

la fameuse loi du prosbol, attribuee a Hillel (cf. Sebi'it X 4 ou on cite une formule differente et la formule des contrats traditionnels)." (Wacholder, 1973, Discoveries, II, pg. 103). My own study of the Aramaic yields a literal translation,

5. Not this I do sell until time
6. of this, I will be free of you in five [years] and I will pay in full,
7. even year of release this, and if so not, I will repay

I have rendered the Aramaic: אפרועיך as 'I will be free of you,' viz. אפרועיך based on the Hebrew cognate root, and the probability that the nun should be a yod. This means that the debtor will not sell the collateral for the loan for five years. At that time he is required to pay in full, and then he can sell the collateral. And even if he does not pay in full, he can sell the collateral, but he promises in spite of the sabbatical year to pay by mortgaging some other property he will acquire later.

It so happens that the second year of Nero 55/56 is the second year of the sabbatical cycle, that is, according to our view, the sabbath year was 53/54. The first year of the cycle was 54/55, and the second year was 55/56. There are therefore five years left to the next sabbatical year: 55/56, 56/57, 57/58, 58/59, 59/60, and 60/61 is the year of release. So the loan is up to the eve of the sabbatical year, when payment is expected, but if the debtor cannot make payment, then he can sell the property, but he still must repay by mortgaging something else. Mur 18 is therefore a classic prozbul document with a new element; payment is expected before the sabbatical year, but if not, then after, and so not only allows our cycle (it is a prozbul document), but confirms it by showing that five years remain to the sabbatical year. We have thus made sense out of the word 'in five' which Wacholder does not explain. Five 'years' makes sense, because a loan has to have a term, and line 6 begins 'time of this,' it being understood in law that a debtor would be free in the sabbatical year, so that loans were ordinarily made using sabbatic periods, even when the note was prozbul, so as to pay lip service to the Law.

The reading of R. Yaron and Goldstein *hwh*, "would be a year of release" shows that the text fits the true cycle.

33. Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Egypt

Nebuchadnezzar's insanity was from late 570 B.C. to late 563 B.C. It is assumed that Nebuchadnezzar made the initial attack in Egypt in the summer of 570 B.C. before returning to his palace. After he fell ill, the war was entrusted to his Generals and regents ruled over the kingdom. Profane records of this period have not been located, except for a very damaged tablet from 568 B.C., the 37th year of Nebuchadnezzar which notes the war in Egypt prosecuted in Nebuchadnezzar's name (ANET 254.98, page 308). Translations of this text vary, and it is not clear who attacked first, but clearly the Egyptians lost.

34. The Desolation of Egypt

Egypt was to be desolate for 40 years, without man or beast passing through it. We do not have any exact dates for this period except that it must begin after Nebuchadnezzar commenced his war with Egypt in 570 B.C., and must end before Cambyses found it necessary to invade Egypt in 525 B.C.. One theory says that Pharaoh abandoned Egypt by fleeing to Cyprus, and neither he nor the Egyptians were able to

return until 527 B.C. Meanwhile Egypt was ruined by total drought and war. The biblical reason for Egypt's utter devastation is that she tempted Judah into rebellion against God's decree that Judah should serve Babylon. Another opinion is that the 40 years is still escatological. Perhaps this is partially true to some degree. Zechariah 14:18-19 may echo some of Egypt's recent experiences, that the Egyptians would certainly remember in his day, but it also points to the age to come, and this may see the final fulfillment of the Ezekiel 29 prophecy.

35. The Chronology of Ezra's Journey

We use the Tishri year (cf. Neh. 1:1 and 2:1) for the seventh year of Artaxerxes II according to Jewish reckoning, Tishri 1, 398 to Ellul 30, 397. According to Persian reckoning it was Nisan 1, 398 to Adar 29, 397. Ezra "founded" (יָסַד) "the first day of the first month", which was Nisan 1, 397, a Friday "to go up from Babylon". They assembled at the Ahava River. It is not likely that they knew Adar would have 29 days. If it had 30, then the arrival deadline would be Sabbath, March 25. Because it was the Sabbath, though, all the exiles knew they had to be at the rendezvous point on Friday. Ezra was planning to depart on the first day of the week, three days later, on the third of Nisan (Ezra 8:15). As it turned out, Nisan 1, was on Friday, March 24. This date would give the exiles a whole week to travel to the gathering point, and once they set out, there would be a whole week of travel. However, the plans did not work out that way, as Ezra found he had to send for Levites. So it turned out that they departed on the 12th day of Nisan. In 397 BC this was Tuesday, April 4. The reason for the delay was that Ezra had discovered that not enough Levites had come, so he sent word by messengers to various places, and then had to wait for their arrival. The messages went out on Nisan 3 or 4 at the latest, after the Sabbath on Nisan 2. The messages reached their destinations on Wednesday or Thursday. That gives four or five days at the most for the Levites to pack up and come. Ezra had called a fast to seek God's favor for the trip on Monday, Nisan 3. They departed the next day.

They arrived on the 1st day of Av, which was a Thursday, 7/20/397 B.C.. They took the fast route for the journey without a military escort, which was 700 miles (see 254.101 page 142, 252.1-map 169). The total number of days was 78. Subtract 11 Sabbaths. 78 - 11 = 67 days. 700 mi ÷ 67 days = 10 miles/day. The calendar change shortened the journey by one month.

Upon arrival, they rested three days (Ezra 8:32). This would be Thursday, Friday, and Sabbath. On Sunday, 7/23 they weighed out the gold and silver for the temple treasury. On Thursday afternoon, 11/30/397 (Kislev 16), Ezra found out about the mixed marriages. Ezra publicly fasted and wept until sunset, and then he went into the high priest's chamber to continue in private.⁷ They sent a summons on Friday for the people to assemble "after the third day" (Ezra 10:8, לְאַשְׁמֶת הַיָּמִים), which was Monday 12/4/397 (Kislev 20).⁸

⁷ Public fasting or grief was not allowed on the sabbath, least of all in the temple. Ezra's grief was justified, but he wisely took it into private. The chamber was that of Jonathan the high priest at the time.

⁸ A 20 mi radius circumscribed around Jerusalem would encompass all of Judah at the time (see 252.1, map 171). This is a one day journey on foot for an adult male. The official courier system would take a day at most to get the word out, giving the men two whole days to