

“Those taken captive” is a reference to the future captivity of the Israelites among the nations during the end of days. The prophets foretold that out of this captivity a remnant of Israel and Judah would return to the Promised Land and eternally dwell with Yahweh.<sup>7</sup> This return was symbolized by the Israelites regaining their liberty during the Jubilee year. The coming of the messiah during the end of days, at which time he will save Israel and Judah from their captivity and return them to their homeland, was, by extension, understood as occurring in one of these future Jubilee years.<sup>8</sup>

In either case, whether for an accurate Israelite chronology or for eschatological purposes, a precise knowledge of this ancient cycle is required. Therefore, we must take the utmost care in uncovering the true and original sabbath year and Jubilee cycle.

There are four possible sabbath cycle systems we must consider.<sup>9</sup> For simplification purposes, this study shall utilize the following labels for these four systems. Our “key” or “example” date will be the sabbath year in each system which is either on or nearest to the year that Jerusalem and Herod’s Temple (the second Temple) were destroyed (the summer of 70 C.E.).<sup>10</sup>

**System “A”:** Abib (March/April)<sup>11</sup> 1, 70 C.E. until Abib 1, 71 C.E. The month of Abib was also called Nisan. System “A” is advocated by this study.

**System “B”:** Tishri (Sept./Oct.)<sup>12</sup> 1, 68 C.E. until Tishri 1, 69 C.E. The Zuckermann-Schürer system.

**System “C”:** Tishri 1, 69 C.E. until Tishri 1, 70 C.E. The Marcus-Wacholder theory.

**System “D”:** Abib 1, 69 C.E. until Abib 1, 70 C.E. A possibility based upon the evidence of an Abib 1 beginning for the year coupled with the claim of Rabbi Jose and other Talmudic writers that the year before the fall of Jerusalem was a sabbath year.

Today the most popular of these theories is system “B.” This system has been advocated since the time of the *Mishnah* (formed at the end of the second century C.E.). It only differs from system “D” in that system “D” would start the sabbath year in the spring rather than in the fall. System “C” has also been advocated since the *Gemara* portion of written Talmudic times,<sup>13</sup> but it has

<sup>7</sup> E.g. Lev., 16:14–45; Deut., 29:10–30:20; Jer., 30:10–31:34; Ezek., 37:1–28; Hosea, 1:1–3:5; Amos, 9:11–15; etc., cf. Acts, 1:1–7; Hebs., 8:8–13.

<sup>8</sup> See the study in HUCA, 46, pp. 201–218.

<sup>9</sup> See Chart A.

<sup>10</sup> In our study the abbreviations C.E. (Common Era) and B.C.E. (Before Common Era), the scholarly, religiously neutral designations, shall be utilized rather than the corresponding A.D. and B.C.

<sup>11</sup> See Chart G. The Hebrew month generally begins during the latter part of the first or the early part of the second Gregorian (Julian, Roman) month-name mentioned as its equivalent.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> For the purposes of our study, Talmudic times, which essentially represent Pharisaic traditions and interpretations of Scriptural laws, can be divided into three phases. First is the halakoth or oral laws period (mid-second century B.C.E. until the end of the second century C.E.). Second is the period when these oral laws were codified in written form. This event took place in about 200 C.E. with the composition of the *Mishnah*. It continued until about 500 C.E. with the *Gemara*, comments by the Rabbis on the *Mishnah*. The post-*Gemara* era is also called the post-Talmudic period. It represents the third phase of Talmudic times. Jewish scholars during this phase advocated the earlier codified Talmudic laws and traditions.