

DATING THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FIRST TEMPLE: TRADITION AND INTERPRETATION IN JOSEPHUS

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One of the least exciting aspects of the historian's work is mapping chronology—partitioning time within a historical narrative as precisely as possible. Chronology also involves miscalculation, faulty copying, and printing errors so common that they hardly deserve comment. Nevertheless, one occasionally encounters a puzzle that making it necessary to determine the chronology of a given event. Josephus, perhaps unlike some historians, displays no hostility to chronologies. On the contrary, in his *Jewish Antiquities*, he draws up occasional chronological summaries of important events. For example, he numbers the years to the beginning of construction of the First Temple under Solomon relative to seven events: Solomon's reign, the Exodus, Abraham's arrival in the Land of Canaan, the Flood, the creation of humankind, Hiram's reign, and the establishment of Tyre (Josephus, *Ant.* 8.62). He counts the destruction of Samaria from three events: The Exodus, the conquest of the Land of Canaan, and the partitioning of the Davidic kingdom (Josephus, *Ant.* 9.280).

Josephus marks the destruction of the First Temple in the following way:

The sanctuary was burned down 470 years, 6 months and 10 days after it had been constructed. From the Egyptian sojourn of the people it was 1,062 years, 6 months, and 10 days. From the Deluge to the demolition of the sanctuary the whole length of time was 1,957 years, 6 months, and 10 days. From the generation of Adam until what happened to the sanctuary it was 4,513 years, 6 months, and 10 days. This then is the total of these years. (Josephus, *Ant.* 10.147–148 [Begg and Spilsbury, *Josephus*]¹)

Unlike Josephus' aforementioned enumerations, in which only years are counted, in this calculation, he also provides numbers of months and days.² Not only here, however, does Josephus give the months and days. Several sentences earlier, he recounts that the Davidic kingdom lasted 514 years, six months, and

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¹ Translation according to Christopher T. Begg and Paul Spilsbury (trans. and comm.), *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary* (ed. Steve Mason), Volume 5: *Judean Antiquities Books 8-10* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

² Josephus uses the same counting method regarding the destruction of the kingdom of Israel, see below.

ten days (Josephus, *Ant.* 10.143). Accordingly, the day of the destruction is also the day when the kingdom met its demise.³ Later in his book, Josephus provides, a few more times, the counting of months and days. After the depiction of Nebuchadnezzar's war in Egypt, Josephus recapitulates the history of exiles from the Land. At the end, he points out that "the entire interval of time from the captivity of the Israelites until the deportation of the two tribes amounted to one hundred and thirty years, six months and ten days" (Josephus, *Ant.* 10.185, Marcus⁴). Josephus provides the same counting of months and days also later in his work. When Josephus recounts that at the beginning of the Second Temple period the high priests headed the people, he relists the years of the Jewish leaders up to the destruction of the First Temple. He notes that from the beginning of Saul's rule, the people had been under the rule of kings for "five hundred thirty-two years six months and ten days" (Josephus, *Ant.* 11.112, Marcus). And again, at the end of *Antiquities*, Josephus produces a chronology of the First and Second Temples, now relying upon the priestly count of years. Referring to the destruction of the First Temple, he writes that the High Priesthood lasted 466 years, six months, and ten days (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.232). Josephus' modern interpreters have often examined and discussed his chronology based upon years.⁵ The system of months and days upon which he relies only in relationship to the destruction, however, has not yet been the subject of scholarly inquiry.

The Biblical Background

Any discussion of the counting of months and days should, of course, take place in connection with accounts of the destruction reported in the Bible and other traditions. Indeed, the date of the destruction is contested already in Scripture. The last chapter of Kings gives a detailed account of the siege of Jerusalem, the breaching of the city walls, and, finally, the torching of the Temple:

On the seventh day of the fifth month—that was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon—Nebuzaradan, the chief of the guards, an officer of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem: He burned the House of the Lord, the king's palace, and all the houses of Jerusalem; he burned down the house of every notable person. (2 Kgs 25:8–9 JPS)

³ Josephus, *Ant.* 11.112, refers to the same event but counts 532 years. The suggestion of Ralph Marcus, *Josephus*, vol. VI: *Jewish Antiquities, Books IX-XI* (LCL 326; Cambridge MA. Harvard University Press, 1937), 368, n. b, seems reasonable but does not solve the problem fully.

⁴ Translation according to Marcus, *Jewish Antiquities, Books IX-XI*.

⁵ See, Marcus, *Josephus*, 148, n. a, 149, n. c; Abraham Schalit (ed. and trans.), *Yossef ben Matityahu Flavius Josephus, Jewish Antiquities*, vol. II (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, Mosad Bialik, 1963), 159-60, n. 219-29 [Heb.]; Begg and Spilsbury, *Judean Antiquities Books 8-10*, 254, n. 596-598. On the chronology of Josephus, see the rich bibliography in Chaim Milikowsky, *Seder Olam: Critical Edition, Commentary and Introduction* (2 vols.; Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 2013), 1:39-40, n. 102.

Thus, the First Temple was destroyed (according to the anachronistic Babylonian month-names) on 7 Av. The last chapter of Jeremiah, which parallels the concluding chapter of Kings, offers a different date:

On the tenth day of the fifth month—that was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadrezzar, the king of Babylon—Nebuzaradan, the chief of the guards, came to represent the king of Babylon in Jerusalem: He burned the House of the Lord, the king's palace, and all the houses of Jerusalem; he burned down the house of every notable person. (Jer 52:12–13 JPS)

Even though the descriptions are similar, if not identical, the date Jeremiah specifies is 10 Av.⁶ The contradiction is acknowledged and discussed by the rabbis, traditional Biblical commentators, and, of course, by modern researchers as well.⁷

The Biblical Tradition in Josephus' Works

Josephus dealt with the destruction of the First Temple in his *Jewish Antiquities*, which describes the history of the Jews from the creation until the outbreak of the Great Revolt. However, even in his earlier book, *The Jewish War*, the first destruction, and especially the date of the destruction, took an important place. *The Jewish War* deals with the last 200 years of the Second Temple, from the founding of the Hasmonaean kingdom to the destruction. When Josephus describes the Second Temple's destruction, however, he evokes the memory of the first:

God, indeed long before, had sentenced it to the flames. But now in the revolution of the years had arrived the fated day, the tenth of the month of Lous, the day on which of old it had been burnt by the king of Babylon. (*J.W.* 6.250 [LCL, Thackeray]⁸)

According to Josephus, both temples were demolished on the same date: the tenth day of the month of Av.⁹ Resolving the matter as does Jeremiah, he repeats this determination with even greater emphasis several sentences later: “And one may well marvel at the exactness of the cycle of the Dynasty; for, as I said, she

⁶ According to the prevailing approach Jer 52, depends on 2 Kgs 25, see Oded Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem: Judah under Babylonian Rule*, (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 336-38.

⁷ On the rabbinic discussion of this contradiction see, *Seder Olam Rabbah* 30 (ed. Milikowsky), 324, and Milikowsky's discussion in *Seder Olam*, 2:435-45, as well as the thorough paper of Michael Avioz, “The Date of the Destruction of the First Temple in Ancient Versions and in Early Biblical Interpretation,” *Textus* 22 (2005): 87-94. On modern critical approaches, see Michael Avioz, “When Was the First Temple Destroyed According to the Bible?” *Biblica* 84 (2003): 562–566; Arthur J. Nevins, “When was Solomon's Temple Burned Down? Reassessing the Evidence,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 31, (2006): 3-25.

⁸ Translation according to H. St. J. Thackeray (trans.), *Josephus, II-III: The Jewish War* (LCL 203, 210; Cambridge MA. and London: Harvard University Press 1927-1928).

⁹ The Hebrew/Jewish month of Av is parallel to the Macedonian month of *Lōios*.

waited until the very month and the very day on which in bygone times the temple had been burned by the Babylonians” (*J.W.* 6.268 [Thackeray, LCL]).

Josephus’ familiarity with biblical chronology is also evident in *Jewish Antiquities*. According to Josephus the siege of Jerusalem began in the ninth year of Zedekiah in the 10th day of the tenth month (*Ant.* 10.116), that is, in the month of Tevet, the figure in exact accordance with the biblical report (2 Kgs 25:1; Jer 39:1, 52:4; Ezek 24:2). Immediately following, Josephus writes that the siege lasted eighteen months (*Ant.* 10.116, 134), which means that the wall of Jerusalem was broken into in the month of Tammuz in the eleventh year of Zedekiah. Again, this date is in accordance with the biblical report: “And in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, on the ninth day of the fourth month, the [walls of] the city were breached” (Jer 39:2 JPS). In light of the close familiarity with Biblical chronology, Josephus creates the expectation that he will identify the date of the destruction, as well, as narrated in the Bible, but here he deviates from the Biblical tradition: “[Nebuzaradan] came to Jerusalem in the eleventh year of king Zedekiah, and pillaged the temple, and carried out the vessels of God [...] and when he had carried these off, he set fire to the temple in the fifth month, the first day of the month, in the eleventh year of the reign of Zedekiah” (*Ant.* 10.146 [Begg and Spilsbury, *Josephus*]). Josephus sets the date of destruction to the beginning of the fifth month, the first of Av. This date is different from both the biblical tradition which sets the destruction to 7th or 10th and Josephus himself of the *Jewish War* where he dates the destruction to the 10th of Av.

“I See the Rod of an Almond Tree”: The Destruction on 1 Av

How did Josephus set the date of the destruction to 1 Av, a date not mentioned anywhere in Scripture? Michael Avioz suggests that the date originates in Ezekiel:

And it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the first day of the month, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying “Son of man, because that Tyre hath said against Jerusalem: aha, she is broken that was the gate of the peoples; she is turned unto me; I shall be filled with her that is laid waste”. (*Ezek* 26:1–2 JPS).

The opening of chapter 26 in Ezekiel gives the year and the day of the prophecy, but not the month. Verse 2 gives the historical context of the prophecy when Tyre proclaims “against Jerusalem: ‘Aha!’” Tyre takes pleasure in the destruction of Jerusalem; by inference, the prophecy was given in connection with the devastation of the city. The omission of the month allows for various possible datings. Avioz claims that Josephus interprets Ezekiel’s remarks as relating to 1 Av.¹⁰ Even if we assume, however, that Josephus traces the date to

¹⁰ Avioz, “Date,” 91-92. Biblical Scholars suggest different months, among them the first and the eleventh month, see Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 22A; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 529-530; Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, vol. 2 of *Chapters 25-48* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 2:33-34.

Ezekiel, we still need to ask why he overlooks the explicit date in Kings and Jeremiah in favor of the obscure reference in Ezekiel. Two complementary possibilities suggest themselves. The contradiction between 2 Kgs 25, which dates the destruction to 7 Av, and Jer 52, which places it on 10 Av, is irreconcilable. Consequently, a third verse is needed to resolve the matter, an interpretive approach well known in rabbinic literature: “Two verses contradict each other until a third verse comes and resolves the contradiction” (Sifra 1:1).¹¹ This rule is valid for the interpretation of any text and served ancient exegetes from the Graeco-Roman as well.¹² Thus Josephus, aware of the contradiction between Jeremiah and 2 Kings, nullifies their conflicting testimonies about the day in the month in favor of Ezekiel’s report which sets it to 1 Av. Josephus fills in the missing information in Ezekiel, the identity of the month, from Jeremiah and Kings, which all agree upon the fifth month.¹³ Another possibility is that Josephus indeed relies on Ezekiel but does so not only on account of the contradiction between 2 Kings and Jeremiah but also, and rather, because the date of the destruction in Ezekiel is supported by an ancient tradition.

Indeed, such a tradition arises from a discussion in the Palestinian Talmud (PT) concerning the date of the destruction. A Mishnah in tractate Ta’anit, lists calamities that occurred on 17 Tammuz and 9 Av. Among those that fell on the former date, it records that “the city was breached” (m. Ta’an. 4:6). The PT takes issue with this Mishnaic passage: “It is written ‘on the ninth of the month the city was breached’ (Jer 39:2) – and you say this?!” (y. Ta’an. 4:6, 68c)¹⁴. While the Mishna dates the breaching of Jerusalem’s wall to 17 Tammuz, the Talmud notes that, according to the Bible, this happened on the ninth of that month.¹⁵ In

¹¹ For this rule see *Mekhilta deRabbi Ishmael*, Pishah 4 (H. S. Horovitz and I. A. Rabin [eds.], *Mekhilta D’Rabbi Ismael* [Frankfurt am Main: Kauffmann, 1931], 13); *Sifre on Numbers* 48 (Menhem I. Kahana [ed.], *Sifre on Numbers: an Annotated Edition*, vol. 1 [Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2011], 146).

¹² Exposing contradictions and their solutions were a significant part of classic interpretation of Homer. Yakir Paz, *From Scribes to Scholars: Rabbinic Biblical Exegesis in Light of the Homeric Commentaries* (Ph.D dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem: Jerusalem, 2014), 190-98 [Heb.], argues that Homer’s interpreters did not use the “third verse” method. Moreover, the Rabbis also, he writes, tended not to use this method with frequency, see esp. Paz, *Scribes*, 199, n. 128.

¹³ It seems that Josephus understood the third verse as a middle ground between the two verses, and not as supporting one verse against the other. This understanding is very close to the school of R. Ishmael, see David Henshke, “The Rabbi’s Approach to Biblical Self-Contradictions,” *Sidra* 10 (1994): 39-59, esp. 44 [Heb.]; see also the bibliography given by Paz, *Scribes*, 199, n. 128.

¹⁴ Translation of PT texts are based on Heinrich W. Guggenheimer (ed.), *Tractates Ta’anit, Megillah, Hagigah and Mo’ed Qatan (Mašqin)* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2015). with my corrections and clarifications

¹⁵ The reason for the discrepancy between the dates is that 17 Tammuz was the date of the cessation of the daily sacrifice (*J.W.* 6.94). The contradiction between the Bible and rabbinic tradition about 17 Tammuz was already discussed and solved in *Seder Olam*: “In the fourth month, on the ninth day of the month, a breach was made in the city’ (Jer 39:2) – the first time; and the second time the seventeenth of it” (*Seder Olam* 30 [trans. Chaim Milikowsky, *Seder Olam: A Rabbinic Chronography* (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University: New Haven, 1981), 548]). Indeed, according to *Seder Olam*, on 17 Tammuz the city wall was breached, while

response, R. Tanhum b. Hanilai, a second-generation Palestinian Amora responds:

Rabbi Tanhum bar Hanilai said, Here is an erroneous computation. That is what is written: “In the eleventh year, in the first day of the month, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying ‘Son of man, because that Tyre hath said against Jerusalem: Aha!’” (Ezekiel 26.1-2). What is “Aha”? If you say on the first of Av, it still was not burned. If you are saying on the first of Elul, cannot in one day and night the messenger leave Jerusalem and arrive at Tyre? But here is an erroneous computation. (y. Ta’an. 4:6, 68c)

R. Tanhum b. Hanilai explains that, indeed, Jerusalem was breached on 17 Tammuz, as the Mishnah reports, but due to the confusion associated with the war the date was miscalculated and set at the ninth of the month instead of the seventeenth. Proof that an error found its way into the Bible emerges from a discussion of the verses of Ezekiel. The Talmud understands that Ezekiel dates the destruction to 1 Av and protests that this cannot be, since, after all, the Temple was still intact on the first of the month, and had it fallen on the first of the next month, Elul, much time would have passed from the destruction to the festivities in Tyre, which were unlikely to have been delayed for three weeks. Thus, the Talmud infers that the date of the destruction as reported by Ezekiel, 1 Av, is the result of “miscalculation.”

R. Mana, however, rejects the possibility of a misdating in Ezekiel: “R. Mana asked: ‘One understands this that they were erroneous for the past; but for the future?’” (ibid.). Since Ezekiel prophesied before the Temple fell, future woes could not have influenced the prophecy when it was given. In other words, the date of the destruction as prophetic utterance, specified in Ezekiel, the first of Av, is immutable. By implication, there are two traditions about the date of the destruction and, in turn, two different traditions about when the city walls were breached, as the Talmud concludes:

Rabbi Abuna said, “I see an almond stick” (Jer 1:11). Since this almond tree from sprouting its flower to finishing its fruit needs twenty-one days, so from the day the city was breached to the day the Temple was destroyed there were twenty-one days. According to the one who says on the ninth of the month, the Temple was destroyed on the first of Av. According to the

according to Josephus the daily sacrifice ceased. The primary issue, however, is that *Seder Olam* connects 17 Tammuz to Second Temple events, while it connects 9 Tammuz, the biblical date, with First Temple events; see Yuval Shahaar, “Rabbi Akiba and the Destruction of the Temple: the Establishment of the Fast Days,” *Zion* 68 (2003): 145-65, especially 159-60 [Heb.]; Meir Ben Shahaar, “Ninth of Av: Chronology and Ideology in Fixing the Dates of the First and the Second Destructions in Rabbinic Literature,” *Zion* 81(2016): 5-30, especially 15-17 [Heb.]. See also the harmonizing suggestion of Asher Weiser, *Bible and Linguistics: Collected Studies* (Tel Aviv: Niv, 1965), 76-77 [Heb.].

one who says on the seventeenth, the Temple was destroyed on the Ninth of Av. (y. Ta'an. 4:6, 68c)

The PT cites a tradition based on Jeremiah, according to which twenty-one days passed between the breaching of the wall and the destruction of the Temple. Importantly, this is an independent tradition not based on Biblical dates.¹⁶ Continuing this line, the PT proposes two equally reasonable possibilities. One is that the walls fell on 9 Tammuz, meaning that the Temple was destroyed on 1 Av; the other sets the respective dates at 17 Tammuz and 9 Av.

What may be inferred from the PT's comments on the date that Josephus proposes? First, it should be noted that the entire discussion in the PT was conducted by the *amoraim* and the Talmud as a "narrator." The debate *ad loc* makes no reference to the presence of any ancient tradition stating explicitly that the Temple was destroyed on the first of Av. However, the very existence of this possibility and, particularly, the way the historiographic debate develops in the PT can also teach us a great deal about Josephus' way of thinking. The PT opens by confronting the mishnaic tradition of the city having been breached on 17 Tammuz with the Biblical dating of this event to 9 Tammuz. The point of departure of the debate in the PT is that the chronological "truth" belongs to the tradition whereas the Biblical dating is flawed by "miscalculation." At the end of the discussion, however, PT acknowledges the existence of two equally valid possible dates for the breaching of the city's walls and the destruction of the Temple. Accordingly, the PT does not feel beholden to the Biblical chronology and may instead prefer tradition over Scripture. Another conclusion is that the PT does not flinch from summoning opaque verses, such as that in Ezekiel, to promote a chronological approach. Similar considerations may have prompted Josephus to date the destruction of the First Temple to 1 Av. The Biblical verses that establish this date, as stated, clash with each other, leaving room for chronological investigation. Once the chronological system in 2 Kings and Jeremiah is dispensed with, more obscure chronological proposals such as that in Ezekiel may be permissible, if not necessary.

Six Months and Ten Days: By Count or by Calendar?

In *Jewish Antiquities*, Josephus cites six separate events from which he dates the first destruction using the formula "X years, six months, and ten days." The first point in need of elucidation in regard to the counting of months and days is the nature of this count. Namely, is it aimed at a specific date on the calendar or is it the literal number of months and days that passed between a certain event and the destruction? The latter possibility is undoubtedly untenable. Josephus invokes the "six months and ten days" notation in regard to various events that took place in different months and on different days, both of which are well documented. He counts 470 years, six months, and ten days from the

¹⁶ In *Lamentations Rabbah*, Ptihtah 23 (Buber ed., 21-22), there is a parallel tradition attributed to R. Eleazar. Wiser, *Bible*, 75, assumes that this is an independent tradition not connected to the dates of the destruction and the breaching of the wall. *Lamentations Rabba* here connects this tradition to 17 Tammuz and 9 Av.

construction of the Temple to its destruction. According to the Bible and Josephus, the construction of the Temple began in the month of Iyar (1 Kgs 6:1, *Ant.* 8.61). As previously noted, Josephus also counts “six months and ten days” from the Exodus, which, according to both the Bible’s report and Josephus’s, occurred on 15 Nisan, the fifteenth day of the first month (Exod 12:17–18, *Ant.* 2.318). The Flood, in contrast, is dated on the seventeenth day of the second month in the Bible (Gen 6:11). In this case, Josephus explains, that the second month is Marheshvan, the month of Dios (*Ant.* 1.80).¹⁷ Thus, it is impossible to state that X years and an additional six months and ten days passed from each event to the destruction of the Temple. The regular count of months and days should be positioned relative to a fixed calendar date, most likely 1 Nisan, the day on which the counting of months begins, as Josephus notes (*Ant.* 1.81).¹⁸ Now, if we count six months and ten days from 1 Nisan, we arrive at 10 Tishre—Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

Dating the destruction to Yom Kippur carries powerful theological-historiosophic weight. Before we continue to ponder it and its origins, we need to ask whether Josephus had any such thing in mind. A different possibility for the formation of the “six months and ten days” formula arises from a comparison of Josephus’ remarks about the destruction of the Northern Kingdom:

The ten tribes of the Israelites were transported from Judea 947 years from the time when their ancestors went out from Egypt and occupied the country under their general Joshua. From [the time] when, revolting against Rehoboam the grandson of David, they handed the kingship over to Jeroboam, as I have related earlier, it was 240 years, 7 months, and 7 days. (*Ant.* 9.280 [Begg and Spilsbury, *Josephus*])

The count of the kings of Israel is a perfect fit for the formula discussed here: X years, Y months, and Z days. It is the sum of the reigns of all these kings as presented by Josephus in *Jewish Antiquities*. Thus, it is not an ancient tradition but a precise chronological calculation—one that squares well with the Biblical account. Seven months is the sum of the six-month reign of Zechariah the son of

¹⁷ The identity of the “second month” in which the Flood occurred is in dispute in Jewish tradition: some argue for Iyar and others Marheshvan. According to Josephus the “second month” is Marheshvan, since Nissan became the “First month” only in the time of the Exodus (*Ant.* 1.81). On other Jewish traditions see Milikowsky, *Seder Olam*, 2:83-84.

¹⁸ Josephus distinguishes between counting for religious purposes, which begins from Nissan, and counting for secular matters, which begins in Tishre. However, all the dates Josephus mentions in *Jewish Antiquities* are based on a counting that begins in Nissan. These are dates of religious occasions as well as of political events (e.g. *Ant.* 4.327, 8.61-62, 10.135 etc.). To conclude, it is important to note that Josephus uses the Nissan’s counting and the Babylonian-Hebrew names of the months only in *Jewish Antiquities*. By contrast, in *Jewish War* Josephus only uses the Macedonian months, although the days of the month are actually determined according to the Hebrew calendar; see Jonathan J. Price, *Jerusalem under Siege: The Collapse of the Jewish State, 66-70 C.E.* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 210-13; Sacha Stern, *Calendar and Community: A History of the Jewish Calendar, 2nd Century B.C.E.–10th Century C.E.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 34-38.

Jereboam (2 Kgs 15:8; *Ant.* 9.228) and the month-long reign of Shallum the son of Jabesh, Zechariah's assassin (2 Kgs 15:13; *Ant.* 9.228). The expression "seven days," of course, corresponds to the reign of Zimri (1 Kgs 16:15; *Ant.* 8.311). Just as he reports the Israelite kings, Josephus adds up the terms in office of the Judean kings: "Together they reigned 514 years, 6 months, and 10 days" (*Ant.* 10:143 [Begg and Spilsbury, *Josephus*]). What is his source for the count of months and days here? At first glance, Josephus obtains it by adding Jehoahaz' three months on the throne (2 Kgs 23:31; *Ant.* 10.83¹⁹) to Jeconiah's three months and ten days (2 Chr 36:9; *Ant.* 10.8).²⁰ One need only check this count, however, to *refute* Josephus' testimony. The tally of the Judean kings according to Josephus is 507 years and not 514, as is written here (*Ant.* 10.143). Consequently, the suggestion of Abraham Schalit, who traces Josephus' count of the kings' reign not to the evidence that he himself presents but to an independent tradition, appears reasonable.²¹ One may still assume, of course, that the tradition Josephus quotes is based on the calculation of Jehoahaz' and Jeconiah's months and days on the throne. On this basis one might hypothesize that, when Josephus counted the years to the destruction from other events, including the Exodus, the Flood, and so on, he added the months and days, which originated in the count of the reigns of the Judean kings, to the tradition of counting the years from the various events. Of course, one cannot rule out the possibility that Josephus tampered with the chronological traditions instead of relaying them accurately. The counting of months and days recurs elsewhere and in more distant contexts (e.g. *Ant.* 10.185) as at the end of *Antiquities*, where Josephus specifies the duration of the high priests' activity in the First Temple: "The term of service [of the priests who served from the time the Temple was built] is four hundred sixty-six years, six months, and ten days" (*Ant.* 20:232 [LCL, Feldman²²]). This count concerns the service of priests and not kings. Even so, it does not square with the 470 years in which the Temple stood according to *Ant.* 10.147. Thus again, the calculation of high priesthood years appears to be based on an independent tradition.²³

The counting of months and days in accordance with different chronological traditions can be explained in two ways. One is that Josephus created the count by adding up the years of rule of the Judean kings, as mentioned above. In chronological traditions concerning the timing of various events relative to the

¹⁹ Josephus reads "three months and ten days". Marcus, *Josephus*, 236-237, n. b., accepts this version, while Schalit, *Antiquities*, 159, n. 219, remarks that this results from a slip of the pen in Jeconiah's account.

²⁰ According to 2 Kgs 24:8, Jeconiah ruled for only three months.

²¹ Schalit, *Antiquities*, 159, n. 219; *Ant.* 11.112.

²² The translation according to Louis H. Feldman, *Josephus, Jewish Antiquities, Books XVIII-XX* (LCL 411; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965).

²³ Feldman, *Josephus*, 511, n. d, suggests that Josephus deducted from the 470 years of the First Temple the first four years of Solomon's kingdom, which preceded its building, rather than adding them. After all, the years do not include the first four years of the reign of Solomon, as is evident from the calculation of the years of the Davidic kings (Schalit, *Antiquities*, 159, n. 219). A more plausible suggestion is that Josephus relies on an independent tradition. After all, Josephus consulted priestly chronological traditions, as he points out in *Against Apion* 1.36.

destruction of the Temple, only years are counted; it was Josephus who added the months and days. The other possibility is that Josephus' chronological traditions included the three chronological indicators (year, month, day) *ab initio*. Some support for the latter originates in a tradition that appears in the chronological records at the end of Book 6 of *Wars*:

437) But before their days the king of Babylon had subdued it and laid it waste, fourteen hundred and sixty-eight years and six months after its foundation. 438) Its original founder was a Canaanite chief, called in the native tongue "Righteous King" [=Melchizedek]... 439) The Canaanite population was expelled by David, the king of the Jews, who established his own people there; and four hundred and seventy-seven years and six months after his time it was razed to the ground by the Babylonians. 440) The period from King David, its first Jewish sovereign, to its destruction by Titus was one thousand one hundred and seventy-nine years; 441) and from its first foundation until its final overthrow, two thousand one hundred and seventy-seven. (*J.W.* 6.437–441 [LCL, Thackeray])

In this list, the chronologies of the first destruction and the second are clearly differentiated. Both events are counted relative to the two foundational events of Jerusalem, the first being the reign of Melchizedek and the second is the reign of David. For the first destruction, the number of months is given in addition to that of years; for the second, only years are given. Evidently, the two chronological systems are unrelated to each other and emerge from different sources.²⁴ The chronology of the first destruction somewhat resembles the one developed in *Jewish Antiquities*. As we recall, all chronological mentions of the first destruction in *Jewish Antiquities* specify "six months and ten days." In the chronology discussed here, however, the expression "six months" appears, without reference to days. There is no ignoring the difference between these traditions. First, in *Jewish Antiquities*, an additional "ten days" are appended to the count of months and years. Second, there is a blatant contradiction in the number of years. The tradition in *Jewish War* counts 477 years from David to the first destruction. This number is not obtained in any form from the tradition in *Antiquities* relating to the reigns of the Davidic kings (514 years) or the duration of the First Temple era (470 years).²⁵ It is likely, then, that there were several chronological traditions relating to the destruction of the First Temple that measured the years from various events to this calamity. These traditions

²⁴ I suggest that Josephus incorporates two traditions here. Assuming that Josephus had only one chronological system, and the other one based on that tradition with which he combined another tradition, these two chronological systems would have counted both months and years. More importantly, the data Josephus provides makes it possible to calculate the years that passed between the first and second destruction. Now, when the calculation is according to the founding of the city by Melchizedek there are 709 years (2177-1468). In contrast, when the starting point for calculation is King David the result is that only 702 years had passed (1179-477). The proposal of Antti Laato, *Guide to Biblical Chronology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2015), 81, appears forced.

²⁵ Milikowsky, *Seder Olam*, 1:42, n. 118.

report an exact chronology including years, months, and days. The connection of the tradition in *Jewish War* with that in *Jewish Antiquities* emerges, of course, from the identical count of months—the addition of six months. The omission of the number of days evidently traces an erosion and abbreviation of the original tradition, either by Josephus himself (less likely) or by his source. The presence of this tradition in *Jewish War*, of course, clashes with Josephus's own previous report that the Temple fell on 10 Av, four months and ten days after the beginning of the calendar year.

As stated, one cannot totally rule out the possibility that Josephus himself drew the connection between the count of months and days of the Judean kings (*Ant.* 10.143) and the other chronological traditions that counted the years from different events to the destruction of the First Temple. But, if Josephus highlights this addition, several times throughout *Jewish Antiquities*, it surely represents a significant intention. The uniqueness of this counting becomes evident by comparison to the destruction of the Kingdom of Israel. For this event, Josephus does not make use of the number of months and days (*Ant.* 9.280), nor does he in relation to other events. It is especially important to note that Josephus brings the exact date of the beginning of the building of Solomon's Temple. The date is the fourth year of Solomon in the second month which is called the Iyar or Artemius (*Ant.* 8.61). Immediately after, Josephus lists the years that have passed between the Temple building and the following events: the Exodus, the coming of Abraham to the Land, the Flood, the creation of Adam, and the kingdom of Hiram. In relation to all these, Josephus brings *only* years. Hence, when Josephus calls attention, many times and in various places in his book, to the number of months and days, he surely does so with a purpose.

If this is the case, however, Josephus must have been aware of the far-reaching significance of the linkage that he created. As argued above, since each of the events—the construction of the Temple, the coronation of the Judean kings, the Exodus, the Flood, and the creation of humankind—took place on different dates, then the expression “six months and ten days” in reference to each means that the reckoning begins at the start of the year, i.e., on 1 Nisan, with the result that the destruction must have occurred on 10 Tishre, Yom Kippur. In other words, irrespective of the origin of the tradition of months and days, by adding the count of months and days to each of the events relative to the dating of the destruction of the First Temple—whether of his own invention or on the basis of other traditions—shows that the destruction should be seen to have occurred on Yom Kippur.²⁶

²⁶ Certainly, Josephus as a historian with chronological awareness was well aware of this meaning. Some evidence for that can be found in the way he lists the years, months and days of the second destruction. He lists 1130 years and another seven months and fifteen days from the founding of the First Temple to the destruction of the Second Temple (*J.W.* 6.269), and 639 years and forty-five days from the founding of the Second Temple to the second destruction (*J.W.* 6.270). The different number of months and days is a result of the different dates of the founding of the First Temple and the founding of the Second Temple. Previous scholars have dealt with various aspects of the years' lists, see Michael First, *Jewish History in Conflict: A Study of the Major Discrepancy between Rabbinic and Conventional Chronology* (Northvale,

This conclusion, however, is problematic in two aspects. First, the implicit chronological assertion that the day of the destruction is also the holiest day is of religious significance that is very difficult to ignore. But in Josephus there is no indication that the day of destruction is indeed Yom Kippur, except from the chronological accounting. Does this mean that Josephus, ignored or simply was not even aware of the possible implications of the chronology he wrote? Second, is it possible to bring other sources that linked the first destruction to Yom Kippur? The more we can offer a positive answer to the second question, the harder it will be to dismiss the first question on the grounds that Josephus was not at all aware of the meaning of his chronology. We will therefore, first pursue the second question and then return to examine Josephus's words regarding the destruction.

The Post-Sabbatical Year, the Jubilee, and *Rosh Hashana*

Josephus rarely cites his sources – to identify them, one has to examine additional sources that at first glance may seem unrelated. Thorough and critical study of the rabbinic tradition on the first destruction may help trace a tradition that identifies 10 Tishre as the proper date. A familiar tradition links the destruction to several chronologies:

Rabbi Yose used to say: Propitiousness is assigned to a propitious day and a calamity to a calamitous day. As it is found say: When the temple was destroyed, the first time, that day was immediately after the Sabbath, it was immediately after the sabbatical year, it was (during the service of) the priestly division of Jehoiarib, and it was the ninth day of Av; and so the second time. (*Seder Olam* 30 [Milikowsky, *Chronography*, 547])

R. Yose's dictum stresses the calendric proximity of the dates of both destructions. He mentions four dates: (1) the day of the week (right after the Sabbath); (2) the year in the sabbatical cycle—following the sabbatical year, which mean the first year of the sabbatical cycle; (3) the cycle of the priestly watch—that of Jehoiarib; and (4) the date in the month: 9 Av. Elsewhere, I have shown that the last-mentioned point does not go back to R. Yose's primary remarks, leaving us with three temporal specifications, each distinct – days of the week, the sabbatical cycle, and liturgical time.²⁷ As Chaim Milikowsky argues, these three chronologies all carry a theological message.²⁸ The moment of the destruction marks the end of one cycle and the beginning of another. Without detracting from the importance of the theological aspect, however, one should examine the chronological argument as well.

Rabbi Yose is not the only one who links the sabbatical cycle with the priestly watches. Several of the Dead Sea Scrolls describe in detail the course of the priestly watches (Mishmarot), based primarily on a six-year cycle and not on

N.J.; Jason Aronson, 1997), 119-20, n. 15; Laato, *Chronology*, 80-81. I must admit to having found no satisfactory explanation for these dates.

²⁷ Ben Shahar, "Ninth of Av," 19-24.

²⁸ Milikowsky, *Seder Olam*, II, 556.

the seven-year cycle of the sabbatical years. In one scroll (4Q319), however, there is an attempt to coordinate the sabbatical cycle with the priestly one.²⁹ According to this scroll, in the first year of the jubilee, which is also the first year of the sabbatical cycle, the house of Jehoiarib serves in the Temple for the first time (out of two) in the week between the 5th and the 11th of Tishre. The scroll relates explicitly that the house of Jehoiarib served in the temple on Yom Kippur, “the Day of Atonement”.³⁰ It should be noted that according to this scroll, in the first two weeks of the month of Av, the Imer and Hezir watches served in the Temple. If we accept Rabbi Yose’s affirmation that the destruction occurred in the first year of the sabbatical cycle while the House of Jehoiarib served in the Temple, the inevitable conclusion is that the destruction took place on Yom Kippur.³¹ It remains unclear, however, whether the tradition brought by Rabbi Yose is in anyway connected to the list of the priestly watches from Qumran. Moreover, it is not at all certain that there were regular weeks for each priestly house (except based upon the Qumran scrolls),³² and even if there was, there is no reason to assume that the reality matched that sketched out in Qumran.

We must return to the three chronological markers suggested by Rabbi Yose – Saturday night after the sabbath, the first year of the sabbatical cycle, and the Jehoiarib watch. The first two are likely correct in relation to the second destruction. The Roman historian Cassius Dio affirms that Jerusalem was destroyed on Saturday, “the very day of Saturn, the day which even now the Jews reverence most” (Cassius Dio, *Hist.* 66.7.1).³³ Moreover, the statement that the temple was destroyed on the first year of the sabbatical cycle also appears to be correct. From 1930 until today, in the cemetery in Zoar (a city located on the Dead Sea coast), new headstones are continually discovered. Most of the tombstones used a double dating method, which included the number of years since the second destruction and the year according to the sabbatical cycle, for

²⁹ The scrolls of the priestly watches were published and discussed by Shemaryahu Talmon, Jonathan Ben-Dov, Uwe Glessmer, *Qumran Cave 4.XVI: Calendrical Texts* (DJD XXI; Oxford: Clarendon, 2001).

³⁰ Talmon, Ben-Dov and Glessmer, *Qumran Cave 4*, p. 225. See also 4Q320, 4Q321.

³¹ According to the Mishmarot list, Yom Kippur took place on Friday – if so, it is difficult to reconcile it with the first date given by Rabbi Yose that the destruction occurred on Saturday night.

³² Michael Avi-Yona, “The Caesarea Inscription of the 24 Priestly Courses,” *Eretz Israel* 7 (1964): 25-28, claimed there was a fixed list but he did not specify its order. In contrast, Milikowsky, *Seder Olam*, 2:572, argues that there is no evidence for a fixed calendar. He points out that Rabbi Yose notes that the two destructions occurred at the time of the Jehoiarib, meaning that there was no fixed list. Had there been, it stands to reason that since the two destructions occurred on the same date, they would have also had to occur at the same priestly watch. Shmuel Safrai and Zeev Safrai, *Tractates Ta’anit and Megillah with an Introduction and Commentary* (Jerusalem: Liphshitz College, 2009), 173-76, discuss the various possibilities and conclude that it was impossible to decide whether there was a fixed list or not.

³³ Another testimony to the destruction on Saturday is found in Frontinus, *Stratagems* 2.1.17. On Frontinus and Cassius Dio see Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (3 vols.; Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974-1984), 1:509-11, 2:377.

example: ³⁴. "משתה קדמיתה דשמטתה שנת תלת מא ושתיין ורבע שנין לחרבן בית מקדשה" [= first year for the *Shemithah* (i.e. the sabbatical cycle); three hundred and sixty-four years for the destruction of the Temple]. Dozens of the tombstones revealed that the year of destruction was indeed the first year of sabbatical cycle, in accordance with R. Yose. It seems that the tradition of R. Yose about the day and the year is affirmed. What about the name of the priestly watch? Unfortunately, there is no reliable source to provide confirmation.³⁵

It may be that the source upon which Rabbi Yose relies is the Mishmarot list from Qumran or one similar to it. Rabbi Yose claims that the two destructions occurred after the sabbatical year. As mentioned above, in relation to the second destruction, his remark is based on chronological reality. But what about the first destruction? Below I will discuss in detail another Talmudic tradition on this subject, but at this point it is important to note that Milikowsky emphasizes that dating the first destruction to the first year of the sabbatical cycle is inconsistent with the sabbatical chronology which governs the *Midrash Seder Olam*. Hence, Rabbi Yose's remark that the first destruction also occurred in the first year of the sabbatical cycle is based on a tradition different from the chronological tradition of the Midrash, quoted by Rabbi Yose.³⁶

We have no way of tracing this tradition, but it is worth considering that it originated in the same social circles that formed the priestly course of Qumran. The Qumran list indeed places Jehoiarib's house on Yom Kippur and on the year after the sabbatical year, but this is a ritual schedule, not an historical one, with no reference to any specific historical event.³⁷ In other words, it is necessary to find a connection between the social circle that created the Mishmarot list and the claim that the first destruction did occur on Yom Kippur and on the first year of the sabbatical cycle.

Before proceeding, we must specify yet another chronological cycle. Yom Kippur is not just a Day of Atonement, but it is also the New Year's Day (*rosh hashana*) of the Jubilee cycle, as the Torah states:

Then you shall sound the horn loud; in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month—the Day of Atonement—you shall have the horn sounded throughout your land: and you shall hallow the fiftieth year. You shall proclaim release throughout the land for all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: each of you shall return to his holding and each of you shall return to his family. (Lev 25:9-10 JPS)

³⁴ Joseph Naveh, "Aramaic Tombstones from Zoar," *Tarbiz* 64 (1965): 477-97, here 478.

³⁵ This is also Milikowsky's conclusion (*Seder Olam*, 2:555-56). From Milikowsky's discussion, it is unclear whether he thinks that R. Yose's remarks are based on first-hand knowledge of the second destruction.

³⁶ Milikowsky, *Seder Olam*, 2:552-53.

³⁷ The distinction between the Mishmarot list board and the historical events list is discussed at length by Shemaryahu Talmon and Jonathan Ben-Dov, "Mishmarot Lists (4Q322-324c) and 'Historical Texts' (4Q322a, 4Q331-333) from Qumran," in *Birkat Shalom: Studies in the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Literature, and Postbiblical Judaism Presented to Shalom M. Paul on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Chaim Cohen, and Victor Avigdor Hurowitz (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 927-942.

The jubilee year is sanctified, i.e., begins, with the blast of the ram's horn on the tenth day of the seventh month, i.e., 10 Tishre.³⁸

The Jubilees Chronology and the Destruction of the Temple

Apocalyptic literature attributes great significance to the division of the world chronology into jubilees (Jubilee tradition). The use of the jubilees system is documented in many apocalyptic works and appears to have been the subject of wide circles in Second Temple Judaism, including the Essenes and the Qumran sect.³⁹ One of the major works in the Jubilees tradition is of course the Book of Jubilees, which was also a major source for the people of Qumran.⁴⁰ The Book of Jubilees organizes the chronology of the world from Creation onward in accordance with the jubilee cycle. Most of this book describes events from Creation to its narrative present, the Revelation at Sinai. Near the end of the book, an intriguing reference to the future appears:

2) And I told thee of the Sabbaths of the land on Mount Sinai, and I told thee of the jubilee years in the sabbaths of years: but the year thereof have I not told thee till ye enter the land which ye are to possess. 3) And the land also will keep its sabbaths while they dwell upon it, and they will know the jubilee year. 4) Wherefore I have ordained for thee the year-weeks and the years and the jubilees: there are forty-nine jubilees 2410 years from the days of Adam until this day, and one week and two years: and there are yet forty years to come (lit. 2450 "distant") for learning the commandments of the Lord, until they pass over into the land of Canaan, crossing the Jordan to the west. 5) And the jubilees will pass by, until Israel is cleansed from all guilt of fornication, and uncleanness, and pollution, and sin, and error, and dwells with confidence in all the land, and there will be no more a Satan or any evil one, and the land will be clean from that time for evermore. (Jub. 50:2-5)⁴¹

The passage connects both chronological extremes of the Israelites' stay in the Land of Israel: entering the Land and the exile that ensued with the destruction of the First Temple. As for their entry, Jubilees concludes with the Revelation at Sinai but creates a chronological and halakhic nexus between that event and entering the Land. The Revelation occurred in the forty-ninth jubilee, in the first sabbatical cycle plus two years, and as Jubilees explains, another forty years remained until the next jubilee year. These are the forty years that the Israelites

³⁸ Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 3 vols. (AB; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 3:2164-65.

³⁹ John Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran: A History of Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

⁴⁰ Cana Werman, *The Book of Jubilees: Introduction, Translation, and Interpretation* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Press), 2015, pp. 48-69 [Hebrew].

⁴¹ Translation according to R. H. Charles (ed.), *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913).

spent in the desert until they entered Canaan. Thus, the author of Jubilees dates the entering the Land to the first year of the fiftieth jubilee cycle! This chronological assertion is surely understandable in view of the importance of entering Canaan.⁴² Although it clashes with the rabbinic view, i.e., that the counting of jubilees began only fourteen years after the Israelites' arrival in Canaan, it does correspond to a *baraita* in BT, which counts the seventeen jubilees from the time Israel "entered the Land" (see below).

The chronology set forth in Jubilees recurs in additional works from the Second Temple era. In the *Apocryphon of Joshua* found in Qumran, one reads: "Israel crossed on dry land in the first month of the forty-first year of their exodus from Egypt, that is, of the year of the jubilees of the beginning of their entering the land of Canaan" (4Q379).⁴³ The passage describes the crossing of the Jordan River under Joshua, with the next sentence linking the jubilees to the Israelites' arrival in Canaan, likely indicating that the Israelites' reaching the Land took place in connection with the count of jubilees, i.e., at the beginning of the jubilee cycle. This chronology is consistent with the method in Jubilees.⁴⁴ The opaque expression "the year of the jubilees to the beginning of their entering the land of Canaan" may also be of halakhic importance because it begins the counting of years by jubilees at the time of entering the Land. This approach, of course, does not contradict Jubilees since this book, too, counts the observance of the jubilee commandment only from the time Israel established its presence in its land.

Another connection between the Jubilees chronology and the entry into the Land is found in the Qumranic text, "Words of Moses" (1Q22). The text describes Moses' warnings to the people on the eve of their entering the Land, followed by an articulation of the sabbatical laws. The next lines are fragmented: "[for] they [we]re wandering [in the desert,] your [fathe]rs, until the [te]nth day of the month [on the t]enth [day] of the month [all work shall be] forbidden and on the t[enth of the] month shall be atoned".⁴⁵ What follows is a description of the worship of Yom Kippur in the temple with the suggestion that the section links Yom Kippur with some event that occurred on this date, the tenth of the month, during the wanderings in the desert. The Hebrew word for wandering in the wilderness is *וָדַד*, a word also related to the gathering of the manna by the Israelites: "Now the manna was like coriander seed, and in color it was like bdellium. The people would go about and gather it [*שָׁטוּ הָעָם*], grind it between millstones or pound it in a mortar, boil it in a pot, and make it into cakes. It tasted like rich cream" (Num 11:7-8, JPS). The people of Israel gathered the manna until the tenth of the month, which is Yom Kippur, and on this day their wanderings in the desert also ended, with the cessation of the manna leading to

⁴² Werman, *Jubilees*, 553; James M. Scott, *On Earth as in Heaven: The Restoration of Sacred Time and Sacred Space in the Book of Jubilees* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 85-87.

⁴³ Translation according to Carol A. Newsom, "4Q378 and 4Q379: An Apocryphon of Joshua", in *Qumranstudien*, eds. Heinz-Josef Fabry, Armin Lange and Hermann Lichtenberger (*SIJD* 4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 35-85, here 65.

⁴⁴ Bergsma, *Jubilee*, 252-53.

⁴⁵ Donald W. Parry and Emanuel Tov, in association with Geraldine I. Clements (eds.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls Reader*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 1:95.

the Day of Atonement.⁴⁶ This reconstruction, of course, does not come up with the biblical chronology, according to which the Israelites crossed the Jordan at Nissan, and the Israelites began to eat from the grain of the Land on 15 Nisan.⁴⁷ The source of the notion in 1Q22 that the Israelites entered the Land in Tishre only makes sense from the perspective that they Israelites entered the Land at the beginning of the jubilee.

The question arises: when it is stated that the Israelites entered the Land in a jubilee year, does this mean that the Temple was destroyed in a jubilee year as well? Given the perceptible effort in Jubilees and other works to present the jubilee framework as both chronological *and* theological, there is reason to expect, in its presentation, the first destruction to be connected to the jubilee chronology. Indeed, although Jubilees does not relate to the chronology of the events after Israel entered Canaan, it does sketch a clear time frame: “The jubilees will pass by until Israel is cleansed [...]” (Jub. 50:5). Chronological use of the jubilee system persists in describing the post-conquest era. This, of course, is not meant to imply that the Temple will be destroyed in a jubilee year and none other, but since Jubilees explicitly establishes the jubilee as the year in which Israel entered Canaan, it stands to reason that other significant events would take place in association with the jubilee cycle.

The nexus that Jubilees creates between chronology and halakhah may indeed allude to future chronology. Verse 3 interrupts the chronological reading that dates the Revelation at Sinai and the onset of the Israelite conquest; it deals with the obligation to observe the sabbatical year in accordance with the jubilee calendar. The emphasis on jubilees is not about the individual’s sabbatical but about that of the land, and thus strongly reminiscent of the account in Leviticus: “Then shall the land make up for its sabbath years throughout the time that it is desolate and you are in the land of your enemies; then shall the land rest and make up for its sabbath years” (Lev 26:34, JPS). This verse relates chronology and halakhah in much the same way as does Jubilees, with the years of destruction and desolation determined by the number of sabbatical years that Israel will have failed to observe. This perception, of course, underlies the chronological account of the period of desolation and devastation at the end of Chronicles which came “in fulfillment of the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, until the land paid back its sabbaths; as long as it lay desolate it kept sabbath, till seventy years were completed” (2 Chr 36:21, JPS). Chronicles, written after the return to Zion, links the sabbatical law and the exile in Leviticus to Jeremiah’s prophecy of redemption at the end of seventy years (Jer 25:11–12, 29:10). If seventy years of exile indeed represent seventy years of unobserved

⁴⁶ For this interpretation, see Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity: The Day of Atonement from Second Temple Judaism to the Fifth Century* (Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 97. Ariel Feldman, “Moses’ Farewell Address According to 1QWords of Moses (1Q22),” *JSP* 23 (2014): 201–14, deals with the etiological aspects of 1Q22.

⁴⁷ The exact date of the cessation of the manna is not in the Bible, thus providing an opening for various midrashic traditions, see *Seder Olam* 10 and Milikowsky’s commentary in his *Seder Olam*, 2:183-84.

sabbaticals, it means that 490 years, exactly ten jubilees, passed from the time Israel entered Canaan.⁴⁸

The chronological link between the counting of jubilees to the destruction of the First Temple recurs in several additional works. In the so-called Apocryphon of Jeremiah (4Q385a–389), the time frame is composed of jubilees.⁴⁹ The Apocryphon acknowledges the return to Zion after the destruction of the First Temple but anticipates further destruction and exile, with God, as it were, saying: “but I shall not respond to their inquiry, because of the trespass which they have trespassed against me, until the completion of ten jubilees of years” (4Q384).⁵⁰ As Cana Werman notes, the work draws a parallel between the nation’s sins during the First Temple era and those in the period of the Second Temple.⁵¹ In view of this, one may surmise that the chronological framework recurs as well. Since the Apocryphon counts 490 years (ten jubilees) to the destruction of the Temple and the Land the second time around, presumably this parallels the chronology for the destruction of the First Temple as well.⁵² The jubilee framework is invoked again in the Testament of Levi. Here the status of the priesthood in each and every jubilee is examined: “In each jubilee there shall be a priesthood” (T. Levi 17:2). Relating to the seventh jubilee, the Testament states: “In the seventh there shall be pollution such as I am unable to declare in the presence of human beings... Therefore they shall be in captivity and will be preyed upon; both their land and their possessions shall be stolen” (T. Levi 17:8–10).⁵³ According to this calculation, the destruction of the First Temple was predicted to occur at the end of the seventh jubilee. What matters for our purposes, however, is that here too the destruction is dated in association with the jubilee and not according to some other calculation.

In the Acts of Melchizedek, another step is taken that brings Josephus’ tradition closer to the Jewish apocalyptic world. As we recall, Josephus’ chronology dates the destruction to Yom Kippur and, after a complex interpretive move, we identified Yom Kippur with *rosh hashana* of the jubilee year. In the Acts of Melchizedek, this is stated explicitly with the extant text which begins by quoting the laws of the jubilee from Lev 25:13, followed by the interpretation: “And the Day of Atonement is the end of the tenth jubilee in which atonement shall be made for all the sons of light” (11Q13 [Parry and Tov, 1:393]).

This passage relates not to the destruction that occurred but rather to future redemption. Either way, here too, the framework for the fulfillment of the divine plan for history is the jubilee. As in additional apocalyptic works, the redemption

⁴⁸ See the thorough discussion of Scott, *On Earth*, 88-102.

⁴⁹ Devorah Dimant (ed.), “4QApocryphon of Jeremiah,” in *Qumran Cave 4, XXI: Parabiblical Texts, Part 4: Pseudo-Prophetic Texts* (DJD 30; Oxford: Clarendon, 2001), 113-15. For the scope and characters of the Jeremiah’s Apocryphon, see Cana Werman, “Epochs and End-Time: The 490 Year Scheme in Second Temple Literature,” *DSD* 13 (2006): 229–55.

⁵⁰ Translation according to Parry and Tov, *Reader*, 2:807.

⁵¹ Werman, “Epochs”, 236-37.

⁵² Scott, *On Earth*, 98-99.

⁵³ Translation according to Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*.

will take place in the tenth jubilee in accordance with the frame set forth in Daniel: $7 \times 70 = 490$ (Dan 9:24). The Testament of Levi, however, also presents the exact date of the redemption and atonement in the jubilee year, Yom Kippur. Admittedly, one cannot prove upon which jubilee, and in which year in the jubilee period the destruction of the First Temple occurred, either according to the Testament of Levi or the Acts of Melchizedek, but the intersection stands both in connection with its content and with other apocalyptic works that invoke the jubilee chronology.⁵⁴ In light of this, one may presume that according to the Testament of Levi, too, the destruction occurred at the end of one jubilee cycle and at the beginning of the next one, on Yom Kippur. Thus, Yom Kippur as the *rosh hashana* of the jubilee year and as initiating an era of historical changes is firmly anchored in the apocalyptic literature of the Second Temple era.

The Jubilees Tradition in Rabbinic Literature

The apocalyptic tradition that linked the destruction to the Jubilee cycle was probably familiar to the Rabbis. Rabbi Yosse's remarks that the first destruction occurred after the sabbatical year opens a long discussion in the Babylonian Talmud. During the discussion, the following *baraita* is presented:

For it was taught [*tanya*]: Seventeen jubilee [cycles] did Israel count from the time they entered the Land [of Israel] until they left it. And you cannot assume that they counted from the moment they entered, for if you were to say so, it would be found that the [first] Temple was destroyed at the beginning of a jubilee, and you could not find [correct the statement]: “the fourteenth year after the city had fallen” (Ezekiel 40:1). Rather, deduct from them the seven years of the conquest and the seven during which the land was distributed, thus you find [substantiated]: “the fourteenth year after the city had fallen.” (b. ‘Arak. 12b)⁵⁵

The BT begins its discussion with the word *tanya*, meaning that the editors assume that a Tannaitic source measures the Israelites' sojourn in the Land as seventeen jubilees long. This dating, however, makes the year of the destruction a jubilee year! The BT immediately rejects this possibility as it clashes with the date of the destruction in Ezekiel, fourteen years *before* the jubilee. To reconcile this reasoning with the *baraita*, according to which the Israelites spent seventeen jubilees in the Land of Israel, the BT explains that, yes, their stay was seventeen jubilees long—850 years—but the count and sanctification of jubilee years

⁵⁴ See Scott, *On Earth*, 96, as well as the detailed discussion of James C. VanderKam, “Sabbatical Chronologies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature”, in *The Dead Sea Scrolls in Their Historical Context*, ed. Timothy H. Lim, Larry W. Hurtado, A. Graeme Auld, and Alison Jack (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000), 169-76. The texts mentioned here probably also include 4Q463. The text is most likely based on Daniel's seventy weeks vision; and these are probably related to the end of Jubilee. The text is very fragmented, and it is thus impossible to know the chronological framework.

⁵⁵ Translation according to Isidore Epstein and Maurice Simon, *Tractate Bekoroth/Arakhin* (London: Soncino Press, 1960).

began only after the fourteen years of conquest and apportionment of the Land. If we accept the Tannaitic tradition without commentary, however, the destruction indeed occurred in a jubilee year.

According to this tradition, too, one need not necessarily assume that the destruction occurred specifically on *rosh hashana* of the jubilee year, 10 Tishre. Indeed, one may definitely sustain the Biblical chronology by dating the destruction to Av of the jubilee year. However, the connection that emerges between the destruction and the jubilee may well lead to a contrary interpretation, that the Israelites' sojourn in the Land of Israel was exactly seventeen jubilees long and, by extension, the Temple was destroyed at the very beginning of the seventeenth jubilee, i.e., on *rosh hashana* of the jubilee year, 10 Tishre.

Josephus and the Day of Atonement

Determining Yom Kippur as the day of the destruction raises a significant theological issue. How has the holiest day, when the high priest entered the sanctuary, become the day of destruction? Josephus, however, shies away from such theological questions. Some would argue that this is sufficient reason to reject the claim that Josephus acknowledged and even employed a chronological tradition linking the destruction to Yom Kippur. But before accepting this conclusion, a similar problem with another event documented in *Jewish Antiquities* should be noted. Among the serious events in the history of the Second Temple there is a special place for the occupation of the temple by Pompey in 63 BC. According to Josephus, Pompey, not only satisfied himself with the conquest of the temple but he also went inside the sanctuary with his companions to see "what it was unlawful for many but the high priests to see" (*Ant.* 14.72 [LCL, Marcus and Wikgren]⁵⁶). Josephus even notes that Pompey's sin and its severity: "and not light was the sin committed against the sanctuary" (*Ant.* 14.71). A few sentences earlier Josephus argues that the city was conquered "in the third month on the fast day" (*Ant.* 14.66), an assertion repeated at the end of the book as well when writing about the conquest of Jerusalem and the temple by Herod, which also took place on the same day. Indeed, after the description of the city's occupation, Josephus concludes: "This calamity befell the city of Jerusalem during the consulship at Rome of Marcus Agrippa...on the same day of the Fast, as it were a recurrence of the misfortune which came upon the Jews in the time of Pompey, for they were captured by Sossius on the very same day" (*Ant.* 14.487-88).

The simple interpretation for "the Fast day" is, of course, "Yom Kippur," but for years, scholars have rejected this interpretation for a variety of reasons. Recently, Nadav Sharon has argued that there is no doubt that Josephus meant Yom Kippur, whether or not the event actually happened on this day. To be sure, Josephus was aware of the importance of dates, evidenced in the emphasis in the *Jewish War* that the first and second destruction occurred on the same day. For him, this repetition is clear evidence of God's involvement in history. Josephus also emphasizes that the occupations of Pompey and Herod occurred on the same

⁵⁶ Ralph Marcus and Allen Wikgren, *Josephus*, vol. VII: *Jewish Antiquities, Books XIV-XV* (LCL 489; Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1943).

day. But aside from mentioning the chronological fact, Josephus says nothing about the city being conquered on Yom Kippur. Had he wished he surely might have lamented that precisely on the day when the high priest was allowed to enter the sanctuary, Pompey and his companions did so instead. Moreover, Josephus recounts that the priests continued to sacrifice the perpetual sacrifices, even though the Romans broke into the temple. That, Josephus does not even mention the worship of Yom Kippur, Sharon suggests that Josephus' silence is due to the apologetic character of his work. Josephus' pro-Roman tendency led him to obscure the fact that the Romans struck Jews on their holiest day.⁵⁷

Perhaps a similar consideration caused Josephus to overlook the significance of the chronological tradition of the first destruction. Recall that the tradition that links the destruction with the Day of Atonement emerges from the apocalyptic view that the first destruction took place at the end of the Jubilee cycle. The Jubilee chronology in the apocalyptic literature is rooted in the past, but it looks to the future, describing the order of the world until the Last Judgment and salvation. Each of the apocalyptic narratives implies different conceptions and descriptions of the nature of salvation, but all share the expectation of the elimination of the alien kingdom. In Josephus' time these traditions were interpreted as directed towards Rome. Josephus himself was not only familiar with these traditions, but probably even very subtly hinted at them. In his great speech in front of the Jerusalem Wall, he affirmed that God transfers power from kingdom to kingdom, and now rules Rome (*J.W.* 5.367). The reign of Rome is temporary, and will only last as long as desired by God.⁵⁸ Here Josephus may have also refrained from offering the apocalyptic tradition too explicitly and prominently. He feared that allusions to the apocalyptic tradition would be interpreted as an expectation of the destruction of Rome, the heir of Babylon.

Discussion and Conclusion: Josephus—Between Scripture and Tradition

Josephus' summation of the events surrounding the destruction of the First Temple in *Jewish Antiquities* contains two salient contradictions in relation to what we know and to what he knew about the chronology of the destruction. First, he explicitly dates the destruction of the First Temple to 1 Av. Second, in proximity to this, he writes that the destruction took place X years plus six months and ten days after other events. His count of months and days comes out on Yom Kippur. This date not only clashes with his previous reporting of 1 Av but also does not appear anywhere, in any manner, in Scripture. In the course of this article, I showed that both dates are anchored in ancient interpretative approaches and traditions. The 1 Av dating evidently originates in a verse in the Book of Ezekiel; Yom Kippur is linked to the Jubilee-apocalyptic tradition. What needs to be elucidated now is what prompted Josephus to overlook Biblical writings that date the destruction to 7 Av (2 Kings) or 10 Av (Jeremiah).

⁵⁷ Nadav Sharon, *Judea Under Roman Domination: The First Generation of Statelessness and Its Legacy* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 404.

⁵⁸ Price, *Jerusalem under Siege*, pp. 116-18.

In reference to the 1 Av chronology, I noted above the near certainty that this dating comes not from an ancient tradition but biblical interpretation. Since 2 Kings and Jeremiah contradict each other as to the day in the month when the Temple fell, neither testimony should be accepted. The testimony in Ezekiel is, I argued, the “third verse” resolving the contradiction between the other two. Further, I demonstrated the emergence of similar interpretative considerations in the PT. However, whereas the interpretive difficulty and its implications are firmly understood, questions should be asked about tracing the destruction to 10 Tishre and why Josephus adopted a tradition, however ancient, favoring it over the biblical chronology—particularly since several years earlier Josephus himself, in *Jewish War*, put forward the biblical date as that on which both temples were destroyed.

The understanding of Josephus’ interpretive and historiographic considerations in choosing these dates is linked to Josephus’ perception of his role as historian and the extent of his commitment to facts. Elsewhere, I have shown that Josephus’ adherence to the Biblical date came at the expense of precise adherence to chronology. Jewish tradition specifies the ninth of Av as the date of the fast in remembrance of the destruction of the Temple because it is the anniversary of the destruction of the Second Temple. This chronological fact, I claimed, may be proven from Josephus’ own remarks in his *Jewish War*. Josephus was interested in drawing a line from the destruction of the First Temple to that of the Second in order to liken the misdeeds of the rebels in the second destruction to those of Israel that occasioned the first destruction. To accomplish this, he “bent” the historical date to the Biblical tradition.⁵⁹

This tendency toward chronological synchronization, of course, was not exclusive to Josephus. Rabbi Yose’s dictum, cited above, reflects this principle well: “Propitiousness is assigned to a propitious day and a calamity to a calamitous day,” a principle which becomes the basis for the accrual of calamities that befell Israel on 17 Tammuz and 9 Av. The tendency toward chronological synchronization was also manifest in the Graeco-Roman world. For example, on the *dies Alliensis*, according to Roman tradition, the Romans sustained defeat at the hands of the Etruscans near the Cremera on July 18, 478 BCE; and the Gauls destroyed the Roman army on the same day in 390. Therefore, this day and the middle days of each month were called *dies atri* (dark days) and were considered unlucky. Public rituals in temples were not observed and private individuals avoided new undertakings.⁶⁰ Plutarch, in a special composition titled *Περὶ ἡμερῶν*, remarked upon dates in the calendar in which

⁵⁹ Meir Ben Shahar, “When was the Second Temple Destroyed? Chronology and Ideology in Josephus,” *JSJ* 46 (2015): 547-573.

⁶⁰ The tradition of the affinity between the two events was widespread and brought by Tacitus, *History*, 2.91.1; Livy, 6.1.11, Plut. *Camillus*, 19.1. For chronological issues and the religious meaning, see Gary Forsythe, *Time in Roman Religion: One Thousand Years of Religious History*, New York 2012, pp. 24-34. Most important in this regard is David Asheri, “The Art of Synchronization in Greek Historiography: The Case of Timaeus of Tauromenium,” *Scripta Classica Israelica* 11 (1991/2): 52-89. Asheri also mentions Rabbi Yose’s dictum and Mishnah, Ta’anit 6:4.

various disasters took place in different years.⁶¹ Thus, it is certainly no wonder that Josephus, or any other ancient author, deviated from “real” chronology in favor of one inflected by ideological considerations. Attention should focus instead on the reasons for and the meaning behind Josephus’ interpretive choices.

In regard to 1 Av chronology, as already argued, one may justify it as a constraint originating in the interpretation of verses. This, however, tells us something about Josephus’ self-perception. His willingness to resolve chronological contradictions by interpretive means indicates that he internalized and applied one of the basic tenets of Pharisaic Judaism, according to which the literal Biblical text is always subordinate to interpretive methods. One may defend the legitimacy of Josephus’ interpretation by noting the contradiction between the Biblical passages. However, by setting the date of the destruction at 10 Tishre, Josephus clearly reveals another aspect of his thought. The assertion of this date is only thinly related to the Bible; in the main, it is founded on an apocalyptic tradition that thrusts history into the frame of jubilees. According to this perception, meaningful events, such as entering the Land, the destruction of the Temple, and redemption occur at the end and at the beginning of jubilee cycles. This chronological frame rests largely on Daniel’s interpretation of Jeremiah’s seventy-year prophecy, according to which seventy sabbatical cycles, i.e., 490 years or ten jubilees, set the temporal boundaries of exile and redemption.

The adoption of an interpretation *à la* Daniel is not foreign to Josephus. Evidently Josephus, like the apocalyptic circles that existed in and after the Second Temple period, attributed great importance to this book. As early as his *Jewish Wars*, he alludes to Daniel’s perception of the four kingdoms (*J.W.* 5.367). Josephus devotes much of Book 10 of *Jewish Antiquities* to the description of Daniel and his visions (*Ant.* 10.190–281). At the end of the book, he writes that Daniel’s visions are steadily coming to pass, proof of divine providence (*ibid.*, 279–80).⁶² By setting the destruction at 10 Tishre, the first day of the jubilee, Josephus alludes to the importance of the event in association with the apocalyptic tradition. Although he does not link the destruction of the First Temple to the end or the beginning of the jubilee, he connects the date of this event with the anniversary of the most important historical occurrences of all time: the creation of humankind, the Flood, the Israelites entering the land of Canaan, and, of course, the construction of the Temple itself. This method of dating is, of course, indicative of the importance of the event. The calendric placement of the destruction on 10 Tishre defines the nature of the event as part of a sacred history that the apocalyptic tradition reveals.

⁶¹ The composition is now lost but parts of it are found in Plutarch, *Camillus*, 19. See the discussion of Anthony T. Grafton and Noel M. Swerdlow, “Calendar Dates and Ominous Days in Ancient Historiography,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 51 (1988): 17–28.

⁶² On the importance of the Book of Daniel for Josephus, see Steve Mason, “Josephus, Daniel and the Flavian House,” in *Josephus and the History of the Greco-Roman Period: Essays in Memory of Morton Smith*, ed. Fausto Parente and Joseph Sievers (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 161–91.

Josephus' chronological determination certainly sheds light on the sources he used, but his willingness to disregard the Biblical date in favor of another tradition ties into another facet of his persona. In his autobiography, Josephus reports having chosen the Pharisaic way after searching for and studying the various Jewish sects (*Vita* 12). Stated at the end of his life, there is no telling how strongly this remark reflects the image and activity of the priest Yossef son of Matityahu, but it certainly befits the aging historian Flavius Josephus in Rome. As many have shown, Josephus' Pharisaic leanings are abundantly manifested in *Jewish Antiquities*.⁶³ What matters for our purposes, of course, is its historiographic manifestation. In *Jewish Antiquities*, it is evident that Josephus labored to integrate into his account ancient traditions of Jewish provenance, which the Rabbis, too, put to considerable use.⁶⁴ Not all of the Jewish traditions he invokes, however, are Pharisaic. Describing the miracle of rainfall as the Temple was being built, for example, Josephus notes, "And this story, which our fathers have handed down to us, is not at all incredible" (*Ant.* 15.425 [LCL, Marcus and Wikgren]). Indeed, the Rabbis invoke the same tradition.⁶⁵ More importantly, the willingness to consider ancient Jewish traditions as a preferred source is a hallmark of the Pharisees' theology, as Josephus himself writes: "the Pharisees had passed on to the people certain regulations handed down by former generations and not recorded in the Laws of Moses, for which reason they are rejected by the Sadducean group" (*Ant.* 13.297 [LCL, Marcus and Wikgren]). The implicit dating of the destruction of the First Temple to 10 Tishre may reflect, on the one hand, Josephus' willingness to rely on an old Jewish tradition; his forgoing the jubilee chronology, on the other hand, shows him distancing himself from the apocalyptic outlook, which had almost totally disappeared from the Pharisaic/rabbinic world.⁶⁶

⁶³ Daniel R. Schwartz, *Judeans and Jews: Four Faces of Dichotomy in Ancient Jewish History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 48-61.

⁶⁴ This conclusion is informed by the discussion of Tal Ilan and Vered Noam in collaboration with Meir Ben Shahar, Daphne Baratz and Yael Fisch, *Josephus and the Rabbis* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi Press, 2017) [Hebrew]. Noam states an explicit conclusion in her introduction, *ibid.*, pp. 38-40; see also the English version "Lost Historical Traditions: between Josephus and the Rabbis," in *Sibyls, Scriptures, and Scrolls: John Collins at Seventy*, 2 vols., ed. Joel Baden, Hindy Najman, and Eibert Tigchelaar (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 2:991-1017.

⁶⁵ *Sifra*, Behuqotai 1:1, 110b (Weiss ed.); b. Ta'an. 22b-23a. The story is discussed by Tal Ilan, "The Miracle of the Rainfall in Herod's Day", in Ilan and Noam, *Josephus and the Rabbis*, 411-16.

⁶⁶ The Rabbis and probably the Pharisees also criticized and detached themselves from the apocalyptic tradition; see, in this regard, Anthony J. Saldarini, "Apocalyptic and Rabbinic Literature," *CBQ* 31 (1975): 348-358; as well as Lawrence H. Schiffman, "Messianism and Apocalypticism in Rabbinic Texts," in *Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. IV: *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, ed. Steven D. Katz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1053-72, especially, 1060-65.