

#### 4. Did Ancient Persians Use a “Spring-to-Spring” Regnal Calendar?

Glenn continues with his rationale for supporting a fall-to fall-calendar by presenting his view that the books of Ezra and Nehemiah prove that this is the calendar recognized and observed by 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE Judaism:

In addition to this, we can determine based upon the books of Ezra and Nehemiah that the Jews were also using the count from the month of Tishri to determine years--based upon Nehemiah 1:1 and 2:1. The first chapter of Nehemiah gives us a specific month and year—"Chisleu, in the twentieth year." In the second chapter (which describes events only a few months later) it gives the month of "Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes." It is impossible for Nisan to still be in the 20th year of Artaxerxes if he is using spring-to-spring calculations—for Nisan is in the spring, and therefore it should have been the 21st year (in a spring-to-spring calendar). Using a fall-to-fall calendar, however, we can solve the problem easily—since Chisleu and Nisan could both be represented (in that order) as part of the same year. Based on this, it is clear that Ezra (who was a contemporary of Nehemiah) was using the Jewish civil fall-to-fall calendar to determine dates. Thus, at least during the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, the first day of Tishri (the 7th month) was the time to start counting the years for "foreign kings."<sup>1</sup>

Once again, I find Glenn's reasoning to be unreasonable and without substance. Here Glenn offers evidence from a heathen Persian calendar as evidence that Yahweh's year begins in the fall. Artaxerxes was the Persian king who granted permission to Ezra and Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem in order to reinstate the Jewish form of government and worship. Artaxerxes should *not* be mistaken as a Torah-observant king.

Glenn's "20<sup>th</sup> year of Artaxerxes" reference might be better understood if compared to the term of United States Presidents. Until 1933, the incoming President was sworn in office on March 4<sup>th</sup>. Thus, the third year of a President wouldn't actually begin until March. Since 1933, the President-elect is sworn in on January 20<sup>th</sup>, so the current President's second year will not begin until January 20<sup>th</sup>, even though our society as a whole begins the year on January 1<sup>st</sup>. Just as we do not expect the President of the United States to change his term of office so as to coincide with Yahweh's year, in the same way, why would Glenn Moore expect Artaxerxes to conform *his* regnal year to Yahweh's ordained calendar?

In an ironic twist, in Glenn's August 2009 revision, he responded to the above comment, only to contradict his answer in his next paragraph. Here is the first paragraph from his response:

Now some will argue that Artaxerxes was a heathen king, and therefore it would only be natural for Nehemiah to use the method of dating that such a heathen king would use. However, that argument only produces more problems--for the Persians did not use a fall to fall calendar to establish dates! It is well known that the Persians (as their custom was) used a spring to spring calendar!! And yet, here we find in Nehemiah 1 and 2 that they were using a fall to fall calendar to establish the 20th year of Artaxerxes.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> From the original version of "Do Sabbatical Years Start in the Spring (Abib) or the Fall (Tishri)?" by W. Glenn Moore. This study may be read by accessing the following URL: [http://www.itsaboutthatime.net/year\\_begins\\_fall.htm](http://www.itsaboutthatime.net/year_begins_fall.htm).

<sup>2</sup> From "Do Sabbatical Years Start in the Spring (Abib) or the Fall (Tishri)?" (August 2009 revision) by W. Glenn Moore. This study may be read by accessing the following URL: [http://www.itsaboutthatime.net/year\\_begins\\_fall.htm](http://www.itsaboutthatime.net/year_begins_fall.htm).

Glenn here issues a very authoritative response to our commentary, explaining that it is “well known that the Persians (as their custom was) used a spring to spring calendar.” Anyone susceptible to falling for remarks given in such an authoritative manner would likely read Glenn’s commentary and “just accept” it as valid without feeling a need to look any further. Not having ever heard of Glenn’s “well known” claim that the Persians used a spring-to-spring calendar, I decided to check it out.

As it turns out, once again, we find that Glenn has conducted shallow research. According to early 20<sup>th</sup> century British author Edward Knobel, the regnal years of Persian kings appear to have been reckoned in three different ways, one of which coincided with the *fall*:

In my paper on these papyri published in the *Monthly Notices* for March 1908, I referred to the regnal years of the kings of Persia, but without attempting any explanation as to how those years were reckoned. It is important to investigate the question, as the calendar dates must necessarily depend upon the determination of the accession of the kings, whence the commencement of the regnal years can be fixed.

Regnal years at this period appear to have been reckoned in three different ways. First, they were determined from the accession of the king precisely as the regnal years in this country [i.e., England]: Oppert states that this system was used in Assyria, and was that adopted in the Bible; secondly, they were reckoned as beginning on the 1st. Nisan following the accession; and thirdly, **the regnal years were considered to commence with the 1st. Thoth<sup>3</sup>** of Nabonassarean and Egyptian years preceding the actual accession. This is the system adopted in Ptolemy’s canon.

The records which enable us to determine the dates of accession of the kings from Xerxes the Great to Darius Nothus are fairly clear.

*Xerxes the Great.*

Fynes Clinton (*Fasti Hellenici*) states that the accession of Xerxes was about the spring of B.C. 485. Oppert, however, has called attention to a Babylonian tablet which records Darius Hystaspes, the father of Xerxes, was living September B.C. 485, and **he concludes definitely that the accession of Xerxes was in the autumn of that year.<sup>4</sup>** I think this may be accepted as the true period of his accession.

*Artabanus.*

Xerxes was assassinated by Artabanus in the beginning of the archonship of Lysitheus—the 4th. year of the 78th. Olympiad. The commencement of this archonship is well determined as July B.C. 465, consequently the accession of Artabanus can be fixed as July or August B.C. 465.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The ancient month *Thoth* usually fell between September 11 and October 10 (c.f., Wikipedia article “Thout,” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thout>).

<sup>4</sup> The author here makes reference to an article entitled “La fixation exacte de la chronologie des derniers rois de Babylone” (Translation: “The Exact Settlement of the Chronology of the Last Kings of Babylon”), by M. Julius Oppert, which appeared in the May 1893 German magazine entitled *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*.

<sup>5</sup> From “Note on the Regnal Years in the Aramaic Papyri from Assuan,” by E. B. Knobel, published in *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society*, Vol. LXIX, No. 1, November 13, 1908, London, England, p. 8. This article is available online by accessing the following URL: <http://adsabs.harvard.edu/full/1908MNRAS..69...8K>.

While we do not deny that the Persians, like the Jews, used a spring-to-spring calendar, it appears possible that they may have *also* recognized a fall-to-fall calendar, at least for the regnal years. In fact, might this be where modern Judaism came up with the notion of a fall-to-fall calendar?

Nevertheless, Glenn proceeds to contradict his own testimony by citing an authority on this subject who states that the first of Tishri (the seventh month) is “the New Year for foreign kings”! Since Artaxerxes was a foreign king, one might reasonably conclude that the first of Tishri marked his “New Year.” If this is the case, then this is something that would have been understood by Ezra and Nehemiah in the same way that we recognize the “New Year” for a U.S. President is January 20<sup>th</sup>. Here, then, is Glenn’s revealing, yet contradictory, citation:

We also have confirmation of this from the Talmud, as explained by Siegfried Horn:

That the fifth century Jews actually counted the regnal year of the Persian kings according to their own fall-to-fall calendar is attested not only by Nehemiah.... later on (it is) traditionally by the Talmud. ‘According to the explanation of Rosh Ha-shanah ... the first of Tishri (the seventh month) is the New Year for foreign kings.’<sup>6</sup>

According to Glenn, fifth-century BCE Judaism reckoned the reign of Persian kings on the basis of a fall-to-fall calendar. Okay, let’s say Glenn is correct about this. My response would be, “So why would Judaism reckon the reign of Persian kings based on a fall-to-fall calendar if the Persians themselves reckoned their own reigns on the basis of a spring-to-spring calendar?” That would be like Egypt reckoning the terms of US Presidents from summer-to-summer, even though the President actually begins his term of office in January! It is simply absurd to believe that Ezra and Nehemiah arbitrarily chose to reckon the reign of Artaxerxes from fall-to-fall if his reign actually began in the spring, yet this is precisely what Glenn wants us to believe! It only stands to reason that the author of the Talmud wrote, “the first of Tishri (the seventh month) is the New Year for foreign kings” because that is when those foreign kings, including the Persians, began reigning. As we will see later, the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE Jews who lived on Elephantine Island also referenced years in terms of the reigns of foreign kings. This should not be mistaken as evidence that they shunned the Scriptural calendar in favor of a civil one.

I find it interesting that Glenn selected the above quote as his validation, not only because it contradicts his own conclusion about the reckoning of regnal years for Persian kings, but also because the authors, Siegfried H. Horn and Lynn H. Wood, mention a renowned chronologist who believed that the Jewish fall-to-fall calendar was a *later* institution, i.e., something that Judaism adopted without Yahweh’s endorsement. From this same book cited by Glenn, *The Chronology of Ezra 7*, we read the following:

The chronologist E. Mahler<sup>7</sup> agreed with Knobel and Fotheringham that the Jewish calendar was based neither on the visibility of the first crescent nor on the

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid. Glenn footnotes Siegfried Horn’s comment as follows: “*The Chronology of Ezra 7*, by Siegfried H. Horn and Lynn H. Wood, p. 73.”

<sup>7</sup> This is a reference to Eduard Mahler, who is listed in *Wikipedia* not only as a chronologist, but also as an astronomer, Orientalist, and natural scientist who lived from 1857 – 1945. Additional information about Eduard Mahler may be obtained by accessing the following URL: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eduard\\_Mahler](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eduard_Mahler).

conjunction, but on the application of a regular cycle. However, **he believed that the Jewish fall-to-fall calendar was a later institution.**<sup>8</sup>

While we certainly do not agree with chronologist Eduard Mahler's assessment of how the ancient Jews reckoned the calendar, it is at least noteworthy that he shares our view that the Jewish fall-to-fall calendar was a *later* contrivance.

### ***Glenn Reacts to my Commentary***

In response to the above commentary, Glenn Moore selected two sentences (underlined above for easy reference) and presented a case that, in so many words, I don't know what I'm talking about, and he reinforced his position that, regardless of when a Persian king began to reign, the Persians didn't start counting until the arrival of the month Tishri. Here is what he wrote (keep in mind that I am the one he refers to as "this critic"):

On a personal note, I find it very interesting that some individuals will attempt to introduce doubts regarding all of these findings on Bible chronology, on the *supposed* basis that the numbering of the months is still from Nisan instead of Tishri (supposedly ruling out a Tishri New Year), or that the Persians supposedly followed a fall calendar to date the reign of their kings (which somehow would explain why the Jews would date the reigns of the Persians based on a fall calendar), or because it doesn't matter if the kings of Israel (or Judah) used a fall-to-fall year to compute their reigns. It is bad enough that chronologists disagree, even amongst themselves--and at the same time I cannot claim to be free of error, as I am continually learning and advancing in my understanding (of Scripture, of history, and of chronology). But such sentiments as mentioned here *are beyond belief!!* In recent months I had generally avoided making direct responses to many similar inflammatory statements, but when someone quotes from a knowledgeable chronologist, without really understanding what that person is truly saying, and follows it up with commentary which does not truly reflect the *teaching* of that chronologist (or any others), I feel I have no choice but to say something. Here is what this critic has said:

"It is simply absurd to believe that Ezra and Nehemiah arbitrarily chose to reckon the reign of Artaxerxes from fall-to-fall if his reign actually began in the spring, yet this is precisely what Glenn wants us to believe! It only stands to reason that the author of the Talmud wrote, 'the first of Tishri (the seventh month) is the New Year for foreign kings' because that is when those foreign kings, including the Persians, reckoned their regnal years."

Now I don't wish to embarrass this person, and I would also prefer not to give links to biased critics, so I will not mention where this was taken from. But a competent chronologist would *never* make such a statement as this, even if he *did not* agree as to which type of calendar a certain group used. [If you doubt this, then contact a reputable Bible chronologist and ask them yourself.] I should like

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<sup>8</sup> From *The Chronology of Ezra 7: A Report of the Historical Research Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists*, by Siegfried H. Horn, Ph.D., Professor of Archeology, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary and Lynn H. Wood, Ph.D., Sometime Professor of Archeology, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, D.C., 1953, p. 34.

to recommend that those who lack knowledge of this subject and at the same time desire to **supposedly** expose my own lack of knowledge and/or teach others something about Bible chronology, well, they should seek out the personal assistance of *several* knowledgeable chronologists, instead of simply making a blind stab into the darkness with personal attacks and uninformed statements, such as the one above. We know that this statement above is totally flawed for several reasons: 1) The Persians start their years from the spring, 2) The ancients *often* used accession year reckoning in which they would not start the count of a king's reign from the time he actually came to the throne, but would wait several weeks or months to begin the count of that king's reign (until the start of the next year, in either the spring or the fall, depending on what system the recording party used), and 3) The authors of the Talmud *did not* stipulate Tishri as the "New Year for foreign kings," supposedly "because that is when they calculated their regnal years," since kings that were foreign to Israel (including Judah) used a variety of methods to calculate their regnal years. Did the northern kingdom of Israel consider their brothers to the south (Judah) to be "foreign kings?" It is quite possible, in light of this knowledge. We know, for example, based upon the work of Edwin Thiele, that the kings of Judah used a Tishri calendar to reckon their reigns. Also, we cannot claim that the teachings found in the Talmud are without error. The Talmud came much later than the kings of Israel, and therefore may not exactly reflect the way ancient kings of Judah and Israel actually reckoned their reigns.

Based on what we know of the chronology of the book of Kings (as explained by Thiele) the kingdom of Judah generally used a dating method which began in the fall, whereas the kingdom of Israel generally used a dating method which began in the spring. Chronologist Edwin Thiele found that Judah and Israel, from time to time, used several methods of calculating their reigns, accession year, non-accession year, spring and/or fall start of the year. This legitimate contribution from Thiele is recognized today as valid by most Bible chronologists, and a *competent* chronologist would know these most basic and fundamental issues in Bible chronology. Therefore, since it is well documented that the Persians started their years in the spring, this comment regarding the statement from the Talmud (telling us that "Tishri is the New Year for foreign kings" *because* foreign kings reckoned their regnal years from the fall) **is totally negated**. Tishri is the "New Year for foreign kings" because it is the original creation calendar (as modern day Judaism acknowledges), it is the same as the Canaanite calendar (as the Hebrew names of the months proves), it follows the agricultural cycle (as the Gezar calendar, the oldest Hebrew calendar known, proves), and it is "the New Year for the reckoning of years, for Sabbatical years, and for Jubilees," as the other reference from the Talmud (and Scripture, cf. Leviticus 25:9-10) confirms. While I could never claim to be perfect, and do from time to time make mistakes, the comment quoted above is very lacking in the most basic fundamental knowledge of chronology, just like one I recently heard from another person who stated that:

"January 1 is the beginning of the year from the Bible."<sup>9</sup>

Oh, how sad. Sadly, it would do no good to argue the point with either one of them, since they are **both completely oblivious** to their own lack of understanding--and, I suspect, unwilling to admit their own lack of knowledge in this area while quick to criticize anything (no matter how trivial) from those they

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<sup>9</sup> Since Glenn chooses to not identify his critics, I have no idea who may have told him that the Scriptural New Year begins in January, but most likely it's an individual who is not well-acquainted with the Torah.

disagree with. While I present these lines of evidence, it is not my objective to simply require the reader to accept my word for it. Instead, I encourage the reader to study this out for themselves if they have any doubts, and not be so quickly swayed by the doubts of critics who themselves are very lacking in *any* credibility.<sup>10</sup>

I'm not sure if it's just me, but I had a difficult time following Glenn's train of thought in the above commentary. As I sort through his comments, I discern a heavy reliance on "chronologist Edwin Thiele." Having reviewed some of Thiele's findings and assessing the disagreement I have with at least one of his conclusions, I am reminded that the title "chronologist" (or any other such title) doesn't make him any more immune to reasoning errors than the rest of us. In a few moments, I will demonstrate why I am persuaded that he made an unsustainable conclusion regarding how the Jews reckoned "regnal years." Moreover, as I worked at processing Glenn's objections as expressed above, I found that he didn't actually refute any of my comments that he was apparently protesting. All he really accomplished was to express his opinion that my remarks were "inflammatory." For those who may have some difficulty following Glenn's commentary, I will briefly summarize what I find to be his key concern: Glenn believes that it is a matter of fact that, no matter when a Persian king began to reign, the Jews didn't start that king's count until the month of Tishri, and he believes that Nehemiah 1:1 and 2:1 prove his theory. Of course, the Bible chronologist whom he cites, Edwin R. Thiele, believes this as well. The fact that Glenn infuses his personal belief that the reigns of Persian kings were reckoned this way because it traces to the "original creation calendar" is, of course, his opinion, which I strongly disagree with.

Rather than go into great detail refuting Glenn's commentary, I will simply demonstrate that Artaxerxes' reign began in the Persian calendar's equivalent of August, and this fact explains why Nehemiah recorded both *Chisleu* (9<sup>th</sup> month) and the following *Nisan* (*Abib*) as being inclusive of Artaxerxes' 20<sup>th</sup> regnal year. I may not be a chronologist, but those who have done extensive studying into this subject state that Artaxerxes began his reign upon the death of his father Xerxes, which some say occurred during the month of August. If this is the case, then if the month *Chisleu* of Nehemiah 1:1 fell during the 20th year of Artaxerxes' reign, then the following *Nisan* (or *Abib*) of Nehemiah 2:1 would still be the 20th year of Artaxerxes' reign. Author Steve Hinrichs presents his case for believing that Artaxerxes' reign began in the month we know as August (late summer):

Artaxerxes reign began when his father Xerxes died. Xerxes death can be precisely determined. The date of the death of Xerxes may be accurately fixed by reference to eclipses. On a tablet that lists lunar eclipses at 18-year intervals occurs the following brief announcement between two eclipse records: "Month V, day 14 [?], Xerxes was murdered by his son." Unfortunately, the cuneiform sign for the day of the month is damaged, and a viable reading could be anything from 14 to 18. The year is missing, but it can be deduced from the 18-year sequence as 465 BC. This identification is confirmed by calculating the dates of the two eclipses stated to have occurred in the same year that Xerxes died. The first of these happened when the Moon was in the constellation of Sagittarius, while the second took place on the 14th day of the 8th lunar month. For many years

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<sup>10</sup> From the late August 2009 revision of "Do Sabbatical Years Start in the Spring (Abib) or the Fall (Tishri)?" by W. Glenn Moore. This study may be read by accessing the following URL: [http://www.itsaboutthattime.net/year\\_begins\\_fall.htm](http://www.itsaboutthattime.net/year_begins_fall.htm). Only the font colors have been changed.

both before and after 465 BC, no such combination of eclipses can be found; it occurs only in 465 BC itself. The dates deduced for the two eclipses are June 5 and November 30 of that year. **Mention of an intercalary sixth month on the same tablet enables the date of the death of Xerxes to be fixed as some time between August 4 and 8 in 465 BC.**<sup>11</sup>

If Hinrichs' research is accurate and Artaxerxes' reign did indeed begin in August, then his 20<sup>th</sup> year *also* began in August. By the month of *Nisan (Abib)*, he was *still* in his 20<sup>th</sup> year. Of course, since the month of August occurs prior to the month known as *Tishri*, this means Artaxerxes' reign began BEFORE the fall season. Thus, both the month *Chisleu* AND the month of *Nisan* fell within the parameters of Artaxerxes' 20<sup>th</sup> year! Certainly, there is disagreement among scholars over the precise month when Artaxerxes' reign began. Author Chuck Missler believes he began reigning in July. If this is so, then the above principle still applies because by the following month of *Nisan (Abib)*, Artaxerxes was *still* in his 20<sup>th</sup> year.<sup>12</sup> Equipped with this understanding, we can see that we do not need someone to persuade us that Nehemiah understood a "fall-to-fall" calendar. Rather, he understood that Artaxerxes' reign began in mid-to-late summer.

As I mentioned earlier, the chronologist in whom Glenn places his trust for determining the reckoning of regnal years for Persian kings is Edwin R. Thiele. However, upon looking into Thiele's reasoning for believing the reigns of Persian kings began in *Tishri* is not because of any archaeological or historical evidence. Rather, it is attributed to his interpretation of Nehemiah 1:1 and 2:1! Keep in mind that Nehemiah never once recorded that Artaxerxes began reigning in the fall, nor in the month of *Tishri*. Nevertheless, based on those two verses, individuals have reached the conclusion that Judaism "must" have reckoned the regnal years of Persian kings from fall-to-fall. Here is what Thiele wrote:

**Furthermore, it is clear from Nehemiah 1:1 and 2:1 that Nehemiah reckoned the years of the Persian king Artaxerxes from Tishri-to-Tishri, for the month Kislev (Nov./Dec.) fell within the twentieth year of the king and the following Nisan was still in the same twentieth year.** But why would Nehemiah do this, when the custom in Persia was to reckon the year from Nisan-to-Nisan? Is it not reasonable to suppose that Nehemiah was acquainted with the custom formerly followed by the kings of Judah to begin their regnal years with Tishri and, in a spirit of intense nationalism, applied the customary Jewish practice even to a Persian king?<sup>13</sup>

Here we see that Thiele essentially follows the same deductive reasoning exhibited by Glenn Moore. From the perspective of Thiele and Moore, it is okay to examine Nehemiah 1:1 and 2:1 from the perspective of the current Jewish practice of reckoning a fall-to-fall calendar, and extrapolate that this

<sup>11</sup> From "Daniel's Messiah in the Critic's Den," by Steve Hinrichs, (Revised 6/00). The entire article may be read online by accessing the following URL: <http://www.theism.net/article/17>.

<sup>12</sup> Cf., "Confirming the Prophetic Date of 445 B.C.," by Chuck Missler, from his Book *The Creator Beyond Time and Space*. Missler writes, "Artaxerxes Longimanus ascended to the throne of the Medo-Persian empire in July 465 B.C. (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1990 ed.)." This article may be read in its entirety by accessing the following URL: <http://www.direct.ca/trinity/king2.html>.

<sup>13</sup> From *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, by Edwin R. Thiele, 1983 by The Zondervan Corporation, Grand Rapids, MI, p. 53.

“must” be the explanation for how both *Chisleu* and *Nisan* fell within the same regnal year, i.e., that Nehemiah “must have” recognized a fall-to-fall calendar.

I respectfully disagree with the above reasoning as promoted by Thiele and Moore. Rather, I believe that Nehemiah reckoned Artaxerxes’ reign in keeping with the month during which it *actually began* (most likely July or August). His 19<sup>th</sup> regnal year ended in either July or August and, of course, the ending of his 19<sup>th</sup> year simultaneously marked the beginning of his 20<sup>th</sup> regnal year. Thus, when the month of *Chisleu* arrived, Artaxerxes was still in his 20<sup>th</sup> regnal year. The months came and went and eventually the first month of the New Year (*Nisan*) arrived. Of course, even though the New Year had begun, Artaxerxes was still in his 20<sup>th</sup> regnal year, which didn’t end until the Persian equivalent of July or August arrived. This is the explanation that I believe makes the most sense, my lack of chronologist credentials notwithstanding.

Apparently I’m not the only one who doesn’t put a whole lot of stock in the credentials of chronologist Edwin Thiele. Floyd Nolen Jones, in his book *The Chronology of the Old Testament*, has this to say about one of Thiele’s conclusions:

The present author also originally thought the chronology could not be resolved unless Babylon and Judah were employing different regnal systems. All my editions prior to AD 2000 reflect this view. Although not true, Thiele was seemingly correct in this assessment, as all who so attempt will soon discover. As has been demonstrated, in desperation he saw a mirage of hope at 1 Kings 6:1 and necessity led him to violate the clear message of the Hebrew Text, forcing the Tishri-to-Tishri system on the Kingdom of Judah.<sup>14</sup>

Clearly, Edwin Thiele’s chronological conclusions aren’t quite as “widely accepted” as Glenn Moore makes them out to be. Moreover, the author of the article “Calendars” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* offered the following review of Thiele’s position that the kingdom of Judah began the year in the fall, whereas the kingdom of Israel began the year in the spring:

Scholars have argued from different sets of facts that the year was thought to begin in either spring or autumn. A widely held position has been that an autumnal New Year was observed in preexilic times, while a vernal New Year came into vogue in the postexilic age. Some have also maintained (e.g., Thiele) that the kingdom of Judah began the year in autumn but the realm of Israel placed it in the spring. In treating a question of this sort, for which the evidence is sparse and difficult, it is important to remember that simultaneously there could be different inceptions for different sorts of New Years.<sup>15</sup>

As implied by the author of the above article, the extra-Scriptural evidence for when both Judah and Israel began the year is “sparse and difficult.” Nevertheless, it seems that Glenn expects us to treat any

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<sup>14</sup> *The Chronology of the Old Testament: A Return to Basics*, by Floyd Nolen Jones, Master Books, Green Forest, AR, 2005, p. 124.

<sup>15</sup> C.f., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 1, David Noel Freedman, Editor-in-Chief, Doubleday, New York, NY, 1992, p. 817.

conclusions reached by Thiele as “gospel.” I believe it makes far more sense to presume that those who obeyed Yahweh observed a “spring-to-spring” calendar in accordance with Exodus 12:1-2. We don’t really need the opinions of men who are deemed “chronologists” to figure this out. Thus, regardless of how Judah reckoned the reigns of foreign kings or even their own kings, the fact of the matter remains that they certainly knew when the first month of the year was, and it was in the spring, not the fall.

Although we have demonstrated how it is far more likely that Nehemiah reckoned the regnal years of King Artaxerxes based on the month of his actual accession to the throne than to have waited until a certain month later in the year to designate “month #1,” Glenn continues with his commentary:

More directly, the Talmud, in commenting on Rosh Hashannah in the Gemara, confirms the statement of Siegfried Horn. Not only does this commentary indicate a fall-to-fall calendar for foreign kings, not only does it indicate a spring-to-spring calendar for the kings of Judah, but it also shows accession year reckoning for both:

The rabbis taught: If a king die in Adar, and his successor ascend the throne in Adar, (documents may be dated either) the (last) year of the (dead) king or the (first) year of the new king. If a king die in Nissan, and his successor ascend the throne in Nissan, the same is the case. But if a king die in Adar, and his successor does not ascend the throne until Nisan, then the year ending with Adar should be referred to as the year of the dead king, and from Nisan it should be referred to as that of his successor. Is this not self-evident? The case here mentioned refers to an instance where the new king was a son of the deceased, and, while ascending the throne in Nisan, had been elected in the month of Adar, and being the king's son, it might be assumed that he was king immediately after his election, and thus the following first of Nisan would inaugurate the second year of his reign. He comes to teach us that such is not the case. . . . . R. Hisda says: The rule of the Mishna—that the year of the kings begins with Nis-san—refers to the kings of Israel only, but for the kings of other nations it commences from Tishri.<sup>16</sup>

To add to this evidence, the Mishnah plainly reveals that there were four ways of counting years, according to Jewish tradition. We can confirm, with Scripture, that at least two of those four methods of counting years have historically been used. One of those ways of determining a year was based upon a spring-to-spring calendar, used to determine the festivals and the reigns of Jewish kings. The second way of determining years was by a fall-to-fall calendar. Sabbatical years were determined by this calendar, as well as the reign of foreign kings. Since the Mishnah deals almost exclusively with regulations which affect the nation of Israel, Nisan (the first month) would have naturally been considered the time to begin counting the years for kings of Israel and the feasts, while Tishri (the seventh month) would be the time to begin counting Sabbatical and Jubilee years (and foreign kings, according to the Talmud):

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<sup>16</sup> This is Glenn’s footnote: “The Jewish Virtual Library, *Talmud*, tractate Rosh Hashana, Chapter 1 <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Talmud/rh1.html>.”

- 1:1 A. There are four New Years:  
 B. (1) the first day of Nisan is the New Year for kings and festivals;  
 C. (2) the first day of Elul is the New Year for tithing cattle.  
 D. R. Eleasar and R. Simeon say, "It is on the first day of Tishre."  
 E. (3) The first day of Tishre is the New Year for the reckoning of years, for Sab-batical years, and for Jubilees,  
 F. for planting [trees] and for vegetables.  
 G. (4) The first day of Shebat is the New Year for trees, . . .<sup>17</sup>

In the first portion of the above commentary, Glenn reiterates what he has already shared: Judaism marked a fall-to-fall calendar for foreign kings and a spring-to-spring calendar for the kings of Judah. I maintain that if Judaism reckoned fall-to-fall regnal years for foreign kings, this would have been because that's the way the foreign kings did it. In the case of King Artaxerxes, since he came to power in either July or August, there would have been nothing preventing Nehemiah from beginning reckoning his reign from that point in time, thus making both *Chislev* and *Nisan* months that would have fallen within the 20<sup>th</sup> year of his reign. Of course, even if Glenn is correct that Nehemiah began reckoning Artaxerxes' reign from the month Tishri, what would this prove? Would it prove that Nehemiah himself reckoned a fall-to-fall calendar?

Hardly. For example, we read in Nehemiah 8:13-14 that the heads of the ancestral houses of all the people, along with the priests and the Levites, came together to the scribe Ezra in order to study the words of the law. They found where it is written that the people of Israel should dwell in booths during the "feast of the seventh month." *What feast is the "feast of the seventh month" during which we are commanded to dwell in booths?* Clearly, this is a reference to the Feast of Tabernacles. This feast is commanded to be observed during the *seventh month*, commonly referred to as *Tishri*. Notice that it wasn't referred to as the "feast of the first month." The calendar proposed by Glenn has the Jews observing, yes, a Feast of Tabernacles during the seventh month of the "religious" calendar, but *also* referring to it as the "first month of the civil calendar." If this sounds confusing to you, then you are actually thinking clearly!

In the final portion of the above commentary, Glenn cites the Mishnah's stand that the first day of Tishri is the "New Year for reckoning years for Sabbatical years and Jubilees." There is no question that Judaism has maintained this position for a very long time, dating back to at least the first century BCE. I will not dispute this. Does the fact that Judaism of the first century BCE reckoned Sabbatical years and Jubilees from fall-to-fall mean that Judaism was correct in so doing? No, it does not.

Indeed, the practice and belief system of first-century Judaism with regard to the reckoning of Sabbatical years appears to be a driving factor of Glenn's premise – that their understanding should determine our interpretation of the key texts of Scripture. I will be the first to acknowledge that whatever was practiced by mainstream first-century Judaism is certainly worthy of our attention, but it should *not* determine our doctrinal stand. I say this especially in view of the fact that, even by Glenn's

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<sup>17</sup> From "Do Sabbatical Years Start in the Spring (Abib) or the Fall (Tishri)?" (August 2009 revision) by W. Glenn Moore. This study may be read by accessing the following URL: [http://www.itsaboutthattime.net/year\\_begins\\_fall.htm](http://www.itsaboutthattime.net/year_begins_fall.htm). Note: Glenn documented that final paragraph of this selection as follows: "*The Mishnah, A New Translation*. Edited by Jacob Neusner. Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 1988. ROSH HASHSHANAH 1.1, p. 299."

understanding, the ministry of Yeshua the Messiah did not coincide with a Sabbatical year, which explains why this topic was not covered in any of the Messianic Accounts of the Bible.

Summarizing our point here, we agree that Judaism recognized that the 20<sup>th</sup> regnal year of Persian king Artaxerxes certainly encompassed a time period that included the ninth month (*Chislev*) to the first month of the Scriptural year (*Nisan*), but this could very well have been because Artaxerxes' regnal year had already begun in late summer – prior to that ninth month. This has nothing to do with Judaism of that day recognizing a “fall-to-fall” calendar. It is simply a matter of Judaism recognizing when Artaxerxes' reign began, which in turn means that his 20<sup>th</sup> year could have been reckoned from “summer-to-summer.” We agree that first-century BCE Judaism (and beyond) may have reckoned a fall-to-fall calendar, but that does not mean that we agree with this practice, and such a calendar is certainly not in harmony with the calendar ordained by Yahweh. Frankly, June and are not interested in *regnal calendars* anyway, since such calendars have nothing to do with which month is designated by Yahweh as “the beginning of months” (Ex. 12:2).