accession text:

- The "A" option, one of the options that marks the point from which the king's reign is calculated, means that the "fifty-second year of Azariah king of Judah" is the beginning of Pekah's *sole reign*, and thus his *accession year*, with the *following* year reckoned as year 1 of his sole reign.
- The "D" option, one of the options that defines the total years recorded for the king's reign, means that

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28 McFall, "Did Thiele Overlook Hezekiah's Coregency?" p. 399. I have changed his notation, but the analysis is the same.  
 29 I have deleted Ahaz (2 Kgs. 16:1-2) and Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:1-2) from the list because their accession statements are subject to disagreement. However, with regard to the purpose of this chapter, it is important to note that both McFall ("Did Thiele Overlook Hezekiah's Coregency?" p. 402) and Stigers ("The Interphased Chronology of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah and Hoshea," pp. 88-89) take "the third year of Hoshea" in 2 Kgs. 18:1-2 to refer to the first year of Hezekiah's coregency.

the "twenty years" includes the first twelve years of Pekah's rival reign in Gilead before he assumed his eight-year sole rule over all of Israel in Samaria.

These two issues, the point from which each king's reign is calculated and the total years recorded for each king's reign, have a problem in addition to that of whether or not the coregency is used. Thiele points out that accession statements for a king were written in terms of the accession system (accession-year or nonaccession-year) used in the country of that king regardless of which system was used in the other country with which it is synchronized.<sup>30</sup> One might assume that since the books of Kings were produced in Judah during the time it used the accession-year system, all the accession texts would be written from the standpoint of the accession-year system. That, however, is not the case. When writing an accession statement for a king of Israel, the numbers are taken from "the book of the annals of the kings of Israel,"<sup>31</sup> which had been recorded according to whatever system was used at that time in Israel.

Thiele gives an example of the result of this fact:

Thus when Baasha's accession is synchronized with the third year of Asa (1 Kings 15:28), it will be the third year of Asa according to the nonaccession-year system used in Israel, which according to Judah's accession-year system and absolute time would be Asa's second year. Since Baasha was succeeded by Elah in the twenty-sixth year of Asa (1 Kings 16:8), this would be the twenty-sixth year according to the nonaccession-year system, or the twenty-fifth year of Asa according to the accession-year system and actual years.<sup>32</sup>

Fortunately for the period of interest in this chapter, namely, the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah, this problem, at least, is not present. As pointed out above in the subsection, "Important Aspects of a King's Reign," starting with Jehoshaphat in Israel and Amaziah in Judah, both countries used the accession-year system.<sup>33</sup>

#### *Coregency Options Regarding the Other King in the Synchronization*

In this regard, there is not nearly as much variation. The year of the other king used in the synchronization is most often reckoned by counting from year 1 of the coregency of that king (if he had one), but there are examples where the counting is from year 1 of the king's sole reign (not from his accession year). McFall lists the following kings where the synchronization counts from year 1 of their coregency: Jeroboam I, Azariah (five times), Pekah, Jotham, Ahaz; he lists only Jehoshaphat (twice) as an example where the synchronization counts from year 1 of his sole reign.<sup>34</sup>

#### Example of the Ambiguities in Accession Formulas

To analyze a specific example, consider again Jotham's accession text, 2 Kings 15:32-33:

In the second year of Pekah the son of Remaliah king of Israel, Jotham the son of Uzziah king of Judah became king. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Jerusha the daughter of Zadok.

Three statements are made here for which options are available to the writer:

- (1) "In the second year of Pekah...Jotham became king."
- (2) "He was twenty-five years old when he became king."

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30 Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, pp. 49-50.

31 E.g., 2 Kgs. 15:31.

32 Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, p. 50.

33 Ibid., p. 60.

34 McFall, "Did Thiele Overlook Hezekiah's Coregency?" p. 396.

(3) "He reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem."

There are three ambiguities related to Jotham in these three statements.

- Statement (1): Is this the point at which Jotham began his coregency with his father Azariah (option B) or the point at which he began his sole reign (option A)?
- Statement (2): Similarly, was Jotham twenty-five at the time his coregency began (again option B) or at the time his sole reign began (again option A)?
- Statement (3): Finally, did the sixteen years include the years of Jotham's coregency (option D) or do they refer only to his sole reign (option C)?

According to the harmonization proposed in this chapter, the answers are B-D for statements (1) and (3), respectively, as in McFall's table. However, it is the interpreter of the text who must decide what choices the author of the text chose; the interpreter makes these choices in an effort to achieve harmonization with all the other biblical accession texts as well as the external Assyrian and Babylonian records.

Regarding statement (2), it would seem that there was also the option of giving the age of the new king either at the beginning of his coregency or at the beginning of his sole reign. For example, both Stigers<sup>35</sup> and McFall<sup>36</sup> argue that 2 Kings 18:2 gives Hezekiah's age at the beginning of his sole reign, while it is fairly clear that 21:1 gives Manasseh's age at the beginning of his coregency with Hezekiah.<sup>37</sup> Because there is so little biblical information about Jotham, it would be difficult to argue whether he was twenty-five years old at the beginning of his coregency or his sole reign. I have found no discussion of the question. However, if Jotham's appointment as coregent was related to Azariah's leprosy,<sup>38</sup> it would perhaps be more important to relate his age to that event.

As already noted, there is yet one more possible ambiguity in this accession formula when the king of the other kingdom in the synchronization had a coregency. Pekah did not have a coregency per se, but he did have a rival reign in Gilead with an accession year of 752/751 followed by a twelve-year reign in Gilead and an eight-year reign in Samaria. Though Pekah's accession statement in 2 Kings 15:27 gives the length of his reign as twenty years (his *total reign*, both Gilead and Samaria), it synchronizes the beginning of his reign *in Samaria* with year 52 of Azariah's reign in Judah. Therefore, the same question arises as it did for Jotham, who had a true coregency: does statement (1) refer to year 2 of Pekah's reign in Gilead or year 2 of his reign in Samaria? According to the conclusions reached later in this chapter in the section, "The Proposed Harmonization," the answer is the former.

As is now evident, there are a number of options possible when interpreting an accession text. According to McFall, "Only a detailed knowledge of the entire chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah can determine in each case how these statements are to be understood."<sup>39</sup> Moreover, as already pointed out, in the case of chronological problems, such as the synchronisms of 2 Kings 17:1; 18:1-2, 9, and 10, the interpreter can attribute to the writer of the accession text those options that secure harmonization with the entire chronology of all the kings.

### Three Unassailable Dates

In developing the chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah, it is essential to find one or more dates that are

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35 Stigers, "The Interphased Chronology of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah and Hoshea," p. 89.

36 McFall, "Did Thiele Overlook Hezekiah's Coregency?" p. 404.

37 Both Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, pp. 176-77, and Leon Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), p. 364, agree that Manasseh had an eleven-year coregency with Hezekiah. If he was twelve years old at the beginning of his sole reign, then his coregency began when he was one year old.

38 See footnote 87.

39 McFall, "Did Thiele Overlook Hezekiah's Coregency?" p. 404.

absolutely certain and which can then be used as a starting point.<sup>40</sup> In his chapter, "The Establishment of an Absolute Date in Hebrew Chronology," Thiele lists two:

- 853: the battle of Qarqar, sixth year of Shalmaneser III (859-824), in which he fought and lost to the coalition of Benhadad of Syria (Aram) and Ahab of Israel<sup>41</sup>
- 701: the year in the third campaign of Sennacherib (705-681) in which he besieged Jerusalem during the reign of Hezekiah<sup>42</sup>

Thiele chose the earlier date and worked forward. On the basis of the 853 date, the date of Ahab's death and Ahaziah's accession can be established as 853, and the date of Joram's death and Jehu's accession as 841.<sup>43</sup> However, the second date is more useful in dealing specifically with the problem synchronisms for Hezekiah in 2 Kings 17 and 18.

In this chapter, I use the 701 date. On the basis of this unassailable date and 2 Kings 18:13, the "fourteenth year" of Hezekiah is fixed at 701:

Now in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and seized them.

For future reference it should be noted that Thiele does note another unassailable date from external sources. It "is provided by the Babylonian Chronicle and gives the exact date when Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem and took Jehoiachin prisoner to Babylon. That was 2 Adar (15/16 March), 597 B.C."<sup>44</sup>

- 597: the year Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem and carried Jehoiachin prisoner to Babylon

This date is important in determining which of the two possible regnal years that overlap Julian 701 is referred to as "the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah."

## The Solution to the Four Synchronisms

The question can now be addressed: is it possible to harmonize these four synchronisms with the rest of the biblical data and the known dates of Assyrian history? The answer is decidedly yes, and--with a surprising bit of irony--the solution is based on Thiele's own method. According to McFall, "He simply failed to apply his own method to these troublesome texts."<sup>45</sup> McFall continues,

The only God-honoring approach, if Thiele's approach and method is anything to go by, is to accept the text as trustworthy and on that basis seek to establish absolute dates from contemporary Near Eastern

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40 It is beyond the scope of this book to develop the arguments used to determine the certainty of these dates, but it involves using Assyrian and Babylonian sources.

41 Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, p. 76.

42 Ibid., p. 78. On p. 120 Thiele again affirms that 701 is "a date firmly established in Assyrian chronology by the attack of Sennacherib on Hezekiah that year." On the Taylor Prism, Sennacherib himself states, "In my third campaign I marched against Hatti [Aram]...As to Hezekiah, the Jew, he did not submit to my yoke, I laid siege to 46 of his strong cities...Himself I made a prisoner in Jerusalem, his royal residence, like a bird in a cage" (*ANET*, p. 287-88). There has been much debate over the question of whether Sennacherib made two invasions of Judah, the first in 701 and the second in 688/687. Entering into this debate is not necessary for this chapter, but for a defense of the view that 701 represents the only invasion by this Assyrian king, see Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History*, p. 360, n. 73.

43 Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, p. 77.

44 Ibid., p. 173.

45 McFall, "Did Thiele Overlook Hezekiah's Coregency?" p. 403. Oswalt, "Chronology of the OT," 1:683, makes the same point: "A twelve-year excess in Judah's total [for the years 753 to 701] is so troublesome that Thiele is forced to abandon his own working hypothesis and suggest that an error has crept in. However, the methodology that Thiele himself applied to earlier problems suggests a solution that does not require emendation."

dates against which to set the biblical data.<sup>46</sup>

In a very significant paper, J. Barton Payne notes that there have been three basic post-Thiele chronological systems proposed that meet these conditions.<sup>47</sup> None of the three attribute error to these four synchronisms by assigning them to a "late redactor," and all three present a harmonization with the other biblical data and known dates from Assyrian and Babylonian records. They are "distinguished by the assignment of the sixteen-year reign of Hezekiah's predecessor, Ahaz [mentioned in 2 Kgs. 16:2], to the [following] years":<sup>48</sup>

View I. 744/743 - 729/728  
View II. 736/735 - 720/719  
View III. 732/731 - 716/715

Curiously, however, these dates are inconsistent. The ranges for views II and III (a total of 17 calendar years) include an accession year; the range for View I (a total of 16 calendar years) does not include an accession year.

Important advocates of these views include the following:

- View I: Payne himself.<sup>49</sup>
- View II: both Stigers<sup>50</sup> and Wood.<sup>51</sup>
- View III: McFall.<sup>52</sup>

Unfortunately, although harmonization is effectively achieved in each view, all three have weaknesses, and it does not appear that a consensus on the correct solution will be reached anytime soon by evangelicals committed to maintaining the accuracy of all the biblical data.

The most serious weakness of View I, admitted by Payne,<sup>53</sup> is that when coordinating the data with Hezekiah, his fourteenth year becomes 713/712 rather than 702/701, the unassailable date of Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem based on Assyrian records. Both 2 Kings 18:13 and Isaiah 36:1 clearly seem to connect this siege with the "the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah."<sup>54</sup>

Views II and III have a number of features in common:

- Both consider a coregency for Hezekiah to be the most important key to solving the problems associated with the four synchronisms (2 Kgs. 17:1; 18:1-2, 9, 10) that caused Thiele to surrender their accuracy.
- Both take Hoshea's accession year to be 732/731.
- Both interpret "the twelfth year of Ahaz" in 2 Kings 17:1 to be a reference to his coregency.
- Both consider the first year of Hezekiah's coregency to be 729/728, year 3 of Hoshea.

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46 McFall, "Did Thiele Overlook Hezekiah's Coregency?" p, 404.

47 J. Parton Payne, "The Relationship of the Reign of Ahaz to the Accession of Hezekiah," *BSac* (January-March 1969):40-52. Payne discusses the strengths and weaknesses of each approach.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 41; brackets added.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 41, n. 9.

50 Stigers, "The Interphased Chronology of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah and Hoshea," p. 87-88.

51 Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History*, p. 355, n. 52.

52 McFall, "Did Thiele Overlook Hezekiah's Coregency?" p. 401, n. 26; see also his chart on p. 397.

53 Payne, "The Relationship of the Reign of Ahaz to the Accession of Hezekiah," pp. 45-46.

54 See Payne, *ibid.*, pp. 46, 52, for his proposed explanation. It first takes 2 Kgs. 18:13 to be simply based on Isa. 36:1 and then suggests that "fourteenth year of Hezekiah" applies to the beginning of a whole section of Isaiah that culminates in Sennacherib's siege. Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), pp. 291-92, takes another approach to 2 Kgs. 18:13. He suggests that the text should be emended from "fourteenth" to "twenty-fourth" year. However, this is to emend the present Masoretic text with no extant manuscript evidence (Payne, "The Relationship of the Reign of Ahaz to the Accession of Hezekiah," p. 46).

- Both consider the synchronisms in 2 Kings 18:1-2, 9, 10 as synchronisms with Hezekiah's coregency and not his sole reign.
- Both take year 1 of Hezekiah's sole reign to be 715/714, with his accession year 716/715, thus making the fourteenth year of his sole reign 702/701, which overlaps Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem in 701.

With regard to a coregency for Hezekiah, Thiele did not propose such a coregency, and that kept him from solving the "contradictions" between these four synchronisms and the rest of the biblical data. McFall writes,

What is incomprehensible in Thiele's handling of this problem is that while the evidence--in the form of three unmistakable synchronisms--clearly indicated that Hezekiah and Hoshea were contemporaries, he never once paused to explore the possibility (if only to reject it) of a coregency for Hezekiah with his father Ahaz from 728 to 715. Having made the initial error concerning the 12th year of Ahaz [in 2 Kgs. 17:1], Thiele doggedly pursued the logic of that initial misplacement of Hoshea's accession....

The solution to the three synchronisms given for Hezekiah in 2 Kings 18:1, 9-10 is to regard them as synchronisms with Hezekiah's *coregency* and not with Hezekiah's sole reign which Thiele maintained. Thus in these reigns there was a coregency for Hezekiah which Thiele never suspected.<sup>55</sup>

The major difference between Views II and III is the placement of Ahaz's reign. As just noted in the bulleted list above, both views take "the twelfth year of Ahaz" in 2 Kings 17:1 as a reference to his coregency. However, McFall,<sup>56</sup> an advocate of View III, sets year 1 of his coregency at 735/734, while both Stigers<sup>57</sup> and Wood,<sup>58</sup> both advocates of View II, set year 1 at 743/742. The significance of this difference is that on View III, the reference to Hoshea in 2 Kings 17:1 must be to his final, ninth year rather than to his accession year, which is the more natural reading of the text.<sup>59</sup> Another objection to View III is that Scripture limits its description of the "events of the reign of Ahaz" primarily to the years 735/734 to 733/732. It would seem odd that the most important events recorded for Ahaz occurred during his beginning coregency years rather than his sole reign.<sup>60</sup>

Therefore, in making my proposal, I take View II and essentially follow Stigers and Wood, with a few minor variations. However, as Wood states, "Admittedly, the dating of Ahaz and Hezekiah is difficult....The dates here set forth seem to fit the scriptural evidence best."<sup>61</sup> I agree with both statements.

## The Proposed Harmonization<sup>62</sup>

55 McFall, "Did Thiele Overlook Hezekiah's Coregency?" p. 402; emphasis original; brackets added.

56 Ibid., chart on p. 397.

57 Stigers, "The Interphased Chronology of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah and Hoshea," p. 86.

58 Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History*, p. 355.

59 McFall, "Did Thiele Overlook Hezekiah's Coregency?" pp. 396, 398, argues for Hoshea's final year as follows. The verb

מָלַךְ is used twice in the accession formula for Judah's kings, but the second use is omitted for Israel's kings (see the subsection "The Parts to an Accession Formula" in the section "The Fundamental Principles That Harmonize the 'Mysterious Numbers'" earlier in this chapter). The verb can mean *to become king*, but it can also mean simply *to reign* (*BDB*, p. 573). Note that the *NASB* (along with other translations) inserts the verb (in italics) for 1 Kgs. 17:1: "In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea the son of Elah became king [ מָלַךְ ] over Israel in Samaria, and reigned nine years." McFall suggests the following translation: "In the twelfth year of Ahaz [Ahaz's coregency] king of Judah, Hoshea the son of Elah reigned in Samaria over Israel nine years" (brackets original). He argues that this accession statement connects year 12 of Ahaz's coregency with year 9 (the final year) of Hoshea's reign. Since it was in the ninth year of Hoshea that Samaria fell, it is an anchor date: 723/722. This interpretation of 1 Kgs. 17:1 makes year 1 of Ahaz's coregency to be 735/734.

60 2 Kgs. 16; Isa. 7-10. See the critique by Payne, "The Relationship of the Reign of Ahaz to the Accession of Hezekiah," p. 50.

61 Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History*, p. 355, n. 52.

62 In developing the chronology in this section, the following notation is used: (1) "co": coregent or coregency; (2) "ac":

## The Falls of Damascus and Samaria as Anchor Dates

To construct a chronology of the Hebrew kings, it is necessary to have a number of fixed dates. As discussed earlier in this chapter, there are three *unassailable dates* based on Assyrian and Babylonian records: the battle of Qarqar in 853, the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib in 701, and the year Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem and carried Jehoiachin prisoner to Babylon in 597. These dates must then be linked either to events or to a year of reign in the biblical data. Thiele began with 853; I will begin with 701. According to 2 Kings 18:13 and Isaiah 36:1, "the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah," is linked to this date of 701.

However, additional fixed dates are needed. These are called *anchor dates* and although less "unassailable" than the unassailable dates, they nevertheless form the foundation of the chronology structures. They must therefore be picked carefully and have sufficient evidence to support them. Therefore, the logic begins with selecting several anchor dates and then successfully connecting them to the unassailable dates.

I begin with two anchor dates:

- The fall of Damascus to Tiglath-pileser III (745-727) described in 2 Kings 15:27-30; 16:5-9; linked with year 20 of Pekah
- The fall of Samaria to Shalmaneser V (727-722) described in 2 Kings 17:1-6; 18:9-11; linked with year 9 of Hoshea and year 6 of Hezekiah.

There has been some debate over whether the fall of Samaria was in 722 or 723. In the 3rd edition of *Mysterious Numbers* (1982), Thiele makes a point of stressing that Samaria fell to Shalmaneser V (727-722) in 723 and not to Sargon II (722-705) in 722.<sup>63</sup> In general, the date of an ancient battle or fall of a city is simply given in terms of our modern Julian calendar by specifying the Julian year in which it occurred. Thus, Thiele argued for 723 rather than 722:

The almost universally accepted date [for the fall of Samaria] was 722 as based on Sargon's claim [that he conquered the city]. My chart called for 723 as the year when Samaria fell, but that was a year before Sargon had commenced his reign. That problem was easily and happily solved when I learned that the renowned Assyriologist Prof. A. T. Olmstead of the University of Chicago had, after a careful study of the evidence, shown that Samaria fell in 723, and not 722, and that Sargon was not telling the truth when he claimed to have taken Samaria. Shortly thereafter Prof. Hayim Tadmor of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem presented additional evidence that Samaria fell in 723, not 722.<sup>64</sup>

On the other hand, in a recent article by Lawson Younger, "The Fall of Samaria in Light of Recent Research," published not only after Thiele's 3rd edition but also after the release of "several new editions and studies of the relevant Assyrian texts,"<sup>65</sup> including the new edition of the Eponym Chronicle (1994), he still concludes his paper with, "The city fell in 722 B.C.," but to Shalmaneser, not Sargon II.<sup>66</sup> Younger argues that

since the claim [of Sargon that he took Samaria] is thoroughly integrated into the descriptions of his

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accession year; (3) one number following a king's name ("Pekah 17" or "Hezekiah 14"): the year of his coregency or sole reign (not counting accession year), depending on context; (4) two numbers following a king's name: ("Ahaz 12/4"): the year of his coregency and the year of his sole reign (not counting accession year).

63 Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, pp. 122-23; 163-68.

64 Ibid., p. 122-23; brackets added.

65 K. Lawson Younger, "The Fall of Samaria in Light of Recent Research," *CBQ* 61 (July 1999):461, 482.

66 The biblical text (2 Kgs. 17:1-6; 18:9-10) explicitly names Shalmaneser as the Assyrian king who took Samaria after a three-year siege (724-722). Of course, there are critics who see two different sources for vv. 3-4 and 5-6 in 2 Kgs. 17, but I assume the integrity of the text. Younger, *ibid.*, p. 478, also concludes that "it seems more natural to link the action of vv. 3 and 5." However, he also correctly finds the "literary technique of telescoping in the narrations of 2 Kgs. 17:1-6 and 18:9-11...In both cases, the activities of a number of years have been compressed into one overarching portrayal" (p. 479).

Western campaign of 720 B.C., it seems very unlikely that Sargon usurped Shalmaneser's accomplishment or simply finished Shalmaneser's business.<sup>67</sup>

Younger further argues that Shalmaneser did not *destroy* Samaria when he took it in 722 and also that of the eight inscriptions in which Sargon made his claim concerning Samaria, only two of them "are of primary importance for the historical reconstruction of Samaria's fall."<sup>68</sup> He concludes that Samaria fell to Shalmaneser in 722 but also that Sargon then retook Samaria during his campaign in the West in 720 after another insurrection. All agree, however, that the Northern Kingdom ceased to exist with the first of these two conquests.

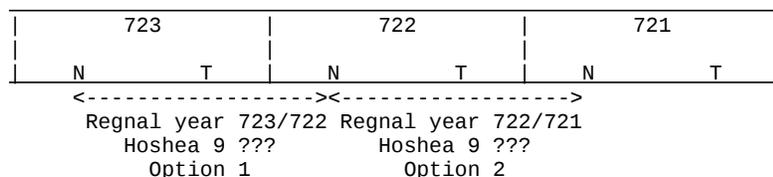
Younger is rather sure of Sargon's subsequent conquest of Samaria in 720,<sup>69</sup> but admits that the Assyrian and Babylonian data are not conclusive regarding the year of Shalmaneser's conquest of Samaria.

The conclusion from the evidence of the Babylonian Chronicle is that Shalmaneser V had a significant role in the capture of Samaria, though a firm chronology is lacking. Chronological data are found only in the biblical text: in 2 Kgs 17:6 and 18:10 the fall of Samaria is dated to Hoshea's ninth year (722 B.C.).<sup>70</sup>

The overall impression one gets from Younger's article is that his concluding statement about the fall of Samaria to Shalmaneser in 722 is based primarily on his assumption that the biblical data point to 722 as Hoshea's ninth year. Thus the debate between 723 and 722 has not been settled by external sources related to Shalmaneser and Sargon.

The biblical data do indeed place the fall of Samaria in year 9 of Hoshea's reign and also ascribes the conquest to Shalmaneser.<sup>71</sup> However, a regnal year of a king of Israel is reckoned from Nisan to Nisan, which is a spring month, running roughly from the middle of March to the middle of April. Sargon assumed the throne in Assyria in December of 722, probably shortly after Shalmaneser died. The regnal year of Nisan 723 to Nisan 722 would include about nine months of 723 and only three months of 722. Similarly, the regnal year of Nisan 722 to Nisan 721 would include about nine months of 722 and only three months of 721.

Two Options for Year 9 of Hoshea



Which of these options represents year 9 of Hoshea's reign? Those who champion 723 for the fall of Samaria would likely prefer Option 1; those who favor 722 would likely prefer Option 2. However, the decision must be made on the basis of the second anchor date, the fall of Damascus. Every source I have checked gives 732 for the date that Tiglath-pileser captured Damascus.<sup>72</sup> With no debate on this point, 732 must be accepted as an anchor date. Moreover, the biblical data require that the fall of Damascus occurred within regnal year 20 of Pekah (his last), which then must also be the accession year of Hoshea.<sup>73</sup> Hoshea assassinated Pekah in Samaria, and

67 Ibid., p. 481; brackets added.

68 Ibid., pp. 468-69.

69 Ibid., pp. 471-72.

70 Ibid., pp. 467-68. Regarding the Eponym Chronicle, Younger concludes the following (p. 464): "The new edition of the Eponym Chronicle indicates three things: (1) there was no campaign against Damascus in 728-727 B.C.; (2) Shalmaneser V became king in 727 B.C.; and (3) Shalmaneser V did not conduct a campaign in 726 B.C., since he remained 'in the land.'"

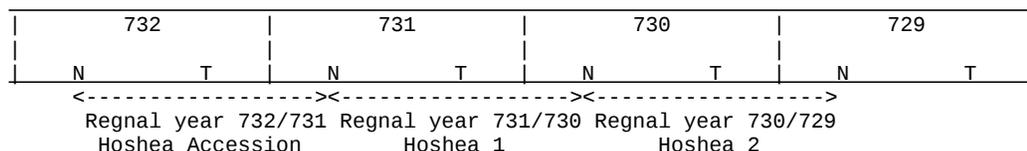
71 2 Kgs. 17:3-6; 18:9-10.

72 The reason likely is stated by Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, p. 130: "According to the Assyrian eponym canon the campaign of 732 was against Damascus."

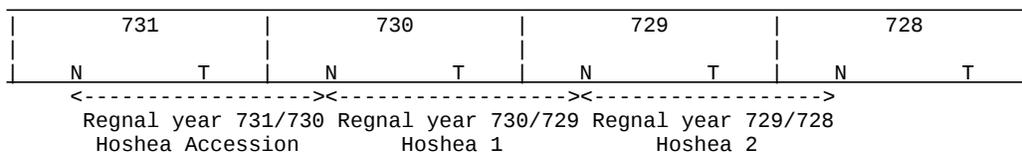
73 2 Kgs. 15:29-30.

Tiglath-pileser claims to have placed Pekah on the throne in Samaria as a vassal.<sup>74</sup> Counting back from Option 1 and Option 2 gives the following results:

Option 1 for Hoshea Accession



Option 2 for Hoshea Accession



Note that on Option 2, no part of Hoshea's accession year overlaps with 732, and therefore this option must be rejected. The correct placement of Hoshea's reign is given by Option 1, which identifies year 9 of Hoshea as 723/722. This in turn implies that the fall of Damascus occurred somewhere within roughly the last nine months of 732. It should also be noted that views II and III are united on these points: Stigers,<sup>75</sup> Wood,<sup>76</sup> and McFall<sup>77</sup> all agree that year 9 of Hoshea is regnal year 723/722. Therefore, the dates of Hoshea's reign become fixed for the purpose of constructing a chronology. His accession year was 732/731 (during which the fall of Damascus occurred), year 1 was 731/730, and year 9 was 723/722, during which the fall of Samaria occurred. Therefore, the siege of Samaria in years 7, 8, and 9 of Hoshea to which reference is made in 2 Kings 17:5-6 and 18:9-10 would be regnal years 725/724, 724/723, and 723/722.<sup>78</sup>

The Reigns of Azariah, Pekah, and Jotham

*Pekah's Rival Reign in Gilead*

Pekah almost certainly set up a rival reign in Gilead during the twelve years that Menahem and Pekahiah reigned in Samaria.

2 Kings 15:27 states that Pekah ruled for twenty years. Year 20 must be Hoshea's accession year when he assassinated Pekah in Samaria, thus 732/731. This makes year 1 751/750 and Pekah's accession year 752/751 for his reign in Gilead. But the accession year for Menahem in Samaria was also 752/751; years 1 through 10 for Menahem were 751/750 through 742/741.<sup>79</sup> Pekahiah's accession year, then, was 742/741; years 1 and 2 for

74 ANET, p. 284.

75 Stigers, "The Interphased Chronology of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah and Hoshea," p. 84, states that Hoshea's ninth year terminated "before Nisan, 722 B.C.," making his ninth regnal year 723/722 in agreement with Option 1 above. However, Stigers then states that "counting back these nine years plus his accession year" makes his accession year 733/732. This simple counting is just not correct. Counting back gives an accession year of 732/731.

76 Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History*, p. 333, n. 93.

77 See McFall's chart, "Did Thiele Overlook Hezekiah's Coregency?" p. 397.

78 Both Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, 165-66, and Younger, "The Fall of Samaria in Light of Recent Research," 464, point out that the Eponym Chronicle refers to a three-year campaign by Shalmaneser in 725, 724, and 723 but also that the name of the city against which the campaign was launched has been broken away. Both cite other scholars who argue that the name to be supplied is Samaria. Thiele is convinced of this but while Younger calls the suggestion "unquestionably appealing," he adds that "we must await new evidence."

79 Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, p. 117, Chart 17, and p. 119, Chart 18.

Pekahiah were 741/740 and 740/739, respectively. The year, 740/739, was also year 12 for Pekah. According to 2 Kings 15:23-25, Pekah assassinated Pekahiah, which must, therefore, have taken place in 740/739. This year, then would be Pekah's accession year for his reign in Samaria (identified as year 52 of Azariah in 2 Kgs. 15:27), which was then followed by an eight-year reign, 739/738 through 732/731.

Thiele writes,

Pekah began his twenty years in 752 as a rival of Menahem, who also began that year...

A number of items point to Gilead as the probable site of Pekah's rival rule against Menahem. When Menahem seized the throne in Samaria, it was by assassinating "Shallum son of Jabesh" (2 Kings 15:13-14)....Jabesh may here be a geographical rather than personal name. The meaning might be that Shallum was from the town of Jabesh. If this refers to Jabesh in Gilead, Pekah would have had strong support there for his stand against Menahem in Samaria.

Exercising jurisdiction in Gilead, Pekah could well have had his eye on Samaria. With the plot in mind of taking over the entire country when the time was ripe, he could have come to terms with Pekahiah by accepting a prominent military post under him. It was with the aid of "fifty men of Gilead" that Pekah was successful in overthrowing Pekahiah and taking his throne in Samaria (2 Kings 15:25).<sup>80</sup>

Wood takes the same view.<sup>81</sup>

#### *Synchronization of Pekah and Jotham*

With the reign of Hoshea in place, some synchronisms are possible with Pekah and Jotham.

Then Pekah son of Remaliah, his officer, conspired against him [Pekahiah] and struck him in Samaria, in the castle of the king's house with Argob and Arieah; and with him were fifty men of the Gileadites, and he killed him and became king in his place. (2 Kgs. 15:25)

In the fifty-second year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekah son of Remaliah became king over Israel in Samaria, and reigned twenty years. He did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin. (2 Kgs. 15:27-28)

In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came and captured Ijon and Abel-beth-maacah and Janoah and Kedesh and Hazor and Gilead and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he carried them captive to Assyria. And Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and struck him and put him to death and became king in his place, in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah. (2 Kgs. 15:29-30)

In the second year of Pekah the son of Remaliah king of Israel, Jotham the son of Uzziah king of Judah became king. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Jerusha the daughter of Zadok. (2 Kgs. 15:32-33)

In the seventeenth year of Pekah the son of Remaliah, Ahaz the son of Jotham, king of Judah, became king. Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem; and he did not do what was right in the sight of the LORD his God, as his father David had done. (2 Kgs 16:1-2)

Pekah reigned twenty years (2 Kgs. 15:27), but in his twentieth year, Hoshea killed him and became king in his

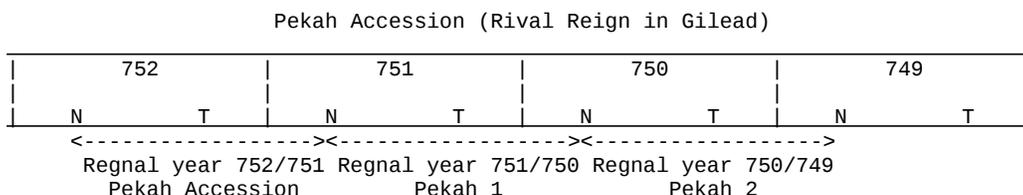
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80 Ibid., p. 129. Thiele, in n. 14, gives several examples of "son of" referring to a town: for example, "Shamgar son of Anath" (Judg. 3:31; 5:6), "which some scholars believe means 'Shamgar of Beth-anath.' "

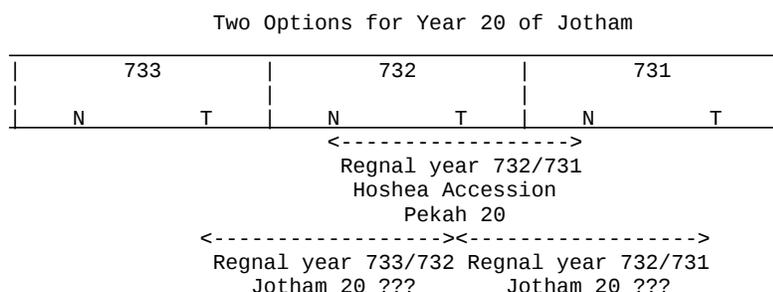
81 Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History*, p. 330.

place (2 Kgs 15:30).<sup>82</sup> This would therefore be Hoshea's accession year, which, as already noted, is Israel's regnal year 732/731. Therefore, this year was also year 20 for Pekah, and as with the fall of Damascus, he was assassinated somewhere within the last nine months of Julian 732.

As just noted in the previous subsection, "Pekah's Rival Reign in Gilead," counting back from year 20 for Pekah, 732/731, makes 751/750 year 1 for Pekah and 752/751 his accession year.<sup>83</sup> The graph is as follows:



The situation, however, is not quite as simple for Jotham. 2 Kings 15:30 also states that Pekah's assassination occurred during Jotham's twentieth year. The regnal year for both Pekah and Hoshea, being kings of Israel, was from Nisan to Nisan. But the regnal year for Jotham was Tishri to Tishri. Therefore, to overlap with the regnal year Nisan 732 to Nisan 731, there are actually two possibilities for year 20 of Jotham.



Both Thiele<sup>84</sup> and McFall<sup>85</sup> take the reference to Jotham's twentieth year to be Judah's regnal year 732/731 (Tishri 732 to Tishri 731), rather than 733/732 (Tishri 733 to Tishri 732). Of course, the choice made here must be consistent with the data relating to the *beginning* of the reigns of Pekah and Jotham. According to 2 Kings 15:32, year 1 for Jotham must overlap year 2 for Pekah.<sup>86</sup>

82 H. J. Cook, "Pekah," *VT* (April 1964):121-35, surveys much of the older literature on the problem of Pekah's reign. "Before external evidence provided enough fixed points to make absolute dating possible, the problem was to reconcile the figures of the Books of Kings internally so as to account for the excess of years in the reigns of Judah above those of Israel, for the period between the death of Solomon and the fall of Samaria. Since the difficulties seem to be concentrated around the reign of Ahaz, adjustments have been most commonly made in this period and the most frequently emended figure was Pekah's round number of twenty years" (p. 121). However, even after "external evidence however demanded that Ahab be dated so that he was on the throne at the time of the Battle of Qarqar in 853..." (p. 122), there were still problems with Pekah's reign. Cook notes Thiele's use of accession and nonaccession-year dating and the existence of coregencies, and then gives an extensive analysis of the evidence for a rival reign of Pekah in Gilead while Menahem and Pekahiah reigned in Samaria. Cook concludes that, "There remains now no obstacle to our taking seriously the biblical synchronizations for the reign of Pekah" (p. 134).

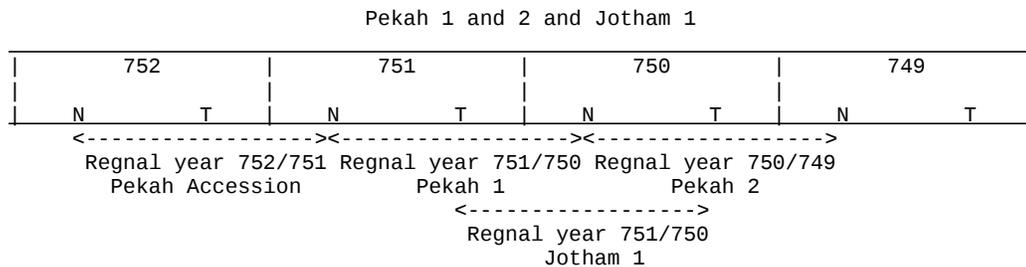
83 These conclusions agree with both Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, p. 117, Chart 17, and McFall, "Did Thiele Overlook Hezekiah's Coregency?" p. 397 (chart).

84 Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, p. 131, Chart 19.

85 McFall, "Did Thiele Overlook Hezekiah's Coregency?" p. 397 (chart).

86 Of course, there is the question of whether this means year 2 of Pekah's rival reign in Gilead or year 2 of his reign in Samaria. Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, p. 117, Chart 17, takes the verse in the former sense. There is a certain consistency in this choice, because the very next accession statement, 1 Kgs. 16:1, also counts from Pekah's accession in Gilead. There is no doubt in 2 Kgs. 16:1 since Pekah did not reign for seventeen years after assuming the throne in Samaria.

Counting back from year 20 for Jotham, 732/731, makes 751/750 year 1 for Jotham, as it did for Pekah. Since Azariah is still on the throne at this time, this year 1 for Jotham is the beginning of his coregency,<sup>87</sup> and coregencies do not have accession years.<sup>88</sup> However, for Pekah 751/750 represents Israel's regnal year from Nisan 751 to Nisan 750; for Jotham 751/750 represents Judah's regnal year from Tishri 751 to Tishri 750. This regnal year overlaps both of Pekah's regnal years, 751/750 and 750/749.



Note that if year 20 for Jotham had been taken as 733/732, year 1 would be from Tishri 752 to Tishri 751, which would not overlap year 2 of Pekah as required by 2 Kings 15:32.<sup>89</sup> Note also the possible confusion that can result when comparing regnal years for Israel's kings with regnal years for Judah's kings. The "year 751/750" is "year 1" for both Pekah and Jotham, yet the writer of 2 Kings 15:32 can write that Jotham's coregency began in the "second year of Pekah." One can only speculate why he would do this. If the actual day Jotham was appointed to his coregency fell between Nisan 750 and Tishri 750, perhaps that was the reason.

Also note that 2 Kings 15:33 states that Jotham reigned for sixteen years. How, then, could he have a twentieth year as per 2 Kings 15:30? According to Wood,

The sixteen years mentioned in II Kings 15:33 and II Chron. 27:1 must concern his rule until terminated at the insistence of Ahaz [his son]; with Jotham, however, yet living four more years to make the full twenty.<sup>90</sup>

Additional discussion of this issue is given in the subsections, "The Reign of Ahaz" and "Reign of Hezekiah."

### *The Reign of Azariah*

The last statement to be noted in these verses about Pekah and Jotham is the statement in 2 Kings 15:27 that "in the fifty-second year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekah son of Remaliah became king over Israel in Samaria, and reigned twenty years." Thiele draws attention to the importance of Azariah's lengthy reign:

From a chronological standpoint the long reign of Azariah is of major importance. It provides anchors that fix the dates for a number of difficult reigns in both Judah and Israel.<sup>91</sup>

87 According to Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History*, p. 352, "The occasion for Uzziah installing his son Jotham as coregent for his last twelve years is almost certainly related to Uzziah's becoming a leper at the beginning of that period. The disease was inflicted as punishment from God for intruding into the priest's office (II Chron. 26:16-21)." Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, p. 132, is a bit more certain: "Jotham became [co]regent when Azariah was smitten with leprosy (2 Kings 15:5)" (brackets added).

88 Note that if 2 Kgs. 15:32 refers to the beginning of Jotham's coregency, then there is no accession statement per se for Jotham when he assumed sole reign.

89 It might seem odd that the statement for Jotham in 2 Kgs. 15:32 gave the synchronism to year 2 of Pekah rather than year 1, since regnal year 1 for Jotham begins in Tishri of Pekah's year 1. However, although a regnal year in Judah is measured from the month of Tishri, this does not mean that the king who "became king" in that regnal year actually assumed the throne during the month of Tishri. In this case, Jotham may have begun his coregency between Nisan 750 and Tishri 750. Thus "In the second year of Pekah...Jotham became king."

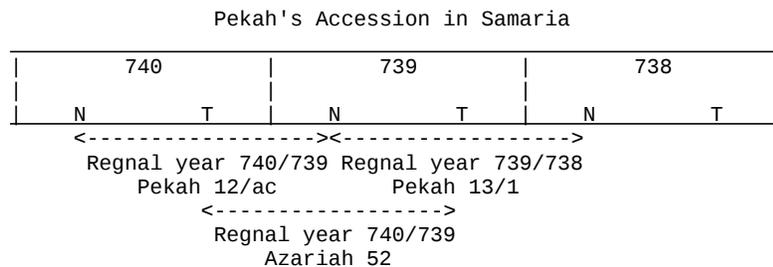
90 Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History*, p. 353, n. 46; brackets added. Stigers, "The Interphased Chronology of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah and Hoshea," p. 87, offers the same explanation.

91 Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, p. 119.

Oswalt, McFall, and Thiele in his third edition all seem to be in agreement regarding Azariah. Thiele<sup>92</sup> places Azariah's accession year at 792/791, Oswalt calls 792/791 "the beginning of Uzziah's total reign,"<sup>93</sup> and McFall places his last year at 740/739,<sup>94</sup> which makes year 1 to be 791/790, with 792/791 as his accession year.<sup>95</sup> Therefore, the important years of Azariah's reign are these:

Azariah Accession	792/791	
Azariah year 1	791/790	
Azariah year 24/ac to sole reign	768/767 <sup>96</sup>	(2 Kgs. 15:1)
Azariah year 38	754/753	(2 Kgs. 15:8)
Azariah year 39	753/752	(2 Kgs. 15:13, 17)
Azariah year 50	742/741	(2 Kgs. 15:23)
Azariah year 52	740/739	(2 Kgs. 15:2, 27)

As noted above in the subsection "Pekah's Reign in Gilead," Pekah's accession year as rival king in Gilead was 752/751. However, although 2 Kings 15:27 specifies his total reign over both Gilead and Samaria as twenty years, it marks his accession year as king in Samaria after killing Pekahiah as year 52 of Azariah. Wood,<sup>97</sup> McFall,<sup>98</sup> and Thiele<sup>99</sup> agree that Pekah's twenty-year rule consisted of 12 in Gilead and 8 in Samaria. This makes year 12, 740/739, his accession year in Samaria and his eight-year reign 739/738 through 732/731, the year of his death.



92 Ibid., p. 109, Chart 13.

93 Oswalt, "Chronology of the OT," I:683.

94 McFall, "Did Thiele Overlook Hezekiah's Coregency?" chart on p. 397 (calculated).

95 The reign of Azariah is irregular and makes its description or analysis difficult. *The argument for a coregency:* In a sense, 792/791 can be taken as the beginning of a coregency for Azariah because his father, Amaziah, was still living. Since the year a coregency begins is normally reckoned as year 1 and not as an accession year, 792/791 would not be an accession year but rather year 1 of the coregency. *The argument for an accession year:* Nevertheless, Thiele calls 792/791 Azariah's accession year, making 791/790 year 1, in agreement with McFall. *First*, perhaps the reason for Thiele's designation is the unusual circumstance under which Azariah began to reign. Yes, his father, Amaziah, was still living (in fact for 25 more years!), but according to Thiele (*Mysterious Numbers*, p. 119) Amaziah was taken prisoner by Jehoash of Israel in 792, which resulted in Azariah taking over the reign without his father still on the throne, thus almost meeting the definition of an accession year of a sole reign. *Second*, despite the fact that Amaziah was still living, Azariah assuming the throne in 792/791 can hardly be considered a normal coregency with his father in prison in Israel for the next ten years. *Third*, although Amaziah was likely released and allowed to return to Jerusalem by Jeroboam II at Jehoash's death in 782 and then lived the fifteen years mentioned in 2 Kgs. 14:17 back in Jerusalem (Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History*, p. 351, n. 38), it would seem doubtful that he would assume the throne, reducing Azariah to a coregent after 10 years of a sole reign. Calling 792/791 an accession year does seem to be the prevalent view based on relatively strong arguments. See also footnote 96.

96 Year 27 for Jeroboam II was 767/766 according Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, p. 116, Chart 15. However, due to the Nisan to Nisan regnal year in Israel and the Tishri to Tishri regnal year in Judah, year 24 for Azariah, 768/767, and year 27 for Jeroboam, 767/766, overlap, forming the synchronism in 2 Kgs. 15:1. Note: I added "/ac to sole reign" after the entry for Azariah's year 24 because it was in that year that his father Amaziah died, leaving Azariah the sole king in Judah. Those circumstances would normally make 768/767 Azariah's accession year. However, Thiele calls 792/791 Azariah's accession year, and footnote 95 presents several arguments to support this view.

97 Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History*, p. 330.

98 McFall, "Did Thiele Overlook Hezekiah's Coregency?" chart on p. 397.

99 Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, p. 129.

Therefore, the important years of Pekah's reign are these:

Pekah Accession in Gilead	752/751	
Pekah year 1	751/750	
Pekah year 2	750/749	
Pekah year 12/ac in Samaria	740/739	(2 Kgs. 15:27)
Pekah year 13/1	739/738	
Pekah year 17/5	735/734	(2 Kgs. 16:1-2)
Pekah year 20/8	732/731	(2 Kgs. 15:27)

### The Reign of Ahaz

#### *The Dates of Ahaz's Coregency and Accession*

The reign of Ahaz can now be addressed. The relevant texts are as follows:

In the seventeenth year of Pekah the son of Remaliah, Ahaz the son of Jotham, king of Judah, became king. Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he sixteen years reigned in Jerusalem. (2 Kgs. 16:1-2)

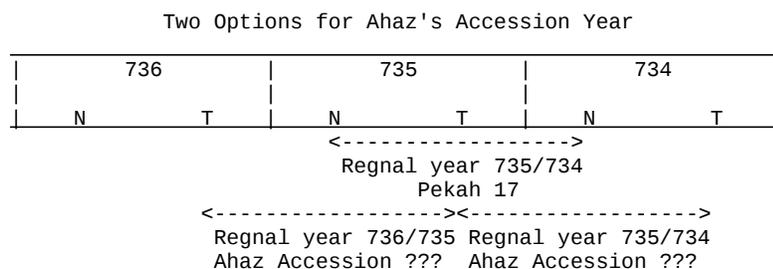
In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea the son of Elah became king over Israel in Samaria, and reigned nine years. (2 Kgs. 17:1)

In the third year of Hoshea, the son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah became king. (2 Kgs. 18:1)

In an earlier section, "The Solution to the Four Synchronisms," it was observed that three views developed in response to Thiele that preserved the accuracy of the biblical data. View I (Payne) had a serious objection (the loss of the link between year 14 of Hezekiah and Sennacherib's siege in 701), but numerous points of agreement were found between Views II (Stigers and Wood) and III (McFall). The issue in this section is the main point at which Views II and III disagree. View II links Ahaz's accession year to year 17 of Pekah; View III links year 1 of Ahaz's coregency to year 17 of Pekah, moving his accession year to 732/731. I follow View II in the chronology constructed in this chapter.<sup>100</sup>

Pekah Year 17/5	735/734	View II: Ahaz's Accession Year	View III: Year 1 of Ahaz's Coregency
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Once that choice is made, there remain two ways in which a Judean regnal year can overlap with a regnal year of Israel, as seen above in the case of Jotham. The two options can be graphed as follows:



100 See the two arguments offered against View III in the section above, "The Solution to the Four Synchronisms."

Stigers takes Ahaz's accession year to be 736/735,<sup>101</sup> which is probably why Payne uses this Judean regnal year to characterize View II.<sup>102</sup> I follow Stigers here, although there does not seem to be much at stake in this choice.

As also stated in "The Solution to the Four Synchronisms," View II sets year 1 of a coregency for Ahaz at 743/742. This means that year 8 of his coregency is his accession year, 736/735, and that year 9 is year 1 of 16 years of his sole reign as mentioned in 2 Kings 16:1-2. 2 Kings 17:1 is taken as a reference to Ahaz's year 12 counting from year 1 of his coregency (743/742), not year 12 counting from year 1 of his sixteen years (735/734).

2 Kings 17:1: Pekah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hoshea

732		731		730		729		728	
N	T	N	T	N	T	N	T	N	T
Regnal year 732/731 Hoshea Accession Pekah 20		Regnal year 731/730 Hoshea 1		Regnal year 730/729 Hoshea 2		Regnal year 729/728 Hoshea 3			
Regnal year 732/731 Jotham 20 Ahaz 12/4 (of 16) (2 Kgs. 17:1)		Regnal year 731/730 Ahaz 13/5		Regnal year 730/729 Ahaz 14/6		Regnal year 729/728 Ahaz 15/7 Hezekiah 1 (co) (2 Kgs. 18:1)			

As noted by Stigers<sup>103</sup> and Wood,<sup>104</sup> year 20 of Pekah, year 20 of Jotham, year 12 of Ahaz, and Hoshea's accession year all occur during the same year, 732/731.

However, the situation now becomes rather complicated: there are two peculiarities in this period to note.

### Two Overlapping Coregencies

First, there are two overlapping coregencies.

Azariah 41	Jotham year 1 (co)		751/750	(2 Kgs. 15:32-33)
Azariah 49	Jotham 9	Ahaz 1 (co)	743/742	
Azariah 52 (dies)	Jotham 12/ac	Ahaz 4	740/739	(2 Kgs. 15:1-2)
	Jotham 16/4	Ahaz 8/ac	736/735	(2 Kgs. 16:1-2)
	Jotham 20/- (dies)	Ahaz 12/4	732/731	(2 Kgs. 17:1)

Note that Jotham is still a coregent under his father Azariah at the time he (Jotham) appoints his son Ahaz as his own coregent. For four years (743/742, 742/741, 741/740, 740/739) Judah had Azariah as chief ruler and both Jotham and Ahaz as coregents. Why was this the case?

Only conjecture is possible, but according to Thiele,

From 743 to 738 he [Tiglath-pileser] conducted a great campaign in the Mediterranean area, and it is in the records of that campaign that Menahem and Azariah are mentioned.<sup>105</sup>

So 743 was probably the year that Azariah left Jerusalem to lead the coalition against Tiglath-pileser. Wood offers this explanation:

101 Stigers, "The Interphased Chronology of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah and Hoshea," p. 89.  
 102 Payne, "The Relationship of the Reign of Ahaz to the Accession of Hezekiah," p. 41.  
 103 Stigers, "The Interphased Chronology of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah and Hoshea," p. 84.  
 104 Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History*, p. 330, n. 85.  
 105 Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, p. 121; brackets added.

The most likely explanation for this unusual situation [overlapping coregencies of Jotham and Ahaz] is that Jotham, now left alone in Jerusalem, fearful of the consequences for his father in this battle, and probably thinking that Tiglath-pileser would bring vengeance on Uzziah's [Azariah's] own country if he won victory over the coalition, sought strength by making Ahaz [his son] co-ruler with him. He may have doubted seriously that his father would return.<sup>106</sup>

### *Accession While Former King Still Lives*

There is a second peculiarity in the dates offered here. Ahaz has his accession year (736/735) before the death of his father Jotham (732/731).

Azariah did return from the conflict between the northern coalition and Tiglath-pileser, and Jotham's accession year is the year of the death of Azariah, namely, 740/739, which is year 4 of Ahaz's coregency with Jotham. However, in 736/735 Ahaz seizes the throne about five years before the death of his father in 732/731 (736/735, 735/734, 734/733, 733/732, 732/731). Since Jotham was not assassinated by Ahaz but lived until his twentieth year (751/750 to 732/731), this dating does satisfy 2 Kings 15:30. But how and why did Ahaz assume power five years before Jotham's death?

Wood again offers an explanation:

From the beginning of his reign, Ahaz was pro-Assyrian in his policies. There is reason to believe that he was able to assume headship in power over his father while Jotham yet lived. If so, the reason must be that the Jerusalem nobles believed they were better off in submitting to Tiglath-pileser of Assyria than in resisting him, and accordingly supported the sympathetic Ahaz in grasping the throne.<sup>107</sup>

### *The Age of Ahaz*

Determining the age of Ahaz at some point during his reign is critical in determining the age of Hezekiah, or even whether he had been born yet, when Isaiah issued the Immanuel prophecy to Ahaz in Isaiah 7:14. The accession text for Ahaz is 2 Kings 16:1-2:

In the seventeenth year of Pekah the son of Remaliah, Ahaz the son of Jotham, king of Judah, became king. Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem.

In which regnal year was Ahaz twenty years old, year 1 of his coregency (743/742) or his accession year (736/735)? McFall recognizes both possibilities, but does not commit himself.<sup>108</sup> However, Stigers definitely suggests that Ahaz was twenty years old in his accession year, 736/735.<sup>109</sup> That would make Ahaz thirteen years old in year 1 of his coregency, 743/742, which would not be impossible.

### The Reign of Hezekiah

That Hezekiah had a coregency with his father Ahaz is the key, missed by Thiele, to harmonizing the four synchronisms (2 Kgs. 17:1; 18:1-2, 9, 10). Among the points of agreement between views I and II noted above in the section "The Solution to the Four Synchronisms," the following are important here:

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106 Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History*, p. 354; brackets added.

107 Ibid., p. 355. Stigers, "The Interphased Chronology of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah and Hoshea," p. 87, makes the same point: "In 736/35 B.C. his [Ahaz's] father's policy of opposition to Assyria filled Ahaz with fright. No doubt he was supported by the nobles in Jerusalem in his seizure of power, for they would suffer more if Tiglath-Pileser destroyed the city than if they paid tribute. The appeasers won the day, and Ahaz removed his father from the throne."

108 McFall, "Did Thiele Overlook Hezekiah's Coregency?" p. 404.

109 Stigers, "The Interphased Chronology of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah and Hoshea," pp. 89-90.

- Both consider the first year of Hezekiah's coregency to be 729/728.
- Both consider the synchronisms in 2 Kings 18:1-2, 9, 10 as synchronisms with Hezekiah's coregency and not his sole reign.
- Both take year 1 of Hezekiah's sole reign to be 715/714, with his accession year 716/715, thus making the fourteenth year of his sole reign fall on 702/701 for Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem.

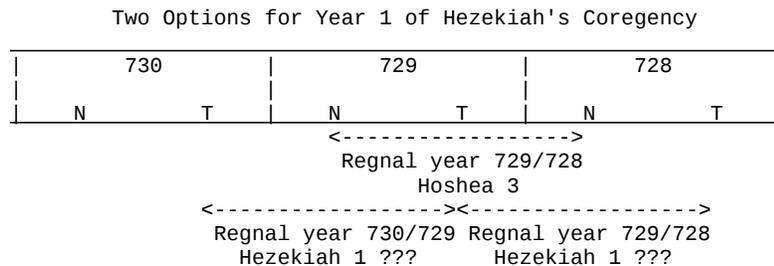
### Hezekiah's Coregency

The first two points of agreement between View II and View III deal with Hezekiah's coregency. How is year 1 of this coregency to be determined? Three of the four problem synchronisms--2 Kings 18:1-2, 9, 10--mention Hoshea, so the answer must be determined by means of the synchronisms with Hoshea, whose dates are now fixed.

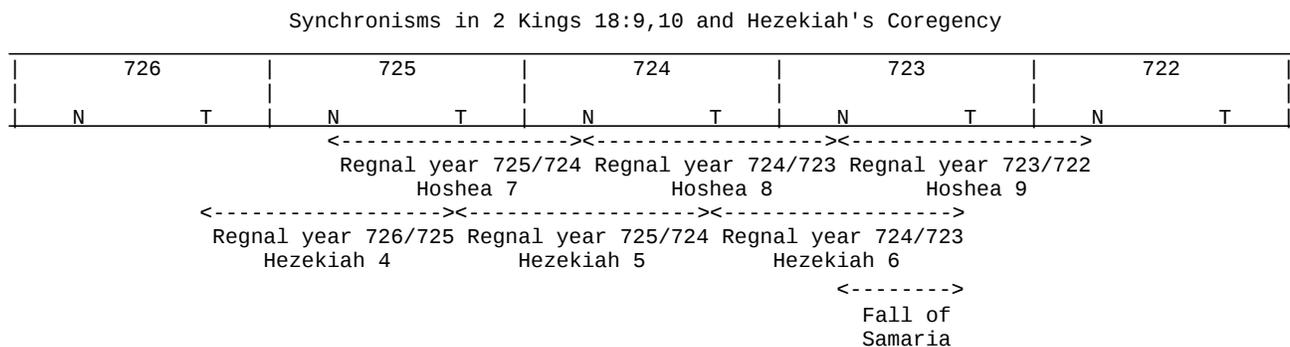
To begin, 2 Kings 18:1-2 reads as follows:

Now it came about in the third year of Hoshea, the son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah became king. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem.

Year 3 of Hoshea is 729/728 (Nisan 729 to Nisan 728). Due to the difference in reckoning regnal years in Israel and Judah, there are, of course, two possibilities for year 1 of Hezekiah's coregency, as was noted previously with year 20 for Jotham ("subsection "Synchronization of Pekah and Jotham").



If year 1 of Hezekiah's coregency is taken as 730/729 (Tishri 730 to Tishri 729), the requirements of the two problem texts, 2 Kings 18:9 and 10, are not met, because no part of year 4 for Hezekiah would then overlap year 7 for Hoshea (as would also be true of year 6 for Hezekiah and year 9 for Hoshea). Therefore, in the above graph, year 1 for Hezekiah's coregency must be 729/728. Thus the synchronisms for the years mentioned in 2 Kings 18: 9 and 10 can be graphed as follows:



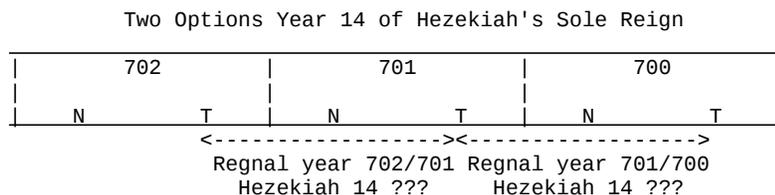
Note that for the fall of Samaria to be in Julian 723 and also during the 9th year of Hoshea (723/722) and the 6th year of Hezekiah (724/723), it must have occurred between Nisan and Tishri in 723, and Hoshea's partial year 9 ended for him during or before Tishri 723.<sup>110</sup> Note also that since Sargon assumed the throne in Assyria in December of 722, Shalmaneser clearly was the conqueror of Samaria as 2 Kings 18:9 states.

### Hezekiah's Sole Reign

The third point of agreement between View II and View III cited in the preceding subsection deals with Hezekiah's sole reign. How is his accession year to be determined? For this, use must be made of 2 Kings 18:13 and the unassailable date of 701 for Sennacherib's third campaign and siege of Jerusalem according to Assyrian records.

Now in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and seized them.

But 701 is the Julian year for the campaign of Sennacherib. Year 14, counting from year 1 of Hezekiah's coregency in 729/728, is 716/715, which is not consistent with the 701 requirement. Therefore the "fourteenth year" mentioned in 2 Kings 18:13 must be year 14 of his sole reign. However, in linking year 14 with 701, two possibilities again present themselves:



During this period of years after the northern kingdom of Israel has ceased to exist, there is no help from synchronisms to solve dating problems in Judah. However, as noted by Thiele, there is another unassailable date. It is supplied by the Babylonian Chronicle and places Nebuchadnezzar's capture of Jerusalem and the imprisonment of Jehoiachin in 597. Although Thiele made the mistake of not recognizing a coregency for Hezekiah and then calling into question the four synchronisms in 2 Kings 18, he nevertheless firmly fixes "the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah" (2 Kgs. 18:13) at 701. Thus, his analysis of all reigns between this fixed date for Hezekiah and the capture of Jehoiachin in 597 can be trusted. On the basis of that analysis, Thiele takes year 14 of Hezekiah's sole reign to be 702/701 (Tishri 702 to Tishri 701).<sup>111</sup>

Therefore, taking year 14 of Hezekiah's sole reign to be 702/701, year 1 must be 715/714, and his accession year 716/715.

After establishing Hezekiah's first year as 715/714, Thiele raises an issue regarding Hezekiah's order to celebrate the Passover. Both Thiele<sup>112</sup> and Wood<sup>113</sup> agree that this order and Hezekiah's "proclamation throughout Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, calling the people to come to Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover"<sup>114</sup> took place during Hezekiah's first year, namely, 715/714.<sup>115</sup> However, Thiele uses this to argue that the synchronizations in 2 Kings 18:1-2, 9, 10 cannot be correct, for such an invitation and the response it produced could not have occurred while Hoshea still reigned. Indeed, these synchronizations do make year 1 of Hezekiah to be 729/728, overlapping year 3 of Hoshea. However, if the synchronizations with Hoshea in 2 Kings

110 See 2 Kgs. 17:3-6.

111 Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, p. 177, Chart 21.

112 *Ibid.*, pp. 169, 175-76.

113 Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History*, p. 358, n. 60.

114 2 Chron. 30:5.

115 Cf. 2 Chron. 29:3.

18:1-2, 9, 10 point to Hezekiah's coregency, which Thiele failed to recognize, there is no problem. The Passover invitation was issued in 715/714, year 1 of Hezekiah's sole reign, not year 1 of his coregency.

However, 2 Kings 18:1-2 poses two additional questions.

- To what does the "twenty-nine years" refer in "he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem"?
- To what does the "twenty-five years old" refer in "he was twenty-five years old when he became king"?

### *Hezekiah's Length of Reign*

As argued above in the subsection "Hezekiah's Coregency," the "third year of Hoshea" in 2 Kings 18:1 must be a reference to year 1 of Hezekiah's coregency rather than his accession year. However, the length of rule in verse 2, twenty-nine years, must refer only to his sole reign and not his total reign. Year 1 of Hezekiah's coregency was 729/728, and counting from that starting point, year 29 would be 701/700. This year could not be the end of his reign. Based on Isaiah 38:6, Wood concludes that Hezekiah's illness "was during, or just prior to, Sennacherib's invasion of the land."<sup>116</sup> As a result of the Lord's healing of Hezekiah, his reign continued for fifteen more years after Sennacherib's siege on Jerusalem. Therefore, the twenty-nine year reign must refer to his sole reign. Starting with Hezekiah's accession year, 716/715, and year 1 of his sole reign, 715/714, year 29, his final year of reign and the year of his death, was 687/686. The total of Hezekiah's coregency plus sole years, namely from 729/728 to 687/686, is 42 years.

As an interesting aside, Hezekiah's illness is related to the appointment of his son Manasseh as his coregent. As pointed out by Thiele, adding the years of the reigns given for the kings Manasseh through Jehoiachin is greater than the number of years from the death of Hezekiah to the imprisonment of Jehoiachin. This requires a coregency, and through a process of elimination, it must be that of Manasseh.<sup>117</sup> The reason Hezekiah might have had to make Manasseh his coregent is ready at hand: his illness and God's response.

Stricken with a serious illness in 701 from which it seemed certain that he was about to die, Hezekiah offered earnest petitions to God and was told by Isaiah that the Lord had granted him an additional fifteen years of life (2 Kings 20:1-6; Isa. 38:1-6). With this message from God, Hezekiah at the earliest opportunity associated Manasseh with himself on the throne to give him every possible training in carrying on the affairs of state. This was when Manasseh was twelve (2 Kings 21:1), when he had become *gadol* [great]. Recall that when Jesus was twelve He reminded His parents that He had reached the time when He should be about His Father's business (Luke 2:42, 49).<sup>118</sup>

According to Thiele, year 1 of Manasseh's coregency is 697/696; his accession year would be the year of Hezekiah's death (during year 29 of his sole reign), 687/686, and year 1 of his sole reign would be 686/685.<sup>119</sup>

### *Hezekiah's Age and Birth*

As interpreted so far, the synchronism with Hoshea in 2 Kings 18:1 refers to Hezekiah's coregency, while the length of Hezekiah's reign (29 years) in verse 2 refers to his sole reign. What about the reference to Hezekiah's age, also mentioned in verse 2? Both Stigers<sup>120</sup> (an advocate of View II) and McFall<sup>121</sup> (an advocate of View III) agree that Hezekiah was twenty-five years old in his accession year of 716/715. There is a certain logic here.

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<sup>116</sup> See Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History*, p. 361.

<sup>117</sup> See Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, pp. 173-74.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 177; brackets added. גדול (gadol) is the adjective great, which can also be used in the sense from small to great (BDB, p. 152-53).

<sup>119</sup> Thiele, *Mysterious Numbers*, p. 177, Chart 22.

<sup>120</sup> Stigers, "The Interphased Chronology of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah and Hoshea," p., 89.

<sup>121</sup> McFall, "Did Thiele Overlook Hezekiah's Coregency?" p. 404.

The writer of Kings wanted to specify the first year of Hezekiah on the throne, namely, year 1 of his coregency; he has done this elsewhere (e.g., Jotham and Manasseh). However, he also wanted to state the number of "official" or sole years Hezekiah reigned, including his age when that reign began.

If this conclusion is correct, and Hezekiah was 25 years old in his accession year, 716/715, then counting back would make Hezekiah 12 years old when made coregent with his father Ahaz in 729/728. As noted in the citation from Thiele in the previous subsection, an age of twelve would not be considered inappropriate. He referred to twelve as the age at which a boy becomes a *gadol*; Oswalt calls twelve "the age of accountability."<sup>122</sup> Although Ahaz was 13 years old at the beginning of his coregency, both Hezekiah and Manasseh were 12 years old at the beginning of their coregencies.

It is now quite simple to calculate the regnal year during which Hezekiah was born. If he was 12 years old in 729/728, then he was born in 741/740.<sup>123</sup> During this year, Ahaz was 15 years old. To quote Stigers, "This is on the young side by our standards, but with due consideration given to data of youthful marriages in the Middle East, it is not impossible."

### *Hezekiah's Assumption of the Throne*

Year 1 of Hezekiah's coregency was 729/728, and his official accession year was 716/715 at the death of Ahaz. However, there is evidence that he actually assumed what was effectively sole reign in 720/719 about four years before Ahaz's death.

The accession text for Ahaz, 2 Kings 16:1-2, must again be noted:

In the seventeenth year of Pekah the son of Remaliah, Ahaz the son of Jotham, king of Judah, became king. Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem.

If the accession year for Ahaz is 736/735 and year 1 of his sixteen years is 735/734, then year 16 is 720/719. But Hezekiah's accession year was not until 716/715, which must be the year that Ahaz died. What then was the situation from 720/719 to 716/715? The best solution seems to be that Hezekiah does to Ahaz what Ahaz did to Jotham, but with the politics reversed. Again, Wood presents this solution:

There is reason to believe that he [Hezekiah] assumed chief rule, however, some four years before his father died, likely at the insistence of a growing anti-Assyrian party who objected to further pro-Assyrian actions by Ahaz. It is probable, indeed, that this first accession as co-ruler [in 729/728] had been at the insistence of this group, though then [in 729/728] Ahaz was still permitted to keep the top position.<sup>124</sup>

Payne suggests that Hezekiah could be described first as a "coregent" (729/728), then as an "active regent" (720/719), and finally as "official king" (716/715).<sup>125</sup>

### Summary of Ahaz and Hezekiah

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122 Oswalt, "Chronology of the OT, I:684-85.

123 With regard to the view that Hezekiah was the object of Isaiah 7:14, if instead of the assumption made here that he was twenty-five in his official accession year of 716/715, Hezekiah was instead twenty-five years old at the beginning of his coregency, then he would have been born in 754/753, an even worse situation for the view that Isaiah 7:14 refers to Hezekiah.

124 Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History*, p. 357 (brackets added); see also p. 355, n. 52, and p. 357, n. 57. Drawing the parallel between Jotham/Ahaz and Ahaz/Hezekiah, Wood also writes, p. 355, n.52, that although Ahaz ruled for a total of twenty eight years, only sixteen were as supreme head (2 Kgs. 16:2), these being "from [736/]735 B.C., when he [Ahaz] took over as head ruler (Jotham yet living four years), until [720/]719 B.C., when his son, Hezekiah, in turn took over from him (while Ahaz yet lived four years)." Wood acknowledges that this view is based essentially on Stigers, "The Interphased Chronology of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah and Hoshea," pp. 86-90.

125 Payne, "The Relationship of the Reign of Ahaz to the Accession of Hezekiah," p. 49.

### Important Dates for Ahaz and Hezekiah

Therefore, the important years in the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah<sup>126</sup> are as follows:

Ahaz 1 (co)		743/742	
Ahaz 3	Hezekiah born	741/740	
Ahaz 8/ac (usurps throne)		736/735	(2 Kgs. 16:1-2)
Ahaz 9/1 (1 of 16)		735/734	(2 Kgs. 16:1-2)
Ahaz 12/4		732/731	(2 Kgs. 17:1)
Ahaz 15/7	Hezekiah 1 (co)	729/728	(2 Kgs. 18:1)
Ahaz 24/16	Hezekiah 10 (usurps rule)	720/719	
Ahaz 28/20 (dies)	Hezekiah 14/ac	716/715	
	Hezekiah 15/1 (1 of 29)	715/714	(2 Kgs. 18:1-2)
	Hezekiah 28/14 (Sennacherib siege)	702/701	(2 Kgs. 18:13)
	Hezekiah 32/18 (Manasseh co)	698/697	(2 Kgs. 21:1)
	Hezekiah 43/29 (dies)	687/686	

### Year-by-Year

To summarize the proposal made here, it is helpful to assemble a year-by-year graph to show the relationship between the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Due to the confusion that might result due to the two different regnal years--in Israel (Nisan to Nisan) and Judah (Tishri to Tishri)--only the Judean kings are included below.

753	-----Azariah Age 39-----	752	
752	-----	751	
751	-----	750	Jotham 1 (co)
750	-----	749	Jotham 2
749	-----	748	Jotham 3
748	-----	747	Jotham 4
747	-----	746	Jotham 5

126 To include Jewish scholars in the research for this chapter, I consulted "Ahaz," *EncJudaica*, II:455-56, an article written by the editorial staff, and "Hezekiah," *EncJudaica*, VIII:450-54, by Oded Bustanay. As encyclopedia entries on these two kings, the articles do not discuss such technical aspects of dating their reigns as accession-year dating, coregencies, or the differing regnal years for Israel (Nisan to Nisan) and Judah (Tishri to Tishri). Moreover, the article on Ahaz has no discussion at all to indicate how the given dates, 743-727 (16 years), were determined. According to the conclusions in this chapter, 743/742 is the first year of his coregency with Jotham, and the coregency period is not included in the 16 years referred to in 2 Kgs. 16:1-2. In the article on Hezekiah, there is some discussion of the dates given for the reign of Hezekiah, and Thiele is included in the bibliography. Bustanay takes Hezekiah's reign to be 29 years based on 2 Kgs. 18:1-2. Then he offers two dates for the beginning of Hezekiah's reign. To calculate the first option he writes, "According to 2 Kings 18:9-10, Samaria was conquered by the Assyrians in the sixth year of his reign (722/1 B.C.E.)." On this basis he concludes, "This would imply that Hezekiah ascended to the throne in 727/6 B.C.E." That is a curious statement. On what basis is Hezekiah's sixth year a known date ("722/1") which is then used to calculate his first year? Of course, "722/1" could also be taken in Bustanay's sentence as the known year of the fall of Samaria. But that too would be a curious statement. Generally, simple Julian dates are given for the fall of a city, while a regnal year of a king's reign is specified by the notation 722/1 or 722/721. Therefore, the following question would arise: if "722/1" is used to specify the year of the fall of Samaria, does it refer to a regnal year of Israel or of Judah? Both Hoshea (Israel) and Hezekiah (Judah) are mentioned in 2 Kgs. 18:9-10, so it is a very real question. Note also that Bustanay states Hezekiah "ascended" to the throne in 727/726. But does "ascended" here mean the first year of his coregency, the year of his accession, or year 1 of his reign following his accession year? The second date Bustanay offers for the beginning of Hezekiah's reign is based on the known date, 701, for Sennacherib's campaign against Jerusalem and the information in 2 Kgs. 18:13. The resulting date is 715/714. Note that according to the conclusions in this chapter, 715/714 is year 1 of Hezekiah's 29 years, that is, the year following his accession year of 716/715.

746	-----	745	Jotham 6		
745	-----	744	Jotham 7		
744	-----	743	Jotham 8		
743	-----Ahaz Age 13-----	742	Jotham 9	Ahaz 1 (co)	
742	-----	741	Jotham 10	Ahaz 2	
741	----Ahaz Age 15 / Hezekiah Born- ---	740	Jotham 11	Ahaz 3	
740	-----Azariah 52 (Dies)-----	739	Jotham 12/ac	Ahaz 4	
739	-----	738	Jotham 13/1	Ahaz 5	
738	-----	737	Jotham 14/2	Ahaz 6	
737	-----	736	Jotham 15/3	Ahaz 7	
736	-----Ahaz Age 20-----	735	Jotham 16/4	Ahaz 8/ac (usurps throne)	
735	-----	734	Jotham 17/-	Ahaz 9/1 (1 of 16)	
734	-----	733	Jotham 18/-	Ahaz 10/2	
733	-----	732	Jotham 19/-	Ahaz 11/3	
732	---Fall of Damascus / Jotham Dies---	731	Jotham 20/-	Ahaz 12/4	
731	-----	730		Ahaz 13/5	
730	-----	729		Ahaz 14/6	
729	-----Hezekiah Age 12-----	728		Ahaz 15/7	Hezekiah 1 (co)
728	-----	727		Ahaz 16/8	Hezekiah 2
727	-----	726		Ahaz 17/9	Hezekiah 3
726	-----	725		Ahaz 18/10	Hezekiah 4
725	-----	724		Ahaz 19/11	Hezekiah 5
724	-----	723		Ahaz 20/12	Hezekiah 6
723	-----Fall of Samaria-----	722		Ahaz 21/13	Hezekiah 7
722	-----	721		Ahaz 22/14	Hezekiah 8
721	-----	720		Ahaz 23/15	Hezekiah 9
720	-----Hezekiah Age 21-----	719		Ahaz 24/16	Hezekiah 10 (usurps throne)
719	-----	718		Ahaz 25/-	Hezekiah 11
718	-----	717		Ahaz 26/-	Hezekiah 12
717	-----	716		Ahaz 27/-	Hezekiah 13
716	----Ahaz Dies / Hezekiah Age 25----	715		Ahaz 28/-	Hezekiah 14/ac
715	-----	714			Hezekiah 15/1 (1 of 29)
714	-----	713			Hezekiah 16/2
713	-----	712			Hezekiah 17/3
712	-----	711			Hezekiah 18/4
711	-----	710			Hezekiah 19/5

710	-----	709		Hezekiah 20/6
709	-----	708		Hezekiah 21/7
708	-----	707		Hezekiah 22/8
707	-----	706		Hezekiah 23/9
706	-----	705		Hezekiah 24/10
705	-----	704		Hezekiah 25/11
704	-----	703		Hezekiah 26/12
703	-----	702		Hezekiah 27/13
702	-----Sennacherib's Siege-----	701		Hezekiah 28/14
701	-----	700		Hezekiah 29/15
700	-----	699		Hezekiah 30/16
699	-----	698		Hezekiah 31/17
698	-----	697		Hezekiah 32/18
697	-----Manasseh Age 12-----	696	Manasseh 1 (co)	Hezekiah 33/19
696	-----	695	Manasseh 2	Hezekiah 34/20
695	-----	694	Manasseh 3	Hezekiah 35/21
694	-----	693	Manasseh 4	Hezekiah 36/22
693	-----	692	Manasseh 5	Hezekiah 37/23
692	-----	691	Manasseh 6	Hezekiah 38/24
691	-----	690	Manasseh 7	Hezekiah 39/25
690	-----	689	Manasseh 8	Hezekiah 40/26
689	-----	688	Manasseh 9	Hezekiah 41/27
688	-----	687	Manasseh 10	Hezekiah 42/28
687	-----Hezekiah Dies-----	686	Manasseh 11/ac	Hezekiah 43/29
686	-----	685	Manasseh 12/1	

### Variations in Accession Statements

In the subsection above, "Coregency Options Regarding the New King," McFall's tabulation was noted that summarizes the variations that occur in the various accession texts in Kings. Here is a detailed look at the variations that occur in the accession texts for the three kings, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.

#### (1) Jotham: 2 Kings 15:32-33

In the second year of Pekah the son of Remaliah king of Israel, Jotham the son of Uzziah king of Judah became king. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem.

- The synchronization, year 2 of Pekah, corresponds to the beginning of Jotham's coregency.
- The length of reign for sixteen years includes Jotham's coregency.

## (2) Ahaz: 2 Kings 16:1-2

In the seventeenth year of Pekah the son of Remaliah, Ahaz the son of Jotham, king of Judah, became king. Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem.

- The synchronization, year 17 of Pekah, is not the beginning of Ahaz's coregency
- The length of reign for sixteen years does not include Ahaz's coregency.

## (3) Hezekiah: 2 Kings 18:1-2

Now it came about in the third year of Hoshea, the son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah became king. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem.

- The synchronization, year 3 of Hoshea, corresponds to the beginning of Hezekiah's coregency.
- The length of reign for twenty-nine years does not include Hezekiah's coregency.

These are the interpretations placed on the accession statements for Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah according to View II, as represented by Harold Stigers and Leon Wood. Leslie McFall, representing View III, agrees with this interpretation for Jotham and Hezekiah but not Ahaz. Contrary to View II, McFall takes year 17 of Pekah as the beginning of Ahaz's coregency, but he agrees with View II that the sixteen years does not include his coregency. Therefore, according to View II, each of the three accession statements differs from the other two. According to View III, accession states two and three follow the same pattern, while accession statement one differs from that pattern. Thus on either view, then, there are differences in the patterns between these three accession statements.

There are also other examples of variations in accession statements even outside of the three troublesome kings, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. For example, for Jehoram in 2 Kings 8:16-17, the total years does not include his coregency, while for Manasseh in 2 Kings 21:1, the total years does include his coregency. The writer of 2 Kings may have used different sources for different kings that could account for the differing forms of the various accession statements, but modern chronologists must simply admit that the reason for these variations on the part of the writer of 2 Kings is simply unknown.

## Conclusion on the Accuracy of the Mysterious Numbers

As J. Barton Payne pointed out in his paper (see section, "The Solution to the Four Synchronisms"), there are three possible post-Thiele chronological systems that harmonize 2 Kings 17:1; 18:1-2, 9, 10, thought by Thiele to be in error, with the rest of the biblical data and with externally known dates.<sup>127</sup> It is appropriate to end this discussion of the problems with the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah where it began--with the comment by McFall:

The lesson from the long and checkered history of interpretation of the chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah is that the moment a wise man departs from a single numeral of the present Masoretic text he is made to look a fool sooner or later.<sup>128</sup>

## The Birth of Hezekiah in the Three Post-Thiele Harmonizations

The three post-Thiele harmonizations are distinguished by the assignment of the sixteen-year reign of Ahaz

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127 Payne, "The Relationship of the Reign of Ahaz to the Accession of Hezekiah," p. 41.

128 McFall, "Did Thiele Overlook Hezekiah's Coregency?" p. 404.

mentioned in 2 Kings 16:2 to the following years :

View I: 744/743 - 729/728 (Payne)  
View II: 736/735 - 720/719 (Stigers/Wood)  
View III: 732/731 - 716/715 (McFall)

The purpose of this chapter was to determine Hezekiah's date of birth from the biblical accession statements in order to learn whether or not he had already been born when Isaiah gave the Immanuel prophecy in 7:14. The fall of Damascus was in 732, so a child being about two years old in 732 would have been born around 734, which was the most likely year Isaiah spoke to Ahaz.<sup>129</sup> Compare 734 with the dates for the birth of Hezekiah calculated by advocates of each of the three views in harmony with the accession statements:

View I, J. Barton Payne: <sup>130</sup>	751
View II, Harold Stigers: <sup>131</sup>	741/740
View III, Leslie McFall: <sup>132</sup>	739

Thus, Hezekiah was at least five years old when Isaiah predicted the birth of Immanuel. There is no known harmonization that places the birth of Hezekiah at or about 734, two years before the fall of Damascus.

Walter Kaiser, a well-known evangelical scholar, takes Isaiah 7:14 as a generic prophecy with Hezekiah being the precursor or down payment to the final, climactic fulfillment in the birth of the Messiah as noted in Matthew 1:22-23.<sup>133</sup> The view that Isaiah 7:14 can be interpreted as a generic prophecy is discussed in Chapter 13.<sup>134</sup>

However, Hezekiah cannot be a candidate for the down payment.<sup>135</sup> Kaiser is left with a hope for the future:

When the data is further massaged and refined by some new discoveries, we believe it will locate Hezekiah's birth and Isaiah's rebuke to Ahaz at some date earlier in this decade, perhaps four to six years prior to the fall of Damascus ([perhaps] c. 736-738 B.C.) and the deaths of Pekah and Rezin in 732 B.C.<sup>136</sup>

However, as unlikely as this refinement by some new discoveries might be, it is difficult to see how it would help. It is the deaths of Pekah and Rezin that would, in Ahaz's view, obviate the problem raised by them, and this date is fixed, as Kaiser admits, at 732.

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129 The date of that meeting between Isaiah and Ahaz when the prophet spoke Isa. 7:14 is discussed at some length in the next chapter, "The Syro-Ephraimite War."

130 Payne, "The Relationship of the Reign of Ahaz to the Accession of Hezekiah," p. 44.

131 Stigers, "The Interphased Chronology of Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah and Hoshea," p. 89.

132 McFall, "Did Thiele Overlook Hezekiah's Coregency?" p. 404.

133 Kaiser, "The Promise of Isaiah 7:14 and the Single-Meaning Hermeneutic," pp. 66-67; see also his book, *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), pp. 158-62.

134 Chapter 13, subsection "Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and Generic Prophecy" in the section "The Views of Dual Sense and Multiple Fulfillment."

135 There is another candidate. For example, Thiele thinks that Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz is "a prototype of Christ" (*Mysterious Numbers*, p. 134).

136 Kaiser, "The Promise of Isaiah 7:14 and the Single-Meaning Hermeneutic," p. 66; brackets added.