

PREFACE
TO THE
TWO BOOKS OF CHRONICLES

by
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Anciently these two books were considered but as one. For this we have not only the testimony of St. Jerome, but also that of the Masorettes, who gave the sum of all the sections, chapters, and verses under one notation at the end of the second book, without mentioning any division. And although the modern Jews divide them, yet they give the Masoretic enumeration of sections, &c., as it was given of old; and all editors of the Masoretic Bibles, whether Jewish or Christian, follow the same plan.

These books have had several names. In Hebrew they are denominated דברי הימים *dibrei haiyamim*; literally, *The Words of the Days*, i.e., *The Journals*, particularly of the kings of Israel and kings of Judah. But this name does not appear to have been given by the inspired writer.

The *Syriac* has, *The Book of the Transactions in the days of the Kings of Judah; which is called, Dibrei Yamim* (referring to the Hebrew title).

The *Arabic* has, *The Book of the Annals, which is called in Hebrew, Dibrei Haiyamim.*

The *Septuagint* has, παραλειπομενων, *of the things that were left or omitted*; supposing that these books were a *supplement* either to Samuel and to the books of Kings, or to the whole Bible. To this the Greek translators might have been led by finding that these books in their time closed the Sacred Canon, as they still do in the most correct editions of the Hebrew Bible.

The *Vulgate* uses the same term as the *Septuagint*, referring, like the *Syriac* and *Arabic*, to the *Hebrew name*.

In our *English Bibles* these books are termed *Chronicles*, from the Greek χρονικα from χρονος, *time*, i.e., *A History of Times*; or, as the matter of the work shows, "A History of Times, Kingdoms, States, Religion, &c., with an Account of the most memorable *Persons* and *Transactions* of those Times and Nations."

Concerning the *author* of these books, nothing certain is known. Some think they are the works of different authors. But the uniformity of the style, the connection of the facts, together with the recapitulations and reflections which are often made, prove that they

are the work of one and the same person.

The Jews, and Christian interpreters in general, believe they were the work of Ezra, assisted by the prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. That Ezra was the author is, on the whole, the most probable opinion. That he lived at the conclusion of the Babylonish captivity is well known; and the second book of Chronicles terminates at that period, barely reciting the decree of Cyrus to permit the return of the captivated Israelites to their own land, which subject is immediately taken up in the book of Ezra, in which the operation of that decree is distinctly marked.

There are words and terms both in Chronicles and Ezra which are similar and prove that each was written *after* the captivity and probably by the same person, as those terms were not in use previously to that time. And some of them are peculiar to Ezra himself. E.g., [for example] we have

[1] כפורי זהב *kipporey zapb*, "golden cups" (Ezra 1:10; 8:27; 1 Chr. 28:17);

[2] and דרכמון *darkmon* or *drakmon*, "a drachma" or *drachm* (1 Chr. 29:7; Ezra 2:69; Neh. 7:70);

[3] and רפסדות *raphsodoth*, "rafts" or *floats* (2 Chr. 2:16), widely differing from דברות *doberoth* (1 Kings 5:9), which we there translate in the same way.

Calmet considers these words as strong evidence that these books were the work of Ezra and penned after the captivity.

We are not to suppose that these books are the *Chronicles of the Kings of Judah and Israel* so often referred to in the historical books of the Old Testament. These have been lost; and the books before us can only be abridgments, either of such chronicles or of works of a similar kind.

That the ancient Jews took great care to register their civil, military, and ecclesiastical transactions is sufficiently evident from frequent reference to such works in the sacred writings; and that these *registers* were carefully and correctly formed we learn from the character of the persons by whom they were compiled. They were in general prophets, and seem to have been employed by the kings under whom they lived to compile the annals of their reigns; or most likely this was considered a part of the prophet's regular office.

[1] *Samuel, Nathan, and Gad* wrote under the reign of DAVID (1 Chr. 29:29).

[2] The acts of the reign of SOLOMON were written by *Nathan, Ahijah, and Iddo* (2 Chr. 9:29).

[3] *Shemaiah and Iddo* wrote those of REHOBOAM (2 Chr. 12:15).

[4] *Iddo* wrote also those of ABIJAH (2 Chr. 13:22).

[5] It is likely that *Hanani* the seer wrote those of ASA (2 Chr. 16:7).

[6] *Jehu* the prophet, the son of Hanani (1 Kings 16:1,7) wrote the acts of JEHOSHAPHAT (2 Chr. 20:34). Under this same reign we find *Jahaziel* the prophet (2 Chr. 20:14) and *Eliezer* the prophet (*ib.* v. 37).

[7] *Isaiah* recorded the transactions of UZZIAH (2 Chr. 26:22) and those of HEZEKIAH (2 Chr. 32:32; and of AHAZ, of whose reign we find the principal facts in the fifth, sixth, and ninth chapters of his prophecies. Under this reign we find *Oded* the prophet (2 Chr. 28:9).

[8] *Hosea* wrote the history of the reign of MANASSEH (see 2 Chr. 33:19 in the margin).

[9] And *Jeremiah* wrote the history of JOSIAH and his descendants, the last kings of Judah.

This was such a succession of historians as no nation of the world could ever boast--men, all of whom wrote under the *inspiration* of God's Holy Spirit, some of whom had minds the most highly cultivated and of the most extraordinary powers. Whether the prophets who flourished in the reigns of the kings of Israel wrote the annals of *those* kings, we know not, because it is not positively declared. We know that

[1] *Ahijah* the Shilonite lived under JEREBOAM, the son of Nebat (1 Kings 11:29, 14:2), and

[2] *Jehu*, the son of Hanani, under BAASHA (1 Kings 16:7).

[3] *Elijah* and many others flourished under the reign of AHAB. *Elisha*, *Jonah*, and many more succeeded in the prophetic office.

Besides these prophets and prophetic men we find other persons, whose office it was to record the transactions of the kings under whom they lived. These were called *secretaries* or *recorders*. So,

[1] under DAVID and SOLOMON, *Jehoshaphat* the son of Ahilud was *recorder*, מזכיר *mazkir*, "remembrancer" (2 Sam. 8:16; 1 Chr. 18:15).

[2] And under HEZEKIAH we find *Joah*, the son of *Asaph* (2 Kings 18:18).

[3] And under JOSIAH, *Joah* the son of *Joahaz*, who filled the office (2 Chr. 34:8).

The real object of the author of these books is not very easy to be ascertained. But it is evident that he never could have intended them as a supplement to the preceding books as

he relates many of the same circumstances which occur in them and often in greater detail, and except by way of amplification adds very little that can be called new, and omits many things of importance not only in the ancient history of the Israelites but even of those mentioned in the preceding books of Samuel and Kings. Nine chapters of his work are occupied with extensive genealogical tables, but even these are far from being perfect [complete]. His history, properly speaking, does not begin till the tenth chapter, and then it commences abruptly with the last unsuccessful battle of Saul and his death, but not a word of his history.

Though the writer gives many curious and important particulars in the life of David, yet he passes by his adultery with Bath-sheba and all its consequences. He says nothing of the incest of Amnon with his sister Tamar, nor a word of the rebellion and abominations of Absalom. He says very little of the kings of Israel, and takes no notice of what concerned that state from the capture of Amaziah king of Judah by Joash king of Israel (2 Chr. 25:17, &c). And of the last wars of these kings, which terminated in the captivity of the ten tribes, he says not one word!

The principal design of the writer appears to have been this: to point out from the public registers, which were still preserved, what had been the state of the different families previously to the captivity, that at their return they might enter on and repossess their respective inheritances. He enters particularly into the functions, genealogies, families, and orders of the priests and Levites. And this was peculiarly necessary after the return from the captivity, to the end that the worship of God might be conducted in the same way as before and by the proper legitimate persons.

He is also very particular relative to what concerns religion, the worship of God, the temple and its utensils, the kings who authorized or tolerated idolatry, and those who maintained the worship of the true God. In his distribution of praise and blame, these are the qualities which principally occupy his attention and influence his pen.

It may be necessary to say something here concerning the *utility* of these books. That they are in this respect in low estimation we may learn from the manner in which they are treated by commentators--they say very little concerning them and suppose the subject has been anticipated in the books of Samuel and Kings. That the persons who treat them thus have never studied them is most evident, else their judgment would be widely different. Whatever history these books possess in common with the books of Samuel and Kings may, in a commentary, be fairly introduced in the examination of the latter. And this I have endeavored to do, as the reader may have already seen. But there are various details, and curious facts and observations which must be considered in these books alone; nor will a slight mention of such circumstances do them justice.

St. Jerome had the most exalted opinion of the books of Chronicles. According to him, "they are an epitome of the Old Testament." He asserts that "they are of such high moment and importance, that he who supposes himself to be acquainted with the sacred writings, and does not know *them*, only deceives himself; and that innumerable questions

relative to the Gospel are here explained."¹ And in another place he asserts that "all Scripture knowledge is contained in these books."² This may be going too far, but St. Jerome believed that there was a mystery and meaning in every proper name, whether of man, woman, city, or country, in the book. And yet he complains greatly of the corruption of those names, some having been divided so as to make two or three names out of one; and sometimes names condensed so as of three names to make but one. To cure this evil he labored hard and did much. But still the confusion is great, and in many cases past remedy. To assist the reader in this respect I wish to refer him to the *marginal readings* and *parallel texts* which are here carefully represented in the inner margin. These should be constantly consulted as they serve to remove many difficulties and reconcile several seeming contradictions. In addition to these helps I have carefully examined the different ancient versions and the various readings in the MSS. of Kennicott and DeRossi, which often help to remove such difficulties.

There is one mode of exposition which I have applied to these books which has not, as far as I know, been as yet used. I mean the *Targum*, or *Chaldee Paraphrase*, of Rabbi JOSEPH. It is well known to all oriental scholars that a *Chaldee Targum*, or Paraphrase, has been found and published in the Polyglots on every book of the Old Testament, *purely Hebrew*, the books of *Chronicles* excepted. Neither in the Complutensian, Antwerp, Parisian, nor London Polyglot is such a *Targum* to be found; none having been discovered when these works were published.

But shortly after the London Polyglot was finished, a MS. was found in the University of Cambridge containing the *Targum* on these books. This, with several other pieces, *Arabic, Persian, Syriac, &c.*, Dr. Samuel Clarke collected and intended to publish as a supplementary volume to the Polyglot, but was prevented by premature death. The MS. was afterwards copied by Mr. David Wilkins and printed with a Latin translation at Amsterdam, quarto, 1715. Of this work the reader will find I have made a liberal use (as I have of the *Targum* of Jonathan ben Uzziel on the preceding books). Rabbi Joseph, the author, lived about three hundred years after the destruction of the second temple, or about A.D. 400. The MS. in question formerly belonged to the celebrated *Erpen*, and was purchased by the duke of Buckingham, then Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, and by him presented to the public library of that University.

It is worthy of remark that the term **מִמְרָא** *meymera*, "word," and **מִמְרָא דִּי** *meymera dayeya*, "the word of Jehovah," is used *personally* in this Targum; never as a *word spoken*, but as a PERSON *acting* (see the notes on John 1:1).

The *first book of Chronicles* contains a sort of genealogical history, from the creation of the world to the death of David, A.M. 2989.

Note: Author's introduction in *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments, With A*

1 *Evangelii Quæstiones*.--Epis. Secund. ad Paulinum Presbyterum., OPER. Edit. Benedict. vol. iv., col. 574.

2 Præfat. in lib. Paral. juxta Septuaginta Interpret. OPER. Edit. Bened., vol. i., col. 1418.

Commentary and Critical Notes. (New York: G. Lane & C. B. Tippet, 1846). The text has not been modified, except that punctuation has been modernized and long paragraphs divided.

Appendix
Jewish Methods of Counting Years
by Kenneth J. Morgan
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What does "A.M. 2989" mean? What year is that? Before answering that question, a little background on the Jewish methods of counting years will prove most interesting.

During the biblical period from the beginning of the Monarchy, years were counted according to the regnal years of the kings of Israel and Judah. During the Persian era (539 B.C. onward), that method was continued using the regnal years of the Persian kings (see Haggai 1:1 and Zech. 1:1).

During the Hellenistic period, an "era" method was used. These methods identify year 1 with some great historical event, and years are counted from that point onward. The victory of Seleucus over Demetrius Poliorcetes and his return to Babylon in 312 B.C. was taken as the beginning of a new era. Reckoning years based on the Seleucus era continued among the Jewish people until the Middle Ages, in the East lasting until the 16th century.

Other eras were also used but did not last: the Hasmonean era (beginning 143/2 B.C.), the Era of the Redemption of Zion (the Jewish revolt between the years A.D. 66 to 70) and the Era of the Freedom of Israel (the Bar Kokhba revolt between the years of A.D. 131 to 135). Dates have also been counted from the destruction of the Second Temple in A.D. 70.

The era currently in use among the Jewish people, especially in Orthodox Judaism, is the *minyan la-yezirah*, the "Era of the Creation." In this system the years are counted from the creation of the world.

"A.M." is the abbreviation of the Latin, *Anno Mundi*, which means "In the Year of the World." The abbreviation is used in the same sense that B.C. and A.D. are used--that is, to identify the method used for calculating the numerical name of the year." Thus, "A.M. 2989" means that year 2989 is based on the Era of the Creation system of reckoning years.

The Era of Creation came into popular use about the 9th century A.D. There have been various rabbinical calculations of the beginning of the world, but from the 12th century A.D. onward the accepted date of the creation was 3761 B.C. on our modern Gregorian calendar. This does not differ very much from the well-known date of 4004 B.C. calculated by Archbishop James Ussher (1581-1656). Concerning the death of King David, modern scholarship generally takes the date to be 970 B.C.

Credit: Much of this information was taken from *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, XVI:1264 (Macmillan Co., 1971).