

A Y2K Solution to the Chronology Problem

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Introduction

Scholars have long grappled with the apparently differing chronological dating for the Second Temple implied by the Talmud and historical records: Seder Olam and *עבודת זרה ה'–ט'* date the building of the Temple to about 350 BCE; Historians date it to about 516 BCE. In general three approaches have been taken to address the chronological differences, i.e. Historical dating is in error; the Talmud's chronology is in error; the Talmud purposely manipulated the dating to achieve some important objective. The first approach would have us reject the objectivity and integrity of the historical records. The problem with this approach is that there is a substantial amount of available historical evidence that is difficult to refute. In a 1962 essay Rabbi S. Schwab found this discrepancy a “truly vexing problem” and wrote¹ that the historical chronological dating:

“can hardly be doubted for they appear to be the result of painstaking research by hundreds of scholars and are borne out by profound erudition and by ever increasing authoritative evidence ... we are compelled to admit that the Bayis Sheni must have existed for no less than 586 years.”

The second approach, that the *Gemara* erred, is equally unacceptable. Without resorting to arguments about the infallibility

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of the *tannaim* and *amoraim*,² it is simply not credible to think that less than one century after the destruction of the 2nd Temple the *חכמי התלמוד* had inadvertently lost track of about one third of the time span that the second Temple existed.³

The third approach accepts the correctness of the historical count but asserts that the *חכמי התלמוד* did not mean for their new chronology to be taken literally. For example, Rabbi Schwab theorized that “our Sages—for some unknown reason—had ‘covered up’ a certain historic period.” He suggested that, based on the instructions in Daniel 12:4 to obscure the date of *maschiach's* arrival, the *Chachamim* didn’t want people to predict the time of the coming of the Messiah and therefore made deliberate changes to the dating system.

The problem with this third approach⁴ is that no matter how well intentioned the objective, the time-line changes may introduce serious calendrical related problems. There seems to be insufficient benefit from the non-literal interpretation offered by the proponents of this approach to justify the potential calendrical errors. Rabbi Schwab himself had a change of heart with respect to his 1962

¹ In “Comparative Jewish Chronology in Jubilee Volume for Rav Yosef Breuer” pp. 177-197.

² E.g. Rabbi Schwab wrote in his 1962 essay: “A special significance was attached to the pronouncements of R. Josi ... it is therefore quite inconceivable that any post-Talmudic teacher could possibly ‘reject’ those chronological calculations which have been made the subject of many a Talmudic discussion.”

³ E.g., the Mishnah prohibits using any of the following ways of dating a *גיטין* because of potential negative political fallout: *ה,ה כתב לשם מלכות* ... שאינה הוגנת, לשם מלכות מדיי, לשם מלכות יוון, לבניין הבית, או לחורבן הבית. ... How could anyone contemplate someone using the building of the 2nd Temple as a temporal reference point, if we think it possible that even *tannaim* living within 100 years of the destruction of the Temple did not know how long it lasted?

⁴ The comments in this paragraph are about Rabbi Schwab’s general approach. His specific suggestion about intentionally obscuring the coming of *maschiach* is in accord with Sanhedrin 97b. However, this view seems to be contradicted by *Gemaras* which discuss specific years for his coming. Several of these *Gemaras* will be discussed in great length later in this paper. See *Margalios Hayam*.

explanation for exactly such a reason. In a 1991 revision of his 1962 work, he rejects the historical chronology because it challenges the accepted count from creation which he asserts is “sacred territory which only fools do not fear to tread upon.”⁵

This paper takes the third approach to resolving the History/*Gemara* conflict. We will argue that the late *tannaim* did not change the chronology for some ill-defined benefit but rather to accomplish what they thought was necessary for the survival of the religion. At the same time we will also demonstrate that as they altered the true chronology they made provisions to avoid calendrical inaccuracies resulting from a manipulated time-line. Finally we will attempt to show that by the time of the *amoraim* the issue driving the rewriting of history had lost its urgency and by carefully analyzing *Gemaras* in עבודה זרה and סנהדרין demonstrate that these *amoraim* left hints to indicate that they were comfortable with a return to the historical chronology.

The Text

ע"ז דף ה: ... דאמר רב כהנא כשחלה רבי ישמעאל בר יוסי שלחו ליה רבי אמור לנו שנים וג' דברים שאמרת לנו משום אביך אמר להו מאה ושמונים שנה קודם שנחרב הבית פשטה מלכות הרשעה על ישראל... מאה ושמונים ותו לא והתני רבי יוסי ברבי דף ט. מלכות פרס בפני הבית שלשים וארבע שנה מלכות יון בפני הבית מאה ושמונים שנה מלכות חשמונאי בפני הבית מאה ושלוש מלכות בית הורדוס מאה ושלוש מכאן ואילך צא וחשוב כמה שנים אחר חורבן הבית אלמא מאתן ושית הוון ואת אמרת מאה ושמונים הוון אלא עשרין ושית שנין קמו בהימנותיהו בהדי ישראל ולא אישתעבדו בהו ואמטו להכי לא קא חשיב להו כשפשטה מלכות הרשעה על ישראל.

According to the chronology offered by רבי יוסי the 2nd Temple flourished for 420 years and was, successively, under the control of the:

⁵ See Eidensohn in www.aishdas.org/avodah/vol11/v11n018.shtml and M. First, “Jewish History in Conflict: A Study of the Major Discrepancy between Rabbinic and Conventional Chronology”, Jason Aronson Inc., Northvale: 1997, pp. 51-54 for more details.

- * Persians - 34 years,
- * Greeks - 180 years,
- * Chashmonaim - 103 years, and
- * House of Herod - 103 years.

This chronology places the destruction of the 2nd Temple at 3828. Figure 1 is a detailed historical time-line for the period from creation until the destruction of the 2nd Temple.

Figure 1

From Creation Until the End of the Second Temple

Creation	1948	2448	2928	3338	3408	3828
	Birth of Avraham ^a	Exodus Sinai ^b	Temple 1 Built ^c	Temple 1 Destroyed ^d	Start of Temple 2 Rebuilding ^e	Temple 2 Destroyed ^f

Explanatory Notes:

- ^a See Appendix.
- ^b Avraham was 100 when Yitzchak was born and the Midrash counts the 400 year subjugation predicted in *ברית בין הבתרים* (Bereishis 15:13) from Yitzchak's birth. (Note: This means the actual exile in Egypt was only 210, 70, years, i.e., Yitzchak was 60 when Yaakov was born and Yaakov was 130 when he came to Egypt. Ramban and *בה"י רבינו* (*Shemos* 12:40-41) disagree with this calculation. Ramban questions whether "*Redu*" is a mesorah and suggests that the stay in Egypt was 240 years and the total time elapsed from the birth of Yitzchak was 430 years.)
- ^c 1 Kings 6:1.
- ^d See Rashi *Sanhedrin* 97a how we know the First Temple lasted 410 years.
- ^e Seventy years of Babylonian exile based on *ירמיה* and *דניאל*.
- ^f Based on *Avodah Zarah* 8b-9a.

After several follow-up remarks on dating post 2nd Temple events, the *Gemara* continues with the following comment by תנא דבי (this comment also appears in (סנהדרין צז):

תנא דבי אליהו ששת אלפים שנה הוי העולם שני אלפים תוהו
שני אלפים תורה שני אלפים ימות המשיח בעונותינו שרבו יצאו
מהן מה שיצאו מהן.

Rashi Avodah Zarah

ד"ה ששת אלפים. נגזר על העולם
להתקיים מנין ימי השבוע וביום השביעי
שבת ובשבעת אלפים נוח לעולם.
ד"ה ושני אלפים תורה. בלא ימות
המשיח.

ד"ה ושני אלפים ימות המשיח
ובעונותינו שרבו יצאו משני אלפים
אחרונים מה שיצאו ומשיח לא בא.

Rashi Sanhedrin

ד"ה ושני אלפים תורה... ואידי דאמר
שני אלפים תוהו קאמר שני אלפים תורה
ולא שתכלה תורה אחר שני אלפים.

ד"ה ושני אלפים שנות המשיח.
שלאחר שני אלפים תורה הוה דינו שיבא
משיח ותכלה הגלות ויבטל השיעבוד
מישראל.

ד"ה אבל בשביל עונותינו שרבו. לא
בא משיח לסוף ד' אלפים ויצאו מה
שיצאו שעדיין הוא מעכב לבוא.

i.e. begin with the original world plan to have a world that lasts 6000 years and consists of three successive 2000 year periods representing "Tobu" (i.e. no Torah), Torah and *mashiach* respectively. They then end with a lament that because of many sins the Messianic period was delayed. In ע"ז the *Gemara* proceeds to challenge the chronological accuracy:

שני אלפים תורה. מאימת? אי נימא ממתן תורה, עד השתא ליכא
כולי האי, דכי מעיינת בהו תרי אלפי פרטי דהאי אלפא הוא
דהואי. אלא (בראשית יב) מואת הנפש אשר עשו בחרן וגמירי
דאברהם בההיא שעתא בר חמשין ותרתין הוה. כמה בצרן?
מדתני תנא ארבע מאה וארבעים ותמניא שנין הויין כי מעיינת
ביה מהנפש אשר עשו בחרן עד מתן תורה ארבע מאה וארבעים
ותמניא שנין הויין
רשי ד"ה אי נימא ממתן תורה ועד עכשיו. עד גמר ארבעת
אלפים לבריאת העולם כדקאמרת ליכא ב' אלפים.

רשי ד"ה דכי מעיינת ולא גרסינן "ועוד" דכי מעיינת

The *Gemara* first assumes the era of Torah commenced with Sinai⁶ in 2448 and thus questions the assertion that 2000 years of Torah would end by the year 4000. The *Gemara's* solution is that the era of Torah began when Avraham was 52 years old and that occurred exactly 2000 years after creation. This then offers the possibility of the Messianic period starting in the year 4000 and brings us to the question of how much after the year 4000 תנא דבי אליהו lived. Before discussing this we point out that according to Rashi the *Gemara* asked only one question and only after first answering that the starting point is Avraham at age 52 did the *Gemara* decide to go back and expand on how much into the 2nd 2000 year period Sinai occurred. It is not clear why the *Gemara* did not ask for or supply these details immediately.

Textual Analysis

תנא דבי אליהו - Tanna D'Bei Eliyahu

Who is/are "D'Bei Eliyahu"?

- 1) Be'er Sheva (*Sanhedrin* 92a):

תנא דבי אליהו is an early תנא⁷ from the period when leaders were referred to by a single name, i.e. Shemaya, Avtalyon, Hillel, etc. D'Bei, according to *Seder Hadoros*, refers to his בית המדרש. *Seder Hadoros* says that this explanation is problematic because:

- * There are examples of D'Bei Eliyahu referring to a comment of a later *tanna*—e.g., Rebbe Akiva—Pesachim 102a, and Rebbe Nasan—Pesachim 94a—and

⁶ We will later discuss how this assumption could be entertained since it is inconsistent with the Torah period starting in year 2000.

⁷ See Rambam פירוש המשניות at the end of his Introduction to זרעים.

* based on our *Gemara*, D'Bei Eliyahu must have lived after the year 4000,⁸ i.e. considerably after the period suggested by *Be'er Sheva*.

2) *Shem HaGedolim*:

תנא דבי אליהו refers to *Eliyahu Rabah* and *Eliyahu Zuta* which *כתובות קו* says was written by Rav Anan (a second generation and 3rd century *amora* who lived after the year 4000). These works are based on his direct studies with Eliyahu Hanavi.

3) Halpern (אטלס עץ-חיים):

Tanna D'Bei Eliyahu is a *tanna* of unknown period.⁹

The *Gemara's* Question(s?)

As explained previously, according to Rashi the שקלא וטריא of the *Gemara* has 3 parts: i.e., a single question on Tanna D'Bei Eliyahu which is focused on the earliest possible date for *mashiach's* arrival; an answer to the question which switches the starting date of the Torah period from Sinai, 2448, to the time when Avraham was 52 years old, 2000; and an explanation of the original question as to when Sinai took place.

Ritva explains the *Gemara* differently than Rashi. Rashi read the opening question אי נימא ממתן תורה? עד השתא ליכא כולי האי to mean that from Sinai until the end of 4000 is less than 2000 years and thus contradicts the 3 two thousand year subdivisions of history articulated by תנא דבי אליהו. Ritva says that the expression עד השתא in the *Gemara* refers to the time of Rav Ashi who, על פי קבלה, died in 4186. He says that based on the words עד השתא, חכמי צרפת explain that the first question is directed at תנא דבי אליהו bemoaning the late

⁸ The question is really much stronger. Our *Gemara* challenges the claim that D'Bei Eliyahu are תנאים since by traditional chronology this period ended about 3980.

⁹ It is unclear whether Halpern considers the word "תנא" as part of the name.

arrival of *masbiach*. Rav Ashi who lived hundreds of years after תנא דבי אליהו then asked: if Sinai is the starting point of Torah, the preordained Messianic period was not scheduled to start even in his time and certainly not prior to תנא דבי אליהו. Figure 2 below gives the time-line of major events in Jewish history that took place from the destruction of the 2nd Temple in 3828 until the completion of the *Gemara* circa 4260. Thus חתימת הש"ס, which took place 73 years after the death of Rav Ashi, occurred considerably before 4448, the 2000th anniversary of Sinai. Ritva agrees with Rashi on the *Gemara's* answer about Avraham, but once again disagrees on the 3rd part of the *Gemara*. Rather than being an explanation of the first question, Ritva reads this as a second question, i.e., how can Sinai be the starting point of Torah when it took place 448 years into the second 2000 year period?¹⁰ Although according to Ritva the 3rd part of the *Gemara* is a different question than the first, the answer to the first question resolves this as well. Ritva does not address why the *Gemara* waited/bothered to ask the second question after it had already answered the first question.¹¹

As discussed in the previous section, according to both Rashi and Ritva the *Gemara* makes sense only if תנא דבי אליהו is a post 4000 *amora* (*Shem HaGedolim*). Since according to the *Gemara's* chronology, the *tannaic* era ended around 3980, if תנא דבי אליהו is a *tanna*, any discussion of *masbiach's* delay in arrival until after the year 4000 is premature.

¹⁰ Note Rashi in both ע"ז and סנהדרין grappled with the meaning of "2000 Torah." In the former he stressed that it meant "and not *masbiach*" and in the latter he said 2000 was used to parallel its usage with respect to *tohu*. מהרשא says that Rashi rejected Ritva's reading because if there were two questions the one about the late start at Sinai should have been asked first. This, however, does not explain why the *Gemara* did not ask both questions.

¹¹ Based on the wording in Ritva it is possible he switched the order of the answer and the second question. Thus, the *Gemara* may have started with two questions. The first was that even in Rav Ashi's time the 2000 of Torah had not yet ended, and the second was that *tohu* lasted considerably more than 2000 years.

Figure 2

From חורבן בית שני until the Completion of the Gemara^a

3828	3880	3948 ^b	3980	4260
Temple Destroyed	Bar Kochba Rebellion	Completion of the Mishnah	Beginning of Amoraim	Completion of the Gemara

^a For the most part this time-line is based on the chronology given in סדר הדורות.

^b This is the date given by ראבד and others. Rav Shereira Gaon says it was 3978.

Historical Accuracy

The time-line presented in the opening section allotting the second Temple 420 years is based on the statement of Rebbe Yosi in עבודה זרה ח:ט. זרה ח:ט. referred to here is Rebbe Yosi bar Chalafta, and the identical chronology appears in *Seder Olam*, a work יבמות פב: attributes to this same Rebbe Yosi bar Chalafta.

Based on the destruction of the 2nd Temple being 70 CE,¹² the construction of the 2nd Temple according to Rebbe Yosi is thus

¹² The year of the destruction of the 2nd Temple is alternatively given in different sources as being between 68 CE and 70 CE. (See e.g., Edgar Frank, *Talmudic and Rabbinical Chronology and History of the Missing Years*, by Rabbi Y. Reisman, "The Jewish Observer," January 1994, pp 16-19). At this point we are primarily interested in creating a framework that addresses time problem discrepancies on the order of hundreds of years, and our arguments apply regardless of which year between 68 and 70 the destruction took place. Because 70 is the most historically validated date, we use it here. In a later section when we deal with more precise timing we will discuss the 68/70 issue in greater detail.

circa¹³ 350 BCE. Historians, however, dispute Rebbe Yosi's assertion that the Persians' domination of the Jews at beginning of the 2nd Temple lasted only 34 years before the Greek ascendancy. Historical sources (Conventional Chronology, "CC") point to a Persian period that lasted far longer and place the building of the 2nd Temple in the year 516 BCE, i.e. 166 years before the Jewish Chronology ("JC").¹⁴ While there are some who dispute the contrary evidence,¹⁵ even among Orthodox sources there are those who are persuaded by the historical arguments. Table 1 summarizes some of the major

¹³ *Chazon Ish*, אור"ח ר"ה סימן קמ, breaks down the chronology of the 70 years of the Babylonian exile and shows how the actual construction of the 2nd Temple began in Elul of 3408. For the same reasons mentioned in the previous footnote, "circa 350" will suffice at this point and we will not convert Jewish years to their exact Gregorian equivalent nor discuss whether the year after 1 BCE is 1CE or 0.

¹⁴ Again with respect to this point, there is some debate as to whether the difference is 166 years or 165 years. At this point in our discussion the difference between the two numbers is inconsequential.

¹⁵ David Altman in, *Is the Real Jewish Year 5765 – Or 5931?*, "Jewish Press" January 21, 2005, p. 8, www.jewishpress.com/news_article.asp?article=4612 argues for JC. He cites a 1991 *Jewish Action* www.starways.net/lisa/essays/heifetzfix.html essay by Brad Aaronson which offers an English translation of the work of Dr. Chaim S. Heifetz that appeared in a 1991 issue of the Israeli magazine *Megadim*, www.herzog.ac.il/main/megadim/14hfz1.html. Heifetz contends CC is wrong because historians confused the rulers of Persia (historians claim ten Persian kings ruled for 208 years whereas JC has only four who ruled for 52 years). A critique of Heifetz can be found at www.talkreason.org/articles/fixing1.cfm. Aaronson concedes that Heifetz admits that "his is a work in progress" and "more work needs to be done." To our knowledge, in the intervening 15 years since these articles were published, there has been no further evidence forthcoming to support Heifetz's work. One point of note is Aaronson stating that the Greek historian Herodotus discusses Cyrus who according to JC ruled Israel 369-366 BCE. However Herodotus died in approximately 425 BCE—many years earlier. This would appear to be a major problem for Heifetz and JC.

explanations offered for the Talmud's motives for a variant chronology.¹⁶

Table 1
Explanations Offered for the Variant Chronologies

Source	Reason for discrepancy
מאור ענים 1574	Many possibilities from mistakes to interpretations based on verses in Daniel.
ערוך מילין 1852	The <i>Chachamim</i> wanted the onset of Greek control of Israel to coincide with the 1000 year anniversary of the Exodus.
סדר עולם רבה 1894	They had a tradition of 420 years and to make it conform they included only major Persian monarchs.
Rabbi S. Schwab 1962	Changes were deliberately made based on the instructions in Daniel 12:4 to obscure the date of <i>mashiach's</i> arrival.
Rabbi M. Breuer 1973	The count is symbolic. He never offers what the symbolism is. He says believing CC does not violate אמונת הכמים.
Rabbi B. Wein 1984	Agrees with historical count, and has no idea as to why <i>Chachamim</i> changed it. He suggests that <i>mashiach</i> will give us the explanation.

In the next section we will follow along with the group of most recent authors in terms of accepting CC but will offer a new concrete significant reason for the *Gemara* purposely manipulating the

¹⁶ See M. First, for a detailed discussion of the opinions of about 100 leading Jewish authorities starting with Saadia Gaon (defends JC) on the discrepancy of the dating of the destruction of the 1st Temple and the building of the second.

2nd Temple chronology. We then investigate the halachic ramifications of this new chronology.

Historical Consistency

In both ע"ז and סנהדרין Rashi assumes Torah will exist beyond the year 4000 and is compelled to explain why תנא דבי אליהו associates Torah with the middle 2000 year period. Rashi's explanation in ע"ז is that the second 2000 is not meant to limit Torah to the middle period, but rather to exclude *mashiach* from coming before 4000. However, according to JC this assertion is contradicted by historical events that occurred after the destruction of the 2nd Temple. JC places Bar Kochba's revolt in 3880, and yet Rebbe Akiva and all of his contemporaries, with only a single exception, initially accepted him as *mashiach*. Moreover, the clear implication from the Midrash and Rambam, מלכים יא:ג, is that Bar Kochba failed because of his own inadequacies and "sins," not because *mashiach* could not come before the year 4000. If תנא דבי אליהו is *tannaic* and early (*Be'er Sheva*), why did all the Sages of Rebbe Akiva's era disregard it? Conversely, if תנא דבי אליהו is post-*tannaic* (*Shem HaGedolim*), how are the actions of Rebbe Akiva and his contemporaries explained?

Rashi's explanation in סנהדרין does not have this problem. Rashi there makes no assertion as to *mashiach's* inability to come before 4000. He says *mashiach* should "rightfully come ..." after 2000 years of Torah, but does not preclude the possibility of him coming earlier. Accordingly, Rashi must look elsewhere for an explanation as to why Torah is associated with the middle 2000 years. Rashi's solution is that the expression "two thousand" with respect to Torah, is used merely in imitation of the language of two thousand used for the *tohu* period.¹⁷ Thus, there is nothing in תנא דבי אליהו which prevents *mashiach* from coming before the year 4000, i.e. Torah and *mashiach* can coexist and are not mutually exclusive.

¹⁷ See *Maharsha* for an explanation of Rashi.

An Attempt at Resolving the Problems: A Reason for Changing the Chronology

Many אחרונים on *Sanbedrin* 97a,b highlight that circa 4000, which the *Gemara* proposes as the end of the Torah era, a sea change in the way Torah was studied occurred, e.g.

הגהות יעב"ץ, סנהדרין צז: ד"ה שני אלפים תורה. נ"ב
ואח"כ פסקה תורה מא"י כי אחר זמן זה לא מצינו עוד ישיבות גדולות שם. ונשלם דור תנאים שהיו שונים כמשה מפי הגבורה ונתחדש דור אמוראים שנעשית תורה כשתי תורות. גם מן אז והלאה אזלת יד וגבר ותוקף הגלות.¹⁸ בגוים אין תורה.

ח"א מהרש"א, סנהדרין צז: ד"ה ב' אלפים תורה... והנראה
לפרש הדברים כפשטן כי באמת אחר שגלו ישראל גלות גמורה אין בהם תורה כדכתיב מלכה ושריה בגוים אין תורה מ"מ קע"ב שנים אחר בית שני מקרי עדיין מיהת שנת תורה כי אז היו דור התנאים ועדיין לא נתדלדלו הישיבות עד אחר שמת רבי וגבר הגלות ורבו הצרות וכלו ימי תורה ומשמם ואילך מתוך הגלות והצרות בכל אותו זמן ראוי לבא משיח וימי חבלי משיח מיקרי.

These אחרונים emphasize the coinciding of the end of 2000 years of Torah with the end of the *tannaic* period. We suggest the more significant relationship is its coinciding with the writing of the Mishnah. *Seder Hadoros*, gives the completion date of the Mishnah as 3948, i.e. 120 years after the destruction of the 2nd Temple (see Figure 2). Note this is exactly 2000 years from the birth of Avraham. As Rambam explains in his Introduction to the *Yad*, the Mishnah represented an innovative new approach to the study of תורה שבעל פה never seen before:

רבנו הקדוש חיבר המשנה. ומימות משה ועד רבנו הקדוש, לא חיברו חיבור שמלמדין אותו ברבים בתורה שבעל פה; אלא בכל דור ודור, ראש בית דין או נביא שיהיה באותו הדור, כותב

¹⁸ This is a twist on the standard understanding of the phrase, i.e., it does not refer to gentiles' knowledge of תורה, but to תורה knowledge by Jews living in gentile lands.

לעצמו זיכרון בשמועות ששמע מרבתי, והוא מלמד על פה ברבים. וכן כל אחד ואחד כותב לעצמו כפי כוחו, מביאור התורה ומהלכותיה כמו ששמע, ומדברים שנתחדשו בכל דור ודור, בדינים שלא למדום מפי השמועה אלא במידה משלוש עשרה מידות והסכימו עליהן בית דין הגדול. וכן היה הדבר תמיד, עד רבנו הקדוש. והוא קיבץ כל השמועות וכל הדינים וכל הביאורין והפירושים ששמעו ממושה רבנו, ושלמדו בית דין של כל דור ודור, בכל התורה כולה; וחיבר מהכול ספר המשנה. ושיננו ברבים, ונגלה לכל ישראל;¹⁹ וכתבוהו כולם, וריבצו בכל מקום, כדי שלא תשתכח תורה שבעל פה מישראל. ולמה עשה רבנו הקדוש כך, ולא הניח הדבר כמות שהיה--לפי שראה שהתלמידים מתמעטים והולכים, והצרות מתחדשות ובאות, וממלכת הרשעה פושטת בעולם ומתגברת, וישראל מתגלגלים והולכים לקצוות: חיבר חיבור אחד להיות ביד כולם, כדי שילמדוהו במהרה ולא יישכח; וישב כל ימיו הוא ובית דינו, ולימד המשנה ברבים.

We suggest that the Chachamim were concerned about the acceptance of the Mishnah. To ensure its unequivocal adoption, they wanted the completion of the Mishnah to occur approximately 2000 years after the start of the Torah period. In this way they were promulgating that the 2000 year interval sandwiched between Avraham at age 52²⁰ and the completion of the Mishnah represented the era of Torah, and that the Mishnah punctuated the end of this creative Torah period.²¹ It also meant that the *amoraim* who were to

¹⁹ A discussion of whether Rebbe committed the Mishnah to writing or merely codified it orally is beyond the scope of this paper. However, even an oral codification, as Rambam explains was new and deviated from previous tradition.

²⁰ According to ראבד (see Fig. 2) the Mishnah was completed exactly 2000 years after the birth of Avraham. We are not suggesting that this was Rebbe Yosi's intended target date since Rebbe Yosi died prior to 3948 JC and could not have known the Mishnah's actual completion date. We are, rather, suggesting that Rebbe Yosi manipulated the dates to ensure that the Mishnah would be completed before 4000 on the newly adjusted time-line.

²¹ Aruch Milin, Table 1, takes a similar type approach in suggesting that the *Chachamim* were trying to have the rise of Greek control of the Jews in the 2nd Temple era coincide with the 1000th anniversary of the

follow would not be included in the creative period of Torah. If this meant chronologically shortchanging the time of the second Temple, so be it. The author of the chronology, as we mentioned above was Rebbe Yosi bar Chalafta, Rebbe's teacher. The idea for the Mishnah did not start with Rebbe, but rather came to complete fruition with him.

ב"מ דף פו. - ... רבי ור' נתן סוף משנה

Rebbe and Rebbe Nasan were working with older Mishnayos some of which were authored by Rebbe Akiva the teacher of Rebbe Yosi. In deducting years from the actual chronology to position the timing of the completion of the Mishnah project in proximity to the year 4000, Rebbe Yosi was constricted by the fact that it was well known that the Temple was destroyed close to the year 400 in *Minyan Shtaros*, i.e., close to 400 years after the Greeks rise to power (*Avodah Zarah 9a*). Since the 2nd Temple was built under the Persians who preceded the Greeks, the 2nd Temple would thus have to have lasted at least 400 years. However, this number would have to be further increased because of

הגי ב:ט - גדול יהיה כבוד הבית הזה האחרון, מן-הראשון--

which *Bavli* (ב"ב ג.) and *Yerushalmi* (end of the 1st chapter in מגילה) interpret to mean that the second Temple would last longer than the 410 years of the first Temple. Since Rebbe Yosi lived about 105 years after the destruction of the 2nd Temple, by placing the life span of the 2nd Temple at 420, he satisfied הגי while allotting the Mishnah project up to 60 years to be completed and still occur before the year 4000. The choice of 420 could, coincidentally, also be justified based on

דניאל ט: כד שְׁבַעִים שָׁבָעִים נְחֻתָךְ עַל-עַמְךָ וְעַל-עִיר קְדֻשְׁךָ,
לְכֹלֵא הַפְּשָׁע וּלְחַתֵּם חֲטָאוֹת וּלְכַפֵּר עוֹן, וּלְהַבְיֵא, צְדָקָה עַל־מִים;
וּלְחַתֵּם חֲזוֹן וְנִבְיָא, וְלִמְשַׁח קְדֻשָׁה קְדָשִׁים.

Exodus. We feel that an event coinciding with the 2000th anniversary of something is more likely as is clear from תנא דבי אליהו who repeatedly use this figure.

which Rashi and others interpret as a prediction that 490 years (i.e. 70×7) would elapse between the destruction of the 1st and 2nd Temples. Subtracting 70 years of the Babylonian exile leaves 420 years for the 2nd Temple. Ultimately, the actual completion of the Mishnah took place within the 4000 year deadline with time to spare.²² The chronology to support the acceptance of the Mishnah was thus in place years before **Rebbe** even completed the task.

The idea that the acceptance of the body of work called the Mishnah may have required a supporting effort on the part of the *Chachamim* is not difficult to fathom. Until that point in Jewish history the only officially accepted Jewish source documents were **תורה שבכתב** which consisted of the *Chumash* given during the Sinai period and the 19 books of **נביאים** and **כתובים** penned over a period of about 900 years (i.e., starting with **יהושע** circa 2500 and ending with the final works of **תרי עשר** completed about the time of the building of the 2nd Temple circa 3400). In fact, even these works did not all have a history of easy entry into the Canonized Scriptures,²³ e.g. see **שיר קהלת**, **משלי** concerning **שבת ל**; **יהזקאל** concerning **שבת יג**; **השירים**, and **מגילה ז**. How much more difficult then would it have been to introduce a new official genre of Jewish work that heretofore had not even been permitted to be written down at all?²⁴ By associating the Mishnah with the ending of the 2000 years of Torah the *Chachamim* were thus trying to say that it was only natural that such a period should end in a work of unprecedented nature. To do this they had to start the Torah period considerably earlier than the more natural starting point of Sinai. To get the system to work the solution was thus to start the count from Avraham and eliminate 166 years of Persian history dating back to the very earliest period of the 2nd Temple that was over 400 years in the past.

That the *Chachamim* took every opportunity to enhance the stature of the Mishnah and then subsequently the *Gemara* is similarly

²² It was not necessary for the targeted event to occur exactly in year 4000. It was merely required that it to be relatively close.

²³ See S. Z. Leiman, *The Canonization of Hebrew Scriptures*, Archon Books, 1976.

²⁴ See **על לעשות להי הפירו תורתך גיטין ט** which offers the justification for committing the Oral Law to writing.

evident in the following passage which extols the qualities of רבי and רב אשי:

סנהדרין לו. ואמר רבה בריה דרבא ואיתימא רבי הלל בריה דר' וולס מימות משה ועד רבי לא מצינו תורה וגדולה במקום אחד... אמר רב אדא בר אהבה אף אני אומר מימות רבי עד רב אשי לא מצינו תורה וגדולה במקום אחד...

In reviewing 2000 years of Jewish history from the giving of the Torah at Sinai until the writing of the Bavli, the Gemara finds only 3 people who merited²⁵ the accolade of simultaneously possessing the highest level of Torah and leadership and these three people successively gave us, the Torah, the Mishnah and the Gemara.

When Rebbe Yosi decided to change the chronology in support of the impending completion of the Mishnah there was, of

²⁵ The Gemara unsuccessfully challenges the uniqueness of these three individuals by identifying others who also possessed both of these traits. One individual the Gemara suggests as possessing both characteristics is Ezra. In a previous chapter in *Sanhedrin* the Gemara extolled the virtues of Ezra and compared him to Moshe (Note: Is it coincidental that it was Rebbe Yosi who compared Ezra to Moshe?) in an attempt to justify his changing of the script in which the Torah is written.

סנהדרין כא: אמר ר' זוטרא ואיתימא ר' עוקבא בתחלה ניתנה תורה לישראל בכתב עברי ולשון הקודש חזרה וניתנה להם בימי עזרא בכתב אשורית ולשון ארמי ביררו להן לישראל כתב אשורית ולשון הקודש והניחו להדיוטות כתב עברית ולשון ארמי מאן הדיוטות אמר רב חסדא כותאי מאי כתב עברית אמר רב חסדא כתב ליבונאה. תניא רבי יוסי אומר ראוי היה עזרא שתינתן תורה על ידו לישראל אילמלא לא קדמו משה, במשה הוא אומר (שמות יט) ומשה עלה אל האלהים בעזרא הוא אומר (עזרא ז) הוא עזרא עלה מבבל מה עלייה האמור כאן תורה אף עלייה האמור להלן תורה במשה הוא אומר (דברים ד) ואותי צוה ה' בעת ההיא ללמד אתכם חקים ומשפטים בעזרא הוא אומר (עזרא ז) כי עזרא הכין לבבו לדרוש את תורת ה' אלהיו ולעשות וללמד בישראל חוק ומשפט ואף על פי שלא ניתנה תורה על ידו נשתנה על ידו הכתב שנאמר **דף כב.** (עזרא ד) וכתב הנשתווון כתוב ארמית ומתורגם ארמית וכתביב (דניאל ה) לא כהלין כתבא למיקרא ופשרא להודעא למלכא וכתביב (דברים יז) וכתב את משנה התורה הזאת כתב הראוי להשתנות למה נקרא אשורית שעלה עמהם מאשור.

Ultimately the Gemara appears to decide that while the changing of the script requires a person of stature it does not necessarily require someone who has no equal. Thus when the Gemara tries to put Ezra on the lofty pedestal occupied by Moshe, Rebbe and Rav Ashi, it responds: והא הוה עזרא? הוה נחמיה בן חכליה... (סנהדרין לו עמוד א)

course, no way of him knowing that there was still to be a later seminal work that was to have perhaps even a greater effect on Jewish law, i.e. the Bavli. As we showed in Figure 2, the Bavli was completed in about 4260. Note that if the historical dating of the Persian Empire is correct (CC), then the true completion date of the *Gemara* was 4421, almost 2000 years after the initial giving of the Torah at Sinai. This would then make the *Gemara* the culminating creative Torah work, and the *amoraim* as the final *Chachamim* of the Torah era.

We believe that the elements of all of these ideas (i.e. both the initial attempt to rewrite history as well as the ultimate attempt to restore it) are contained within the give and take of the *Gemara* in ע"ו .ט. While Rebbe Yosi who lived near the time of the completion of the Mishnah might have thought it a good idea to attribute only 420 years to the 2nd Temple, by the time of the completion of the *Gemara*, those 166 missing years would preferably have been returned in order to legitimize a work that would become the new focal point of Jewish religion and law.

To demonstrate that the *amoraim* were comfortable with the historical chronology (CC) consider the *Gemara* in *Sanhedrin* immediately following the statement of תנא דבי אליהו:

**סנהדרין דף צז: ... אמר ליה אליהו לרב יהודה אחוה דרב
סלא חסידא אין העולם פחות²⁶ משמונים וחמשה יובלות וביובל**

²⁶ The *Gemara* offers no hint as to any rationale for this figure. Abarbenel says that that the source is the *parsha* of ויהי בנסוע (Bamidbar 10:35-36) which has 85 letters and is set off by 2 inverted י's and discusses the victory of the Jewish people over their enemies. We would like to suggest a less mystical and more practical source. Rambam, הלכות שמיטה, i.e. the length of the 1st Commonwealth (from the Jews entry into Eretz Yisrael until the destruction of the 1st Temple) was 850 years (440 from entry until the 1st Temple and 410 years that the 1st Temple lasted). Note that the 85 *yovlos* that the *Gemara* predicts is 5 times the 17 *yovlos* of the 1st Commonwealth. If one were able to discern patterns in past history, depending on the frequency of occurrence and the strength of the relationship, one might be inclined to extrapolate that history would similarly repeat itself in the future. Thus, if the period of the entire 1st Commonwealth was 850 years it is not unreasonable to perhaps assume

that the designated time for the 2nd Temple would follow a similar scale. Thus when the 2nd Temple lasted only 420 years before being destroyed in 3828 (JC) this fell far short of expectations that the 2nd Temple would last another 430 years, i.e. until 4258. The year 4258 is 8 years into the 86th *yovel* and hence the *Gemara's* questions about the exact timing of this prediction are exactly on target.

Of course, the 850 year analysis would really be interesting only if it could be broadened beyond the period of the two Temples. Note that this entire paper revolves around a statement by *תנא דבי אליהו* that parses 6,000 years of world history into 3 two-thousand year periods. If 850 is the operative breakdown unit (rather than 2000) then the 6,000 years of world history could be divided into 7 units encompassing all but the last 50 years of history (i.e., $7 \times 850 = 5950$), with the key years of interest being approximately: 850, 1700, 2550, 3400, 4250, 5100, and 5950. Major events in world history did occur in proximity to the 2nd, 3rd and 4th dates in this sequence: *Mabul* - 1656, Entry into Eretz Yisrael- 2498, and the destruction of the 1st Temple- 3338. It may therefore not be unreasonable for someone to assume that something of potentially great significance to the Jewish people would occur in proximity to the next (5th) date in this sequence, 4250 (17 complete *yovlos*.)

One final thought that we will return to later: As mentioned, *תנא דבי אליהו* decomposed the world into 3 periods of 2000 years. The first 2000, designated *tohu*, had 2 major devastating cataclysmic world events mentioned in the Torah: *Mabul* - 1656 and *Haflagah* - 1996. The second 2000 period, designated Torah, had 2 major devastating cataclysmic events for the Jewish people: The destruction of the 1st Temple—3338, and the destruction of the 2nd Temple—3828 JC or 3994 CC. Note that if CC is correct then the two events in the second 2000 year period appeared at points in time almost exactly twice that of the first set of devastating events ($2 \times 1656 = 3338$, $2 \times 1996 = 3994$). When viewed from this perspective, the worldly division suggested by *תנא דבי אליהו* works far better with CC than JC. In this scenario the period of *tohu* encompasses 2 devastating events for humanity and ends with Avraham emerging as a world leader to form a new religion 4 years immediately after the *haflagah* tragedy. This new promising period, is designated Torah not because of Sinai but because of the emergence of the Jewish people. This era too lasts 2000 years and likewise suffers devastating losses in proportionately identical periods of time as *tohu*,

האחרון בן דוד בא אמר ליה בתחילתו או בסופו אמר ליה איני
 יודע כלה או אינו כלה אמר ליה איני יודע רב אשי אמר הכי א"ל
 עד הכא לא תיסתכי ליה מכאן ואילך איסתכי ליה
 רשי ד"ה כלה. זמן הזה קודם שיבא משיח או אינו כלה דבתוך
 היובל בסופו בא

predicted *mashiach* would come sometime in the 85th *yovel*, i.e., between²⁷ 4200 and 4250. However, when רב יהודה אחוה דרב סלא חסידא pressed him as to if it would be at the start or the end of the period, אליהו could not say. He then asked if it would be after the period or before its end²⁸ and אליהו again could not say. The *Gemara* concludes with רב אשי resolving what had previously gone unanswered by אליהו. But how could רב אשי offer a definitive answer when אליהו himself said he did not know?

To answer these questions it is informative to know the time period in which this story took place. יומא יט: tells of an incident involving רב יהודה אחוה דרב סלא חסידא and רב הונא and we know רב הונא died around 4050 JC (*Seder Hadoros*). Thus, when אליהו revealed to רב יהודה אחוה דרב סלא חסידא information about the arrival of *mashiach*, he was talking about an event that would not occur for at least a century after his death, and the question of precisely when in the 85th *yovel mashiach* was to come was purely informational for future generations. However, if the story is using CC, רב הונא died about 4216 (i.e. 166 years later) and רב יהודה אחוה דרב סלא חסידא was asking a personal question as to whether *mashiach* would come at the start of the *yovel* and he would see him, or perhaps at the end of the *yovel* and he might not. The second question of רב יהודה אחוה דרב סלא חסידא as to whether *mashiach* would not come until the completion of the 85th *yovel* (i.e., 4251 at the earliest) can be similarly understood, and again,

with the destruction of the 2nd Temple occurring just 6 years before the end of the cycle in the year 4000.

²⁷ See *Tosafos* ע"ז ט: ד"ה לאחר.

²⁸ I.e., the questioner was uncertain as to whether אליהו meant that *mashiach* would come in the 85th *yovel* or after it. Rashi's final words דבתוך היובל בסופו בא are puzzling. If the prediction meant *mashiach* would come in the 85th *yovel*, אליהו already said he did not know at which end it would be. We will assume that the second question simply means: Is it in or after the 85th *yovel*? (See מהרשא.)

אליהו said he did not know. Rav Ashi's follow-up remark must occur before his death 4186 JC, i.e., before the earliest possible designated time of 4200. If so, as we asked above, there is no way Rav Ashi could answer a question about *mashiach* that אליהו could not. However, if we use CC, Rav Ashi died in 4352 (the 88th *yovel*) considerably after even the latest time interpretation of the prediction of אליהו previously considered. In light of this knowledge Rav Ashi could now in retrospect explain what the prediction must have meant. Thus, the logic of the *Gemara* using CC flows far more naturally and intuitively than one using JC.

A similar proof that the *Gemara* was using CC rather than JC can likewise be found in the very next story in the *Gemara*:

שלה ליה רב חנן בר תחליפא לרב יוסף מצאתי אדם אחד ובידו מגילה אחת כתובה אשורית ולשון קדש אמרתי לו זו מניין לך אמר לי לחיילות של רומי נשכרתי ובין גינזי רומי מצאתיה וכתוב בה לאחר ד' אלפים ומאתים ותשעים ואחד שנה לבריאתו של עולם העולם יתום מהן מלחמות תנינים מהן מלחמות גוג ומגוג ושאר ימות המשיח ואין הקב"ה מחדש את עולמו אלא לאחר שבעת אלפים שנה רב אחא בריה דרבא אמר לאחר חמשת אלפים שנה.

Seder Hadoros puts the death of רב יוסף at 4082 JC. If so, רב חנן בר תחליפא predicted that *mashiach* would arrive in 4291, well beyond the lifetime of any of the individuals in the story. After relating the precise contents of the letter the *Gemara* discusses what will happen after the year 7000 and then cites רב אחא בריה דרבא as giving the time as 5000. While at first it appears that he is substituting 5000 for the 7000 just mentioned, this is unlikely since it seems to be universally accepted that the renewal of the world would not take place before the year 6000. רש"י and others thus say that רב אחא בריה דרבא is referring back to the statement that *mashiach* will come in 4291, and he corrects²⁹ this to read 5291. We know from many places in ש"ס that רב אחא בריה דרבא was a contemporary of רב אשי and died 4179 JC. Thus, according to JC we have two predictions by people living in the 41st and 42nd centuries about an event that would take place in the

²⁹ Some say he meant the year 5000. Our answer works with either 5291 or 5000 but, as explained in the next footnote, is particularly well suited if it means 5291.

late 43rd century without any indication as to what compelled רב אהא בר תחליפא to change the date of *mashiach's* arrival from 4291 to 5291. However, if the *Gemara* is using CC, רב אהא בר תחליפא lived in the first half of the 43rd century and רב אהא בריה דרבא lived mid 44th century. Thus רב אהא בר תחליפא offered a time for the arrival of *mashiach* about 43 years in his future while רב אהא בריה דרבא lived beyond the predicted time and knew that *mashiach* had not come. His solution was to assert that the prediction must have been 5291, not 4291.³⁰ In this way both stories in *Sanhedrin* 97b that we discussed involve the same model: i.e. a prediction about *mashiach* coming in the future is made and someone living after the designated time in CC, knowing *mashiach* did not arrive at the designated point, reinterprets the prediction so it does not contradict fact.

One final *Gemara* germane to this discussion is a follow-up story to ע"ז תנא דבי אליהו in:

ט: אמר רבי חנינא אחר ארבע מאות לחורבן הבית אם יאמר לך אדם
קח שדה שיהא אלף דינרים בדינר אחד לא תקח במתניתא תנא אחר
ארבעת אלפים ומאתים ושלשים ואחת שנה לבריאת עולם אם יאמר

³⁰ To fully appreciate this emendation we point out that when the *Gemara* described a date in time it did not necessarily supply all of the integers for the year. For example, in ע"ז ט. the *Gemara* discusses how to convert from a dating system that uses the destruction of the Temple as its point of origin to a dating system based on "Shtaros" (Greek System). The *Gemara's* conversion formula only addresses the units and tens position of the transformation but not the hundreds and thousands position: . . . אמר רב פפא אי טעי האי תנא ולא ידע פרטי כמה הוה? . . .

רשי פרטי כמה הוה. אין אדם טועה במאות אלא טועה בשנה או בשתים דהיינו פרטי דמאות ואלפים הוה כללי. I.e. it is assumed that the person seeking the transformation knows the higher order positions without assistance. Similarly, חברת מקיצי תשך (published in Israel by תשובות הרמבם תשובה שפט, ולפי חשבון זה תהיה שנה זו (4935) שהיא שנת שש ושמונים וארבע (נרדמים) writes: i.e. Rambam dates the *Teshuva* to 486 from *Shtaros* when it is really 1486 (or 4935 JC). What we are suggesting is that רב אהא בריה דרבא in *Sanhedrin* is saying that the document cited by רב אהא בר תחליפא read 291 (i.e., no thousands position) which the latter took to mean his own millennium, i.e., the 4,000's. רב אהא בריה דרבא then says that in retrospect this was incorrect and it obviously meant 5291.

לך אדם קח לך שדה שוה אלף דינרים בדינר אחד אל תקח מאי
בינייהו איכא בינייהו תלת שנין דמתניתא טפיא.³¹
רשי ד"ה דמתניתא ... כשאמר רבי חנינא למילתיה עדיין לא עברו ת'
לחורבן.

Rashi explains that this *Gemara*, like the one in *Sanhedrin*, is predicting the coming of *mashiach* and therefore suggesting that no real estate transactions outside of Eretz Yisrael be undertaken regardless of how lucrative the deal may seem. Rashi stresses that רבי חנינא, like the Baraisa, is referring to a future point in time and is merely moving the date up by 3 years, i.e., whereas the *Baraisa*³² gave the predicted year as 4231, רבי חנינא said it would be 400 years after the destruction of the 2nd Temple or 4228 (3828+400). No

³¹ Based on this *Gemara*, גרא changed the date in the second story in *Sanhedrin* from 4291 to 4231. Thus, if the story occurred at least 17 years before Rav Yosef's death, according to CC (i.e. 4248-4231,) *mashiach's* arrival would have been very imminent. Gra references *Tosafos* ע"ז ט' to support his change of date. Gra's association seems improbable. Firstly, other than the years 4291 and 4231 both ending in 1 there is no evidence that the two stories refer to the same incident. Secondly, the *Tosafos* that Gra cites refers to the first, not second story in *Sanhedrin* 97b. Finally, in *Sanhedrin*, רב חנן בר תחליפא, who relates the story, appears nowhere else in ש"ס. In ע"ז the one telling the story is רבי חנינא. It is highly doubtful that these two people are the same. *Seder Hadoros* says that רבי חנינא generally means רבי חנינא בר חמא, a 1st generation Eretz Yisrael *amora* circa 4000 (see e.g., כתובות קג:), who would not have had contact with Rav Yosef, a 3rd generation Babylonian *amora*. Halpern says, sometimes the name רבי חנינא refers to רבי חנינא דציפורין, a 5th/6th generation Eretz Yisrael *amora* (one of the last) who died a little before Rav Ashi. This, again, places him beyond Rav Yosef. Thus, whoever this רבי חנינא truly is, it is highly unlikely that he is רב חנן בר תחליפא who spoke to Rav Yosef.

³² *Soncino Shas* footnote b2 points out that this *Baraisa* is the only known *tannaic* work that specifically dates an event based on time from creation (Anno Mundi—AM—era of the world). *Soncino* says that while we see that the *Chachamim* were familiar with this dating system it did not get into public use until much later. *Soncino's* best guess is that dating from creation came into widespread use in Spain in the 12th century in order to avoid being forced to use the CE system which began being used in France and Germany in the 10th century.

explanation, however, is given for how רבי הנינא knew to change the prediction listed in the *Baraisa* and why he did not simply give the year³³ as 4228? In our explanations of the two *mashiach* predictions in *Sanbedrin* we suggested that Rav Ashi and רב אהא בריה דרבא altered the original predictions because they lived after the designated time, based on CC, and *mashiach* had not come. If the same model is applied here, we suggest that רבי הנינא דציפורין³⁴ refers to רבי who preceded Rav Ashi by about 15 years (as mentioned previously Rav Ashi died about 4352 CC) and lived after 4231 CC. Thus the predicted time of *mashiach's* arrival as 4231 had truly passed even before his lifetime according to CC. His rephrasing of the prediction in terms of placing the date as 400 years after the destruction of the 2nd Temple (i.e., 4394 CC) once again pushed the prediction into the future.³⁵ His emendation is reminiscent of the change made in

³³ Based on footnote 26 dealing with the decomposition of history into 850 year units, it is possible that רבי הנינא phrases his words in terms of 400 years because he is willing to view history as being broken into 400 year intervals. Note that significant eras that lasted approximately 400 years include: Egyptian Exile—400, Entry into Eretz Yisrael until the Building of the First Temple—440, First Temple—410 (including the time it took to build it), Second Temple—420 (including the time it took to build it).

³⁴ See footnote 31. We are thus rejecting the alternative possibility that it is the more frequently implied רבי הנינא בר המא who would have died circa 4171CC which is well before the predicted date.

³⁵ The point here then is not that the simple implication of the *Gemara* is to say that there is a 3 year difference between the two opinions but rather to make sure that both are referring to an event approximately 400 years after the destruction of the 2nd Temple, i.e. 4228 JC=4394 CC. We note that Ritva disagrees with Rashi's explanation of the thrust of the *Gemara* in *Avodah Zarah*. According to Ritva the *Gemara* is not predicting the coming of *mashiach* but saying if a point in time has been reached where *mashiach* should have come, but did not, it means that our sins have prevented his coming. If that is the case Ritva says then it must follow that our persecution will intensify to the point in which we lose everything. That being the case, if someone were offered a deal where he could make a considerable sum of money he should turn it down because it was inevitable that his profit will be taken from him. According to Ritva, the *Gemara* is extending the concept of תנא דבי אליהו of בעונותינו

Sanbedrin by רב אחא בריה דרבא. Thus according to Rashi's understanding of ע"ז ט: the *amoraim* in both *Sanbedrin* as well as *Avodah Zarah*, who immediately follow the claim of תנא דבי אליהו, all make more sense assuming they were employing a CC system.

In summary we suggest the *tannaim* used JC but the *amoraim* used CC. However, the *amoraim* would never openly challenge the designation of a given year but let their chronology come through from the context of their statements. In this way, it was important for the *Gemara* in *Sanbedrin* and *Avodah Zarah* to follow up the statement of תנא דבי אליהו with incidents that demonstrate the silent dissent of the *amoraim* with the *tannaic* chronology. If so, we would then suggest, that when the *Gemara* says,

שני אלפים תורה. מאימת? אי נימא ממתן תורה, עד השתא ליכא כולי האי,

עד השתא, which according to Ritva was said by Rav Ashi, is not asking a question (as Rashi and Ritva claim³⁶) but asserting his disagreement with JC and his opinion that Torah started with Sinai and his era is within the 2000 year Torah period. The subsequent statement concerning Avraham and the calculation of Sinai having taken place in 2448 is then a response to demonstrate the weakness in Rav Ashi's argument, i.e., if Torah started at Sinai then *tobu* lasted far too long. Rav Ashi's (unsaid response) would most probably attribute the delay to ... בעוונותינו שרבו.³⁷

Possible Halachic Implications: *Shemittah* and the Missing Years

While it may be conceptually acceptable to alter historical chronology to accomplish a major goal, it is not reasonable to do so if the change

שרבו יצאו מהן מה שיצאו מהן, i.e. not only is *mashiach's* arrival not imminent but in addition things will get worse.

³⁶ Which, as we explained previously, leads to the difficulty of why the 1st question is separated from its explanation (Rashi) or the second question (Ritva)?

³⁷ Which, as we explained in footnote 35, is how Ritva understood the later *Gemara*.

leads to halachic or theological errors. In this section we demonstrate that the deletion of 166 years of history was done in a manner that exacted no fall-out of consequence.

The first issue to consider in changing historical chronology is the effect it will have on our yearly calendar system. In determining the start of a new year, Rosh Hashanah, for any given year the central most important calculation is the מולד of *Tishrei* of that year. The calculation of the *molad* of any *Tishrei* begins by knowing the *molad* of *Tishrei* of the year of creation (this is known as the year of *tohu*³⁸ and its molad is ³⁹בהרד) and bringing the *molad* forward in time to the year in question. If in fact, our calendar is missing 166 years, the calculated *molad* is incorrect and hence the starting point of Rosh Hashanah is incorrect.

There are several good reasons why this is not a matter of concern but most are beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that Rebbe Yosi lived during a period when the start of the new month (year) was determined by actual visual observation and rote calculations played only a very minor and insignificant role in the process.

הלכות קידוש החודש פרק ו. א. בזמן שעושין על הראייה, היו
מחשבין ויודעין שעה שיתקבץ בה הירח עם החמה בדקדוק
הרבה, כדרך שהאצטגנינין עושין, כדי לידע אם ייראה הירח או
לא ייראה. ותחילת אותו החשבון, הוא החשבון שמחשבין

³⁸ תנא דבי אליהו uses this word to represent the metaphysical state of a Torah-less world. It is used in בראשית א:ב to describe the state of the physical world at the time of creation. In the context of the calendar it refers to the first year of creation. Adam was created on the first Friday and that day was Rosh Hashanah. Thus, the first day of creation, the previous Sunday, was the 25th of Elul. In reality no day existed before this one. However, for the sake of calculation we extrapolate back in time to the beginning of this year which had only 5 real days. This year is referred to as the year of *tohu* (i.e., it was for the most part not real.)

³⁹ A complete description of this system is beyond the scope of this paper. Interested readers can see the details, terms and methodology in Rambam, הלכות קידוש החודש. A brief review of this material can be found in *A 5765 Anomaly*, "Tradition," Vol. 38, No. 3, Fall 2004, pp. 40-59. We would also point out that the critical value of בהרד is not mentioned anywhere in *Gemara*.

בקירוב ויודעין שעת קיבוצם בלא דקדוק; ושעת קיבוצם בלא דקדוק אלא במהלכם האמצעי, הוא הנקרא מולד.

Thus, certainly for the time of Rebbe Yosi, dropping 166 years had no affect on the start of *Rosh Chodesh*. We must however stress that even today when our calendar is determined solely by calculation, the 166 year discrepancy does not affect the determination of Rosh Hashanah. As evidence of this we refer to Figure 1, Explanatory Note b, where we point out that Ramban and Rabbenu Bechaya disagree with conventional JC, that the exile in Egypt was only 210 years, and yet they have no difficulty maintaining our calendar based on the same calculations we do.⁴⁰

A second issue to consider as a by product of changing world chronology is whether there is any theological significance to altering the age of the world. As we said in the introductory section of this paper:

“Rabbi Schwab himself had a change of heart with respect to his 1962 explanation ... In a 1991 revision of his 1962 work, he rejects the historical chronology because it challenges the accepted count from creation which he asserts is ‘sacred territory which only fools do not fear to tread upon.’”

Rabbi Schwab’s reference to the theological inadmissibility of challenging the “accepted count” is unclear. If it refers to the belief that: *The world is roughly 6000 years old and not the billions of years promulgated by science*, then the addition or subtraction of several hundred years is not a critical matter. The essence in the difference of the two positions is that if 6000 is correct then the world could not have come about by an evolutionary process since it is too young to have evolved as science describes. If Rabbi Schwab is alluding to a more restrictive need to believe that: *The world is exactly 5766 as we currently calculate it*, the question is what evidence is there that this is a fundamental matter of faith? As a counter-example we once again point to Ramban and Rabbenu Bechaya who offered a chronology of the length of time that the Jews were enslaved in Egypt that differs from JC by 30 years. Is Rabbi Schwab then suggesting that only large

⁴⁰ A discussion of why this is so is beyond the scope of this paper.

deviations from 5766 are not acceptable but small ones are? This seems unlikely. We thus see no theological difficulty in the *Chachamim* purposely changing chronology to achieve a significant objective.

The one area, that we feel changing chronology can potentially cause significant halachic problems, is with respect to *shemittah* being observed in the wrong years. In the rest of this section we will discuss the issue of *shemittah* and explain why it is not a problem.

The need to observe *shemittah* was first triggered by the Jewish people settling Eretz Yisrael in the time of Yehoshua⁴¹ and remained in effect until the de-sanctification of the land upon the destruction of the 1st Temple. *Shemittah* was later reinitiated upon the return from *Galus Bavel*.

הלכות שמיטה ויובל פרק י הלכה ד כיון שחרב הבית, בטל מניין זה, משבטלה הארץ. ונשארה הארץ חרבה, שבעים שנה; ונבנה בית שני, וארבע מאות ועשרים עמד.⁴² ובשנה השביעית מבנינו, עלה עזרא והיא הביאה השנייה; ומשנה זו התחילו למנות מניין אחר. ועשו שנת שלוש עשרה לבניין בית שני שמיטה, ומנו שבע שמיטות וקידשו שנת חמישים; אף על פי שלא היה שם יובל בבית שני, מונין היו אותו כדי לקדש שמיטות.

⁴¹ As we will explain later it actually started not with the original entry into Eretz Yisrael but rather 14 years later with כיבוש and חילוק.

⁴² When Rambam says the 2nd Temple lasted 420 years the count is from the time it began being built in 3408 and not upon its completion in 3413 (see *Chazon Ish* קמ סימן ר"ה). This is analogous to the way we count the 410 years the 1st Temple lasted, i.e. 410 years from the start of construction, with the completion and actual occupation of the Temple not taking place for another 7 years, i.e.,

מלכים א פרק ו: לו. בשנה הרביעית, יסד, בית יי-בנין, זו. לה. ובשנה האחת עשרה בנין בול, הוא החדש השמיני, פלה הבית, לכל-דבריו ולכל-משפטו; ויבנהו, שבע שנים.

Thus, when we say that the *Shemittah* cycle began 6 years after the start of the work with the arrival of Ezra, in effect it began close to the point in time when the 2nd Temple was actually completed. We note that historians agree that the amount of time between the two temples was 70 years but they count it from the destruction of the 1st Temple until the completion of the building of the 2nd Temple.

ה נמצאת למד שהשנה שחרב בה הבית באחרונה, שתחילתה
מתשרי שאחר החורבן בשני חודשים, שהרי מתשרי הוא המניין
לשמיטים וליובלות--אותה השנה מוצאי שביעית הייתה, ושנת
חמש עשרה מן היובל התשיעי הייתה.

Based on Rebbe Yosi's 420 year chronology, after excluding the first 6 years which preceded Ezra's arrival and the sanctification of the land, the 2nd Temple was destroyed in the 414th year after the reinstatement of *shemittah*. This was then the 14th year of the 9th *yovel* cycle and *shemittah*, i.e.⁴³ $(414 \text{Mod} 50) \text{Mod} 7 = 0$, and the year that started two months later was the first of a new *shemittah* cycle. Rambam concludes that the observance of all future *shemittah* years is based on how many years it is from the *churban* year. If our suggestion that רבי יוסי purposely changed the count by 166 years is correct, then the Temple lasted 586 years. If, as before, we subtract the 6 years prior to Ezra's arrival,⁴⁴ the destruction of the 2nd Temple took place in the 580th year of a *shemittah* cycle or, equivalently, in the 30th year of the 12th *yovel*, i.e., the 2nd year of *shemittah*— $(580 \text{Mod} 50) \text{Mod} 7 = 2$. Presumably, by the time of רבי יוסי the tradition of observing *shemittah* had continued non-stop for hundreds of years. How then could he suggest a calculation which resulted in a different *shemittah* count?

We suggest that Rebbe Yosi himself addressed this question in a second oft quoted adage:

ערכין דף יא: ... ת"ש רבי יוסי אומר מגלגלין זכות ליום זכאי
וחובה ליום חייב אמרו כשחרב הבית בראשונה אותו היום
תשעה באב היה ומוצאי שבת היה ומוצאי שביעית היתה ... וכן
בשניה ...

⁴³ I.e., $X \text{Mod} Y$ is the remainder of X divided by Y . Hence $414 \text{Mod} 50 = 14$, and $14 \text{Mod} 7 = 0$. In a Mod50 system all answers are between 0 and 49, and 0 means it is *yovel*. In a Mod7 system all answers are between 0 and 6, and 0 denotes *shemittah*. Any number other than 0 means it is that number year in the *shemittah* cycle.

⁴⁴ In truth, the subtraction of 6 years in this scenario probably makes no sense. It is only in JC that Ezra came in the 7th year of the 2nd Temple. In CC Ezra came many years later. We will, however, resolve the problem without directly dealing with this issue.

i.e. he asserts that the destruction of the 2nd Temple was in the first year of a *shemittah* cycle. The *Gemara* itself later challenges this assertion as being inconsistent with our assertion of Rebbe Yosi that the 2nd Temple lasted 420 years.

דף יב: ... וכן בשניה. ושניה במוצאי שביעית מי משכחת לה?
מכדי בית שני כמה קם ארבע מאה ועשרים ארבע מאה תמניא
יובלי ארבסרי תרי שבוע פשו להו שית הוה ליה בשיתא
בשבוע...
דף יג: ... רב אשי אמר הנך שית שני עד דסליק עזרא ומקדיש
לא קא חשיב להו דכתיב (עזרא ד) באדין בטילת עבידת בית
אלהנא די בירושלים וכת' (עזרא ו) ושיציא ביתא דנא עד יום
תלתא לירח אדר דהיא שנת שית למלכות דריוש מלכא ותנא
באותו זמן לשנה הבאה עלה עזרא וגלותו עמו דכתיב (עזרא ז)
ויבא ירושלים בחודש החמישי היא השנה השביעית למלך.

Hence, Rambam's assertion that the destruction of the 2nd Temple occurred on *shemittah* is based on the *Gemara's* suggestion to exclude the first six years in order to reconcile two seemingly contradictory statements by Rebbe Yosi. However, if in fact the historical chronology is correct then the 2nd Temple lasted 586 and, if we do not subtract anything and assume, as the *Gemara* originally did, that *shemittah* began immediately⁴⁵ with the building of the 2nd

⁴⁵ The idea that we can count *shemittah* from the start of the 2nd Temple appears at first to be untenable. As Rambam said in the above cited הלכה י, it was the arrival of Ezra that was designated as *ביאה שניה* which imbued the land with holiness so that the land related *mitzvos* had to once again be observed. This concept is more fully presented by Rambam previously in תרומות:

א:ב ארץ ישראל האמורה בכל מקום--היא הארצות שכובש אותן מלך ישראל או שופט או נביא מדעת רוב ישראל, וזה הוא הנקרא כיבוש רבים. אבל יחיד מישראל או משפחה או שבט שהלכו וכבשו לעצמן מקום--אפילו מן הארץ שניתנה לאברהם--אינו נקרא ארץ ישראל, כדי שינהגו בו כל המצוות; ומפני זה חילק יהושע ובית דינו כל ארץ ישראל לשבטים, ואף על פי שלא נכבשה--כדי שלא תהיה כיבוש יחיד, כשיעלה כל שבט ושבט ויכבוש חלקו.
ו [ה] כל שהחזיקו עולי מצרים, ונתקדש קדושה ראשונה--כיון שגלו, בטלה קדושתן: שקדושה ראשונה--לפי שהייתה מפני הכיבוש בלבד, קידשה לשעתה ולא קידשה לעתיד לבוא. ז כיון שעלו בני הגולה, והחזיקו במקצת הארץ--קידשוה קדושה שנייה העומדת לעולם, לשעתה ולעתיד לבוא....

Temple, then the destruction of the 2nd Temple took place in the 36th year of the 12th *yovel*, or in the 1st year of *shemittah* as required i.e., $(586 \text{Mod} 50) \text{Mod} 7 = 1$. Thus, while רבי יוסי on the one hand was omitting 166 years of history (עבודה זרה) he was making sure that it did not effect *shemittah* observance by explicitly stating (in ערכין) the status of the year of the destruction. If any problem arose upon anyone doing the actual calculation based on the 420 years, Rebbe Yosi figured it would always be possible to reconcile the new count by deducting some years at the start of the 420 (as רב אשי did).

Our suggestion that Rebbe Yosi was in fact claiming that the year of the destruction of the 2nd Temple was a post *shemittah* year, disagrees with Rambam's 5th halacha which claims that the year after the destruction was a post *shemittah* year. Nevertheless, the scenario we have described based on the historical chronology fits the words of רבי יוסי more precisely than Rambam's explanation. Rambam begins הלכות שמיטה ויובל, by saying:

א ... ומאימתי התחילו למנות: מאחר ארבע עשרה שנה משנכנסו לארץ--שנאמר "שש שנים תזרע שדך, ושש שנים תזמור כרמך" (ויקרא כה,ג), עד שיהיה כל אחד ואחד מכיר ארצו; ושבע שנים עשו בכיבוש הארץ, ושבע שנים בחילוק.
ג שבעה עשר יובלים מנו ישראל, משנכנסו לארץ ועד שיצאו; ושנה שיצאו בה, שחרב הבית בראשונה, מוצאי שביעית הייתה, ושנת שש ושלושים ביובל הייתה--שארבע מאות שנה ועשר שנים, עמד בית ראשון.

Rambam thus places the destruction of the 1st Temple the year after *shemittah* and that of the 2nd Temple the year of *shemittah* (i.e. in הלכה ה he says the post *shemittah* year was the one that began 2 months after the destruction). But this is not consistent with Rebbe Yosi's own statement

of the אמינא (או"ח ר"ה סימן קמ) חזון איש asks this question on the *Gemara* in ערכין that the years prior to Ezra should have also been counted and answers:

ואפשר דסביר דחכמים שבא"י קדשו קודם שבא עזרא ועזרא קידש את החומה ואת העזרות אבל קדושת הארץ שאינה במעשה אלא בירושה ע"מ שתהיי קדושה כיון שהחלו לבנות ע"פ ה' היה דעתם לקדשה.

We are suggesting that this אמינא may in fact be correct.

כשחרב הבית בראשונה אותו היום תשעה באב היה... ומוצאי
שביעית היתה... וכן בשניה...

ואע"ג דלא דמו אהדדי מ"מ כיון שאין מרחק: comments on this: מהר"י קורקוס
רב ביניהם מחית להו בברייתא בהדא מחתא וכן כתב בעל התרומה...

This answer is quite forced.⁴⁶ Our explanation avoids this problem.

Besides the "better fit" based on the inclusion of the 166 years there is additional evidence that the year of the 2nd *churban* was a post-*shemittah* year. Rambam, הלכה ו, identifies the year in which he wrote these halachos as 1107 years after the *churban* and "4936 from creation:"

ו ולפי חשבון זה, שנה זו שהיא שנת אלף ומאה ושבע לחורבן,
שהיא שנת שבע ושמונים ואלף וארבע מאות למניין שטרות,
שהיא שנת שש ושלושים ותשע מאות וארבעת אלפים ליצירה--
היא שנת שמיטה, והיא שנת אחת ועשרים מן היובל.⁴⁷

Unlike today, when "years from creation" is our normal way of identifying yearly time, in the era of the *משנה*, the *גמרא* and for a considerable period afterwards a variety of other reference points were used. The spectrum of possibilities is illustrated in the following:

משנה גיטין ה,ה כתב לשם מלכות שאינה הוגנת, לשם מלכות
מדיי, לשם מלכות יוון, לבניין הבית, או לחורבן הבית...

⁴⁶ Rashi, ערכין יד, resolves the discrepancy by suggesting that 420 refers to complete years and that the *churban* took place in the following year. The problem with this approach is that the equivalent calculation for the 1st Temple which ended on a post *shemittah* year, i.e. 480-40-16+410=836, assumes the *churban* took place on the 410th year of the 1st Temple. It again seems forced to say that two numbers that are stated in the same way (i.e., 410 for the 1st Temple and 420 for the 2nd Temple) are to be interpreted differently. Our explanation avoids the problem.

⁴⁷ We will explain this part of the statement a little later in the text. See also footnote 32 for a discussion of "years from creation."

In הלכה ו' Rambam uses several of these designations, i.e., years from the destruction of the Temple, מנין שטרות (from the Greek period) and the year from creation. Unfortunately, the exact meaning of “from creation” when used in early sources is not always clear. *Chazon Ish* (או"ח ר"ה סימן קמ) explains that in general when the year for an event is calculated based on Biblical numbers we can never be certain whether the year:

- Is the one in which the event took place.
- Is the number of complete years that elapsed before the event in question took place (i.e. the event took place in the next year).
- Is being counted from the birth of Adam or the Rosh Hashanah one year earlier.⁴⁸

The question thus becomes what Rambam meant by “4936 from creation.” Fortunately, we have a similar reference by Rambam in *Hilchos Kiddush Hachodesh* 11:16:⁴⁹

כבר אמרנו שאלו הדרכים שאנו מבארים בהלכות אלו, אינן
אלא לחשבון ראיית הירח בלבד; לפיכך עשינו העיקר שממנו

⁴⁸ The world was created on the 25th of *Elul*. That year had only 5 days and is referred to as the year of תוהו (i.e. most of it did not really exist). Adam was created on the Friday of the week of creation. If we count time from Adam, he was created in year 1. If we count time from the start of *tobu*, Adam was created on Rosh Hashanah of year 2. Our current calendar system uses *tobu* as its base. See Appendix.

⁴⁹ Edgar Frank, page 25, *Talmudic and Rabbinical Chronology* also makes the association between Rambam in קידוש החודש (K”H) and Rambam in שמיטה ויובל. His analysis and conclusions, however, are significantly different than ours. A more complete discussion of this material is beyond the scope of this paper. As an aside, from the dates listed in both of these halachos, one might try to conclude that K”H which precedes *Shemittah V’yovel* in the *Yad*, was written 2 years later. Finally, in K”H 9:5, two chapters earlier, Rambam offers an example using the year 4930. However, he does not indicate there that it actually was the year he was writing it. See *Sichos in English*, Vol. 21, *Iyar* 5744, “Shabbos Parshas Chukas, 1st Day of Rosh Chodesh Tammuz, 5744”, for a discussion by the Lubavitcher Rebbe on the dating issues.

מתחילין לעולם לחשבון זה, מתחילת ליל חמישי שיומו יום שלישי לחודש ניסן משנה זו--שהיא שנת שבע עשרה ממחזור ר"ס, שהיא שנת שמונה ושלושים ותשע מאות וארבעת אלפים ליצירה, שהיא שנת תשע ושמונים וארבע מאות ואלף לשטרות, שהיא שנת תשע ומאה ואלף לחורבן בית שני...

His association of 4938 “from creation” with 1109 after the *churban* (and 1489 from שטרות) is exactly consistent with his designation in 4936 “from creation” with 1107 from the *churban* (and 1487 from שטרות). But in K”H he also explains that all years from creation are reckoned from the *molad BaHaRaD* of *Tisbrei* of the year prior to the creation of Adam, i.e. the nomenclature used today in our calendar:

ח וכן כשיהיה עימך ידוע מולד שנה זו, ותוסיף שאריתה על ימי המולד--אם פשוטה היא שארית הפשוטה, ואם מעוברת שארית המעוברת--ייצא לך מולד שנה שלאחריה. וכן שנה אחר שנה, עד סוף העולם. והמולד הראשון שממנו תתחיל, הוא מולד שהיה בשנה ראשונה של יצירה, והוא היה בליל שני חמש שעות בלילה ומאתיים וארבעה חלקים, סימן להם ב' ה' ר"ד; וממנו היא התחלת החשבון.

יג כשיהיה לך ידוע מולד תחילת מחזור, ותוסיף עליו ב' י"ו תקצ"ה, ייצא לך מולד תחילת המחזור שאחריו; וכן מולד כל מחזור ומחזור, עד סוף העולם. וכבר אמרנו שמולד תחילת המחזור הראשון היה ב' ה' ר"ד. ומולד השנה, הוא מולד תשרי של אותה השנה.

Extrapolating backwards, we now know that Rambam wrote in 1175 CE/1176 CE and, according to him, the *churban* took place in⁵⁰ 3829 (68 CE/ 69 CE).

That 68/69 is the year in which Rambam believes the 2nd Temple was destroyed can also be deduced from the שמיטה calendar now in use. When Rambam in הלכה ו concludes that the year 4936 is a *shemittah* year he is using the standard *shemittah/yovel* 7/50 year model. Thus, the year 4936 was 414+1107=1521 years after the

⁵⁰ Edgar Frank, page 22 says Rambam is “The only Rabbinical source within 1500 years” to correctly date the *churban* to 70CE. We disagree.

reinstitution of *shemittah*. Since $(1521 \bmod 50) \bmod 7 = 0$, the year in which he was writing the halacha, 4936 was *shemittah* exactly as was the year of the destruction of the 2nd Temple.⁵¹ However, in הלכה ז:ח Rambam offers a different view on how *shemittah* is determined today based on a Gaonic *mesorah* that when there is no temple there is no *yovel*. In this view, the *shemittah* status for any year can easily be calculated by knowing how many years it is from the destruction of the Temple and simply dividing by 7, i.e. $X \bmod 7$:

ז אבל כל הגאונים אמרו שמסורת היא בידיהם איש מפי איש, שלא מנו באותן השבעים שנה שבין חורבן בית ראשון ובניין בית שני אלא שמיטות בלבד, בלא יובל; וכן משחרב באחרונה, לא מנו שנת חמישים אלא שבע שבע בלבד מתחילת שנת החורבן. וכן עולה מתלמוד עבודה זרה, כפי חשבון זה שהוא קבלה.

ח ושנת השמיטה ידועה היא ומפורסמת, אצל הגאונים ואנשי ארץ ישראל; וכולן לא מנו אלא לשני חורבן, משליכין אותן שבע שבע. ולפי חשבון זה תהי שנה זו, שהיא שנת שבע ומאה ואלף לחורבן, מוצאי שביעית. ועל זה אנו סומכין, וכפי חשבון זה אנו מורין לעניין מעשרות ושביעית והשמטת כספים-- שהקבלה והמעשה עמודים גדולים בהוראה, ובהן ראוי להיתלות.

Hence 4936 is a post-*shemittah* year because $1107 \bmod 7 = 1$ and thus one year later in the *shemittah* cycle than the year of the destruction. In terms of which system to ultimately adopt, Rambam concluded הלכה ז by backing the Gaonic position.

⁵¹ Rambam does not mention the details of this calculation but merely that it was the 21st year of a *yovel* cycle. Note, the entire calculation is necessary and it is not sufficient to merely assert that since 4936 is 1107 years after the *churban* and $(1107 \bmod 50) \bmod 7 = 0$ it follows that $4936 \equiv 3829$ with respect to *shemittah*. The problem is that there are possible 0's resulting from the Mod50 component which indicate it is *yovel*, not *shemittah*. The simple counter example is year 4965 which is 1136 years after the חורבן. Using only 1136 we get $(1136 \bmod 50) \bmod 7 = 1$, i.e. 4965 is the 1st year in a *shemittah* cycle. Using the full number count from the building of the 2nd Temple you get $(1550 \bmod 50) = 0$, i.e., it is a *yovel* year.

We most recently observed שמיטה in 5761 (2000/2001). In the Gaonic system, with respect to their position in the *shemittah* cycle $4935 (1174/1175 \text{ CE}) \equiv 5761$ and thus also *shemittah* (i.e., $(5761-4935) \text{Mod} 7 = 826 \text{Mod} 7 = 0$). Our current system is then consistent with Rambam's statement that according to the Gaonim 4936 (1175/1176) was the 1st year of a *shemittah* cycle. Regressing this further back 1107 years to the period of the *churban* and applying $1107 \text{Mod} 7 = 1$, means that 3829 (68/69) was a *shemittah* year. Since Rambam, places the *churban* of the 2nd Temple in *shemittah* that means he dates the *churban* to *Av*⁵² of 3829 or equivalently the summer of 69. Historical records, however, seem to place the *churban* in 70 CE⁵³ or in the first year of a *shemittah* cycle, exactly as attested to by the literal words of Rebbe Yosi.

Based on all of the above Rambam's explanation and our interpretation of Rebbe Yosi lead to the same halachic *shemittah* designation for all post *churban* years. The only difference is whether the *churban* took place in 69 (Rambam, *Shemittah*) or 70 (Historical, Post-*shemittah*). Based on the above we argue that Rebbe Yosi statement in *Eruchin* is not to merely offer a homiletical evaluation of what happened. Rather, his major intention was to make a halachic statement which allows him to disrupt the history line without affecting the designation of *shemittah* years.

⁵² Rambam's dating of the *churban* to 3829 is not inconsistent with our previous calculation that identified 3828 as the year of the *churban*. Looking at the three alternatives previously presented by חזון איש concerning the meaning of 3828, i.e.:

- Is the one in which the event took place,
- Is the number of complete years that elapsed before the event in question took place (i.e. the event took place in the next year),
- Is being counted from the birth of Adam or the Rosh Hashanah of *tohu*.

As we have seen before, Rambam counts from year *tohu*. If the *Gemara's* count is from Adam then Rambam's 3829 and the *Gemara's* 3828 are reconcilable.

⁵³ This dates the *churban* to 3830. This is consistent with 3828 by applying both the 2nd choice and the second option of choice 3 mentioned in the previous footnote (see חזון איש).

Tannaim and Amoraim

It is interesting that although Rebbe Yosi's intentional rewriting of history did not have halachic implications for *shemittah*, it may have had significant halachic implications in a totally different arena. It is well accepted that *amoraim* cannot dispute assertions of *tannaim*, and post-Talmudic sages cannot dispute *amoraic* opinions. The origin of this principle as well as its rationale is, however, unclear. Table 2 summarizes the three prevailing views on this subject.

Table 2

Reasons for not Allowing Disagreements Amongst
Chachamim of Different Talmudic and Post-Talmudic Eras

Source	Reason
Kesef Mishnah (Mamrim 2:1)	At the completion of the Mishnah it was proposed and accepted that future <i>Chachamim</i> could not disagree with the Mishnah. A similar agreement was reached at the completion of the <i>Gemara</i> .
Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik	The <i>mesorah</i> ended with the <i>amoraim</i> . Hence post- <i>amoraim</i> could not disagree with <i>amoraim</i> . In principal the <i>amoraim</i> could argue with the <i>tannaim</i> , but they chose not to.
Chazon Ish	The <i>amoraim</i> recognized that they were not on the same level as their predecessors and thus would not disagree with them. ⁵⁴ Similarly, the post-Talmudic rabbis were unwilling to dispute opinions of <i>amoraic</i> origins.

⁵⁴ See *Meiri, Introduction to Avos*, who says that on rare occasions when an *amora* felt that a Mishnah was in error, he would amend the language of the Mishnah.

The veracity of the principle and our inability to supply its origins is clearly articulated in the following תורת נביאים (מהר"ץ חיות)
(קט, p. מאמר לא תסור

והנה מרן בכ"מ פ"ב מהלכות ממרים הלכה א' התעורר בקו' עצומה על רבינו דלשיטתו דהיכי דפליגי בסברות ודרשות יכול האחרון לחלוק על הקדמון אע"ג דאינו גדול בחכמה ובמנין א"כ אמאי לא פליגי אמוראי אתנאי ? דהא בכ"מ מקשינן לאמורא מן מתניתן או ברייתא , וכי הוא ז"ל ואפשר לומר שמיום חתימת המשנה קיימו וקבלו עליהם שדורות האחרונים לא יחלוקו על הראשונים וכן עשו בחתימת הגמרא שמיום שנחתמה לא ניתן רשות לשום אדם לחלוק עליה עכ"ל, ואולם מי יתן ואדע היכן מצינו בשני התלמודים שהיה אצל הקדמונים הסכמה מוחלטת הזאת ? ולא בא מזה שום רמז במשנה ותלמוד וק' מרן חמורה מאוד...

We suggest עבודה זרה ט. as the source of both of these principles. In its question and answer, the *Gemara* entertained two possible starting points for the Torah period, i.e., Avraham at age 52 (year 2000) or Sinai (year 2448), and possibly, two counting conventions (Figure 3 below).

- If we count from Avraham:
 - JC—Torah era ends with the end of the *tannaim* (Mishnah),
 - CC—Torah era ends with the destruction of the 2nd Temple. Neither *tannaim* after ריב"ז or *amoraim* are in the Torah era.
- If we count from Sinai:
 - JC—Torah era includes *savaraim* and the first 90 years of the *gaonim*,
 - CC—Torah era ends with the end of the *amoraim* (*Gemara*).

Figure 3

From Birth of Avraham Until the Completion of the *Gemara*

Jewish and Conventional Chronology

Creation	2000	2448	3828JC/ 3994CC	3948JC/ 4114CC	4254JC/ 4420CC	4360JC/ 4526CC
Avraham in <i>Charan</i> .	Exodus, Sinai.	2 nd Temple Destroyed	Completion of Mishnah. End of <i>Tannaim</i> .	Completion of End of <i>Amoraim</i> . Start of <i>Savoraim</i> .	Completion of End of <i>Amoraim</i> . Start of <i>Savoraim</i> .	End of Start of <i>Gaonim</i> .
			←2000 Years CC→	←2000 Years JC→	←2000 Years CC→	←2000 Years JC→

The *tannaim*, not knowing what was to follow, started Torah with Avraham’s proselytizing not long after the *baflagab* and closed the era according to JC with the completion of the Mishnah. *Amoraim*, however, started Torah with Sinai and applied Conventional Chronology, thereby closing the era with the completion of the *Gemara*. Yet despite the fact that the *amoraim* championed CC, as we have shown they at no time took an open stand directly challenging the JC numbers of the *tannaim*. Rather, they were content with allowing their disagreement to subtly emerge from their rewording of old *tannaic* dicta that seemed at odds with historical reality. Our halachic principle of disallowing disputes between *tannaim*, *amoraim* and later *Chachamim* represents a continuation of this relationship and a validation of the implication of both chronologies, i.e., *amoraim* cannot disagree with *tannaim*; *gaonim* cannot disagree with *amoraim*.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Throughout this presentation we have stressed that Tanna D’Bei Eliyahu’s division of the world into three periods is meant to attribute halachic significance to knowledge emanating from the 2000 year Torah period. In this section we suggested that this can be translated into such

practical an application as not allowing scholars of the post-Torah era to openly disagree with their Torah era predecessors. *Chazon Ish*, הלכות אישות סימן כז, actually attempts to derive a much more far reaching interpretation of the 2000 year period of Torah. He asserts there that the significance of the Torah period is that it was the era of Torah “creativity,” and determination of all subsequent halachic decisions were to be based on the facts of that period. Thus, for example, if the Talmud defines יה טריפות as being incurable illnesses with an expected life span of less than one year, then, *Chazon Ish* claims, even if medical science can now cure these illnesses, they remain halachic *terefos* because our frame of reference must always be the Era of Torah. In support of his view, *Chazon Ish* references:

בבא מציעא דף פו ... רבי ור' נתן סוף משנה רב אשי ורבינא סוף הוראה וסימנך (תהילים עג) עד אבוא אל מקדשי אל אבינה לאהריתם.

and adds “and we do not have new Torah after them.” Thus, this period was not merely the time when Torah was studied. It was the time when Torah was still being defined. Note that *Chazon Ish* does not take the argument as far as we did to justify the rule for the *amoraim* not being able to disagree with the *tannaim*. From his quote he, in fact, appears to include *amoraim* in the Torah period (seemingly rejecting the *Gemara's* answer that Torah starts with Avraham and agreeing with Rav Ashi—according to Ritva—that Sinai is the start of Torah). As outlined in Table 2, *Chazon Ish* adheres to the theory that *tannaim*, *amoraim* and those that followed them were aware of the decline in knowledge and voluntarily agreed not to dispute the words of their predecessors. We are suggesting that using his reasoning, an analysis of the time line and the disputes over chronology allows us to take his hypothesis much further and in fact distinguish the *tannaim* from the *amoraim*. While it may certainly be true that the learning of Torah was not limited to the two thousand years, as Rashi in *Sanhedrin* points out, Torah creativity was. As a direct consequence of the different role and responsibilities of the *Chachamim* of the Torah and post-Torah eras, disputes between the two groups were impossible.

A less radical reading of the difference between a Torah era that starts with Avraham and one that starts with Sinai can perhaps be formulated based on a recent essay (2005) by Rabbi Nathan L. Cardozo entitled “The Beth Midrash of Avraham Avinu: Tentative Thoughts Towards a Jewish Religious Renaissance.” Rabbi Cardozo differentiates between the *beth bidrash* of Avraham and the *beth midrash* of Moshe:

Summary and Concluding Comments: Tanna D'Bei Eliyahu Revisited

It is interesting to note that comments attributed to D'Bei Eliyahu are generally⁵⁶ messianic and non-halachic in nature. In light of this we suggest that אליהו here is referring to אליהו the prophet and our belief that his return will precede and herald the messianic era. In this vein, D'Bei Eliyahu represents a group of people who preached and urged repentance and good conduct so that *mashiach* could/would finally come. The dating of such a group would most logically be after the destruction of the second Temple, up to and including the general era in which Rebbe lived. We would even venture a guess as to the identity of some of the Chachamim included in D'Bei Eliyahu. Note, that there are several places in *Sbas* (e.g., *Berachos* 3a) where Rebbe Yosi bar Chalafta's encounters with אליהו are mentioned. Similarly, we find in *Baba Metz'ia* 59b and other places that Rebbe Nasan (the co-author of the Mishnah with Rebbe) met with אליהו. We, therefore, suggest that D'Bei Eliyahu are a group of late *tannaim* (including Rebbe Yosi and Rebbe Nasan) who are said to have met with אליהו and who, when speaking about matters of *mashiach*, spoke

“We must therefore realize that Judaism did not start as a halachic tradition, as we know it today. It took hundreds of years before the Sinai revelation with all its halachic implications, became possible. Much had to happen before such an exalted moment. Halacha had to grow out of the Abrahamic experience. It is only *then* that the Beth Midrash of Moshe Rabbenu became possible. It is the Beth Midrash of halachic discussion and halachic decision-making. But such a Beth Midrash must first of all be grounded in the existential “*emunah*” orientated Beth Midrash of Avraham Avinu.”

Rabbi Cardozo does not cite our Gemara in *Avodah Zarah* in his essay, but the difference between where to start the 2000 years certainly resonates from this *Gemara*.

⁵⁶ In all, there are 9 different statements attributed to Tanna D'Bei Eliyahu in Bavli and none in Yerushalmi:

1) קידושין פ: (5, גדה עג. = מגילה כח: 4), פסחים קיב: (3, פסחים צד. 2), שבת יג. 1), תמיד לב: (9), ע"ז ח: (8, ע"ז ט. = סנהדרין צו. 7), סנהדרין צב. 6)

Only #3 is directly related to a halacha. All of the rest deal with תחיית המתים, משיח, earth, advice, etc.

with the more authoritative designation of D'Bei Eliyahu. As we have also mentioned previously, we find D'Bei Eliyahu citing works of Rebbe Akiva and Rebbe Nasan. Since Rebbe Akiva was the teacher of Rebbe Yosi bar Chalafta, and Rebbe Yosi bar Chalafta and Rebbe Nasan were part of the D'Bei Eliyahu, this is not surprising. We also find the Gemara relating stories concerning אליהו visiting Rebbe Yosi and Rebbe in *Baba Metz'ia* 83-84.

If our assumptions are correct, the chronology and the statement of D'Bei Eliyahu offered in ט. עבודה זרה ח: - ט. are authored by the same or contemporary *Chachamim*. In accord with our contention of the previous section that Rebbe Yosi was willing to go to great lengths (i.e., change chronology) to assure the universal acceptance of the Mishnah, we can offer new insights into the meaning of the well known dicta attributed to D'Bei Eliyahu (מגילה כח:):

תנא דבי אליהו כל השונה הלכות בכל יום מובטח לו שהוא בן
עולם הבא.

What does “Halachos” refer to? The preceding *Gemara* in *Megillah* used the word “Halachos” and Rashi translates it as “he taught Mishnayos to *talmidim*.” Thus, the same D'Bei Eliyahu who subdivide the world's 6000 years into three 2000 year intervals, also encourage the learning of Mishnayos as a way of being guaranteed a share in the world to come. This is not mere coincidence. The purpose of both is to give Mishnah credibility and encourage its acceptance and learning as a way of achieving the world to come.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Perhaps this is also the meaning of the word הלכה in the following expression authored by רב who straddled the *tannaic* and *amoraic* periods: **סנהדרין דף צא:** ... אמר רב יהודה אמר רב כל המונע הלכה מפי תלמיד כאילו גזולו מנחלת אבותיו שנאמר (דברים לג) תורה צוה לנו משה מורשה קהילת יעקב מורשה היא לכל ישראל מששת ימי בראשית.

Not merely content with lauding Mishnah as a major work, Rav intends here to put it on a par with the written Torah and traces its lineage back to creation.

“What has Passed has Passed”

As we have previously discussed, according to the Rebbe Yosi’s chronology, the question and answer dialogue in *Avodah Zarah* concerning D’Bei Eliyahu’s decomposition of the six thousand years, is problematic. The entire discussion is based on the assumption that *mashiach* cannot come before the year 4000. If D’Bei Eliyahu is *tannaic* then it predates 4000 (i.e., the *tannaic* period would have ended with Rebbe prior to the year 4000 JC). If D’Bei Eliyahu is the work of an *amora* then it is contradicted by the actions of Rebbe Akiva and his contemporaries in proclaiming Bar Kochba (about 3880 JC) *mashiach*?

However, if the historical chronology is correct, the Bar Kochba revolt would have taken place in 4046 and the *tannaic* period would have ended in 4114. Our suggestion that D’Bei Eliyahu dates from about the period of Rebbe Yosi bar Chalafta until the end of the *tannaic* period would have allowed Rav Ashi (around 4431) to have authored the questions and answers of the *Gemara* in *Avodah Zarah* in a completely logical sequence and with the intention of restoring the proper time line.⁵⁸

In summation, we are suggesting that in promulgating its view of world history, D’Bei Eliyahu were employing the chronology presented by Rebbe Yosi bar Chalafta. This chronology was designed and chosen because the two thousand years of Torah end with the writing of the Mishnah. D’Bei Eliyahu’s statement is not in and of

⁵⁸ In Sanhedrin 94a, בר קפרא, a disciple of Rebbe, asserts that *Hashem* wanted to make הזקיה *mashiach* but decided not to. According to all chronologies, הזקיה was definitely before 4000. Is בר קפרא consistent with D’Bei Eliyahu? עץ היים asks this question (*Sanbedrin* 97a) and suggests that הזקיה was so great that *Hashem* was contemplating altering his plans for him. We suggest that the *Gemara* (*Sanbedrin* 94b) lauds the period of הזקיה for its unprecedented high state of Torah (“they searched from Dan to Be’er Sheva and did not find an ‘*am ha’aretz*’ from Givat to Antifres and did not find a male or female child, man or woman who were not experts in the laws of unclean and clean ...”). Consistent with our interpretation of the views expressed by the D’Bei Eliyahu that the culmination of the Torah period is followed by the messianic period, it is only natural that the הזקיה era could have been a catalyst for *mashiach*. Alas, as the *Maharsha* points out, it was not to be because of other considerations (“*razqa li, razqa li*”).

itself contradicted by Rebbe Akiva proclaiming Bar Kochba as Mashiach, because as Rashi explained in *Sanbedrin*, *mashiach* can come before the year 4000.

It nevertheless is somewhat disingenuous for D'Bei Eliyahu to bemoan the delay in *mashiach* when according to the calculations they are perpetuating they themselves are living in just about the time *mashiach* was destined to come. We would therefore like to suggest a different interpretation of the phrase בעונותינו שרבו יצאו מהן מה שיצאו מהן. In a previous section we explained how the dicta from D'Bei Eliyahu decomposing the world into 3 two thousand year periods is not purely aggadaic but also has halachic ramifications. In this section we would like to explain that D'Bei Eliyahu is also expressing a theological view on how a committed Torah observant Jew is supposed to view the world. In essence D'Bei Eliyahu's presents a glorified eternally forward moving view of world history. First the world would endure a period of "tohu" personified by the absence of Torah. This was to be followed by a more elevated era ushered in by Avraham Avinu. This period would eventually culminate with the giving of the Torah at Sinai and the acceptance of the *mitzvos* by Avraham's descendants who promised to observe the Torah and study it forever. Finally, history would culminate in a messianic era where the glory of *Hashem* and his Torah⁵⁹ would reign supreme over an entire world. In this picture of history, backsliding may possibly occur within relatively small pockets of time when the Jewish people do not conduct themselves as *Hashem* would like. Nevertheless, the overall trend in the D'Bei Eliyahu world view is always forward moving. Although D'Bei Eliyahu never mentions it, we feel it is important to point out that within a year of the giving of the Torah at Sinai, the משכן was built and became operational. The reality of a central place of worship for the Jewish people continued in some form of the משכן for 480 years, followed by the 1st Temple for 410 years and subsequently, after a 70 year pause, by the 2nd Temple for 420 years.⁶⁰ Thus for 1310 of the 1380 years following Sinai the Jewish people were fortunate to have had both a Torah as well as some form of Temple. It would be reasonable to say that the central

⁵⁹ As Rashi explains in *Sanbedrin*.

⁶⁰ By Rebbe Yosi's chronology. In the historical chronology it is 1476 out of a possible 1546 years.

place of worship had a positive impetus on the religiosity of the people and their dedication to Torah.⁶¹ With the destruction of the 2nd Temple the theological question became whether the change in fortune was just another temporary downward blip in the 2000 years of Torah⁶² (e.g. like the 70 years between the two Temples) or an indication of a fundamental alteration in the idealized model of “continuous improvement” first envisioned? With this in mind we cite ראש השנה יט: which presents a dispute between Rebbe Yosi and Rebbe Meir as to whether the holidays listed in מגילת תענית were still in effect after the destruction of the 2nd Temple:

דף יט: ... תנאי היא דתניא הימים האלו הכתובין במגילת תענית בין בזמן שבית המקדש קיים בין בזמן שאין בהמ"ק קיים אסורין דברי ר"מ רבי יוסי אומר בזמן שבהמ"ק קיים אסורין מפני ששמחה היא להם אין בית המקדש קיים מותרין מפני שאבל הוא להם והלכתא בטלו והלכתא לא בטלו קשיא הלכתא אהלכתא לא קשיא כאן בחנוכה ופורים כאן בשאר יומי:

We suggest that the dispute between these two *tannaim* who lived less than 50 years after the destruction of the 2nd Temple was whether it was time to write off the 2nd Temple era or still hold out hope for the imminent rebuilding of the Temple. Rebbe Meir felt that there was still hope that the 2nd Temple era might be salvaged and thus insisted on the perpetuation of all victories of that era. Rebbe Yosi, on the other hand, felt that the 2nd Temple era was over and thus felt no need to celebrate localized victories or successes of a bygone era.⁶³

⁶¹ For over 800 years of מקדש/משכן (i.e. Shiloh and the 1st Temple) the ארון, which symbolizes Torah, resided in the מקדש/משכן. The remaining time it did not. Yet even without the ארון the מקדש/משכן would have had a supportive effect on Torah.

⁶² The issue would no doubt of been exacerbated by the fact that according to CC the *churban* took place in almost exactly 4000, i.e., the time that the next era in world evolution was scheduled to start.

⁶³ ראש השנה יח: offers a similar dispute between pairs of very early *amoraim* as to the relationship of the four fasts originally instituted in the period immediately following the destruction of the 1st Temple, and of the continued applicability of מגילת תענית:

In this light, we suggest that בעונותינו שרבו יצאו מהן מה שיצאו מהן is not referring to 2000 years of Torah elapsing without the arrival of *mashiach*. Rather, D'Bei Eliyahu is expressing the idea that history was initially meant to allow for the Temple to continue during the entire era of Torah up until the coming of *mashiach* (and presumably thereafter as well). The destruction of both Temples was not an inherent part of the original world plan. Because of our many sins, however, this was not to be. "What has passed has passed" refers to the destruction of both Temples (and perhaps the disaster of Bar Kochba at Betar). D'Bei Eliyahu are not bemoaning the delay of *mashiach* but rather the destruction that had already occurred and was not part of the original grand scheme.⁶⁴

As we have explained before, whatever the intentions and chronology of D'Bei Eliyahu, the *amoraim* who composed the questions and answers in *Avodah Zarah* generally worked with the historical chronology (not that of Rebbe Yosi). While the *Gemara* ostensibly devised a way of justifying D'Bei Eliyahu's assertion that the year 4000 is two thousand years after the start of Torah (i.e., Avraham at the age of 52), it at the same time has insured that it is not lost on us that the completion of the *Gemara* occurred almost exactly 2000 years after Sinai.

We point out in concluding this paper that the *Gemara's* preoccupation with predicting the imminent coming of *mashiach* is centered on dates between the years 4000 and 4300. While some mystics and commentators have attempted to predict the date of *mashiach's* arrival after this period from other hints left in Daniel and the *Gemara*, for the most part the *Gemara* itself is silent on the issue.

...איתמר רב ורבי חנינא אמרי בטלה מגילת תענית רבי יוחנן וריב"ל אמרי לא בטלה מגילת תענית רב ורבי חנינא אמרי בטלה מגילת תענית הכי קאמר בזמן שיש שלום יהיו לששון ולשמחה אין שלום צום והגך נמי כי הני רבי יוחנן ורבי יהושע בן לוי אמרי לא בטלה מגילת תענית הני הוא דתלינהו רחמנא בבנין בהמ"ק אבל הגך כדקיימי קיימי.

Based on the two cited *Gemaras* we suggest that this dispute over how to interpret the destruction of the Temple continued on for well over a century and was only settled with the passing of time and the continued worsening of hardships.

⁶⁴ Neither is D'Bei Eliyahu concerned that based on the historical chronology they in fact were after the year 4000 and *mashiach* had not come. Their comment מהן מה שיצאו מהן שרבו בעונותינו equally well explains *mashiach's* delay.

That is of course true only until the year 6000. Once we begin to draw close to that year, the *Gemara's* predictions will once again come to the fore. Based on JC we are in the year 5766 and while we pray every day for *mashiach's* arrival, the year 6000 is far enough in the future for us not to linger on the *Gemara's* predictions. However, if, as we contend CC is correct and the Ramban as well, then we are really $166+30=196$ further along in the calendar and the year we are currently in is 5962. As such, the *Gemara's* predictions about *mashiach's* arrival are once again in play. May *Hashem* spare the Jewish people pain and suffering and bring *mashiach* to take us out of this final exile in the very very near future. 

Appendix

Chronology of Bereishis

The chart below of the 20 generations of fathers and sons from Creation until Avraham shows exactly how we derive that Avraham was born in 1948. The analysis is based on the year the father was born (column 3) and how old the father was when the son was born (column 2—given in verses in *Bereishis*). The sum of the year the father was born and how old he was when the son was born yield the year of the son's birth.

<u>Generation</u>	<u>Age of Father At Birth of Next Generation</u>	<u>Year of Birth</u>
Adam		0
Seth	130	130
Enosh	105	235
Kenan	90	325
Mehalalel	70	395
Yered	65	460
Enoch	162	622
Methuselah	65	687
Lamech	187	874
Noah	182	1056
Shem	502	1558
Arpachshad	100	1658
Shelah	35	1693
Eber	30	1723
Peleg	34	1757
Reu	30	1787
Serug	32	1819
Nahor	30	1849
Terah	29	1878
Avraham	70	1948

Note that this procedure yields the birth of Avraham in 1948 only if we designate the year in which Adam was born as year 0. If the year Adam was born is designated Year 1, then all of the dates of births in this list will increase by 1. According to this count (called

Cheshbon Adam) Avraham was born in 1949. Our current calendar considers Adam to have been born in Year 2 and is referred to as *Cheshbon Tohu* (this term is explained several times in the course of this paper). According to our calendar system all the numbers in the above list must be increased by 2 and Avraham was born in Year 1950. Any one of these 3 systems can be used interchangeably as long as it is made clear what the initial frame of reference is. *Seder Olam* uses the designation given in the above list and is the one primarily used in this paper. We note that Art Scroll in “*Tanach Stone*” edition, Appendix A, Timeline 1, and Aryeh Kaplan in “*The Living Torah*” Plate 2, start with Adam being born in year 1 and still have Avraham being born in Year 1948. As we just explained, this is incorrect.