A Y2K Solution to the Chronology Problem

By: SHELDON EPSTEIN, BERNARD DICKMAN and YONAH WILAMOWSKY

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 חכש הירז work 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 wrote 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,* 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.

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 *mashiach*’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 approach 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

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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 גט because of potential negative political fallout: גט ה, גט ממלכת, גט ממלכות, גט ממלכות מורי, גט ממלכות וה柠ינ, בתי התורה, והחותם בראשו. 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 *mashiach* 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.”

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 וּבּוֹדֵה הָוָה and mundo demonstrate that these amoraim left hints to indicate that they were comfortable with a return to the historical chronology.

The Text

According to the chronology offered by the 2nd

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creation</th>
<th>1948</th>
<th>2448</th>
<th>2928</th>
<th>3338</th>
<th>3408</th>
<th>3828</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birth of</td>
<td>Avraham</td>
<td>Exodus</td>
<td>Temple 1</td>
<td>Temple 1</td>
<td>Start of</td>
<td>Temple 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avraham</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>Sinai</td>
<td>Built</td>
<td>Destroyed</td>
<td>Temple 2</td>
<td>Destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>g</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Explanatory Notes:

a See Appendix.

Avraham was 100 when Yitzchak was born and the Midrash counts the 400 year subjugation predicted in Bereishis 15:13 from Yitzchak’s birth. (Note: This means the actual exile in Egypt was only 210, רדו, years, i.e., Yitzchak was 60 when Yaakov was born and Yaakov was 130 when he came to Egypt. Ramban and רבני (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.)

b 1 Kings 6:1.

c See Rashi Sanhedrin 97a how we know the First Temple lasted 410 years.

d Seventy years of Babylonian exile based on ירמיה and דניאל 8.

e 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 דבי תנא:

...תוהו אלפים שני העולם ווי שנה אלפים ששת אליהו דבי תנא יצאו שרבו בעונותינו המשיח ימות אלפים שני תורה אלפים שני...ותכלה תורה...ואיידי דאמר שני אלפים תורה ואלא (ברראשית ו) מתת את עות בוחר וגוריו באברם בהו עתה בר המשויי והוריח. הלך ברץ, מזודין נא ארבעה מאא ארבעים ושמונים שנה meer תוריה בך מופסק אשר עות בוחרlein חומת חורא לא ארבעה מאא וארבעים. ותקין שענין: רוש דחיי אי דאמ ממקות תחרת זעק עשוריי. דע נמס ארבא ארבא האלפים לבריאת העולמים דקאמרת ליכא באלפים.

Rashi *Avodah Zarah*  
"דחי משחת אלפים...ואני דאמר...ساب אלפים תוריה...ולא שטבל נוריה ארכי אלפים...בвести אלפים שנות המשיח...לא אלפים ארכי המשיח...מלאת השניה הגרלה ושבעים...ארכי המתא מרשיא..."  

Rashi *Sanhedrin*  
"דחי משחת אלפים...ואני דאמר...שב לע올מה...לתוחיק מגינ ימיה ובפון בניינו...שבה משמחת אלפים צור עולמה...דחי ושני אלפים תוריה...שלארח שב אלפים תוריה...אין שברא המשיח והיה להנהיג...לאי ויביא אתונית התנ"א מרשיא...דחי אחר אלפים...ואלפי תוריה יתא שברא...UserID לא come...לא אלפים ה囫ים...משי שער תריה בהנהיג...ולא רכשיה..."  

i.e. הנא דבי אליחו begin with the original world plan to have a world that lasts 6000 years and consists of three successive 2000 year periods representing "*Tohu*" (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 עם הנא *Gemara* proceeds to challenge the chronological accuracy:
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 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

אליהו ד’בי תנא-Tanna D’Bei Eliyahu

Who is/are “D’Bei Eliyahu”?

1) Be’er Sheva (Sanhedrin 92a):

D’Bei Eliyahu is an early תנא 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 Natan—Pesachim 94a—and

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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 פיאות החשכות at the end of his Introduction to היד.
* based on our Gemara, D’Bei Eliyahu must have lived after the year 4000, i.e. considerably after the period suggested by Be’er Sheva.

2) Shem HaGedolim:

עליי דבי תנא refers to Eliyahu Rabah and Eliyahu Zuta which קוקתובות 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 (אסלאל זינ-חרים):

Tanna D’Bei Eliyahu is a tanna of unknown period.

The Gemara’s Question(s?)

As explained previously, according to Rashi the תורה ממתן נימה אי 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 תורתמה אי 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 אליהו דבי תנא. Ritva says that the expression עד השחה in the Gemara refers to the time of Rav Ashi who, על פי קבלת ת銮, died in 4186. He says that based on the words עד השחה תנא דבי אליהו explain that the first question is directed at תנא דבי אליהו bemoaning the late

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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 “נאם” as part of the name.
arrival of *mashiach.* Rav Ashi who lived hundreds of years after 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 *דביתנא אוליהו.* 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, *הש"ס תחתים_* 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? 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.

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

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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 *mashiach*” and in the latter he said 2000 was used to parallel its usage with respect to *תולעה.* אוליהו 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 *תולעה* lasted considerably more than 2000 years.
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Figure 2

From חורב בית שני until the Completion of the Gemara

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3828</td>
<td>Temple Destroyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3880</td>
<td>Bar Kochba Rebellion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3948</td>
<td>Completion of the Mishnah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3980</td>
<td>Beginning of Amoraim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4260</td>
<td>Completion of the Gemara</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|   | For the most part this time-line is based on the chronology given in חזרה והימים.
|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 חזרה — יוסי רב חלafia. 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.

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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.
circa 13 350 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”). While there are some who dispute the contrary evidence, even among Orthodox sources there are those who are persuaded by the historical arguments. Table 1 summarizes some of the major

13  Chazon Ish, הארא הער תחתי קספה א’acc, 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

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

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

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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 " وعنandez Rashi assumes Torah will exist beyond the year 4000 and is compelled to explain why תана דבי אליהユーザ associates Torah with the middle 2000 year period. Rashi’s explanation in " وعنendez is that the second 2000 is not meant to limit Torah to the middle period, but rather to exclude mashiaḥ 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 mashiaḥ. Moreover, the clear implication from the Midrash and Rambam, מלכים אין is that Bar Kochba failed because of his own inadequacies and “sins,” not because mashiaḥ could not come before the year 4000. If תана דבי אליהユーザ is tannaic and early (Be’er Sheva), why did all the Sages of Rebbe Akiva’s era disregard it? Conversely, if תנה דבי אליהユーザ is post-tannaic (Shem HaGedolim), how are the actions of Rebbe Akiva and his contemporaries explained?

Rashi’s explanation in " وعنendez does not have this problem. Rashi there makes no assertion as to mashiaḥ’s inability to come before 4000. He says mashiaḥ 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 תנה דבי אליהユーザ which prevents mashiaḥ from coming before the year 4000, i.e. Torah and mashiaḥ can coexist and are not mutually exclusive.

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17 See Maharsha for an explanation of Rashi.
An Attempt at Resolving the Problems: A Reason for Changing the Chronology

Many on Sanhedrin 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.

These 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 Torah never seen before:

This is a twist on the standard understanding of the phrase, i.e., it does not refer to gentiles’ knowledge of Torah, but to Torah knowledge by Jews living in gentile lands.
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. It also meant that the amoraim who were to...
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.

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

which Bavli (ב ב”ה) 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 חגי 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

Exodus. We feel that an event coinciding with the 2000th anniversary of something is more likely as is clear from הנא דבי Алיאו who repeatedly use this figure.
which Rashi and others interpret as a prediction that 490 years (i.e. $70 \times 7$) 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. 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 שֵׁבֶת תּוֹרָה which consisted of the Chumash given during the Sinai period and the 19 books of נבואה and וֹתֶנָּה penned over a period of about 900 years (i.e., starting with וֹתֶנָּה circa 2500 and ending with the final works of הר שָׁם 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, e.g. see וֹתֶנָּה concerning אֵל דִי אָבְרָהָם, and כָּהַתָּנָה concerning מִלְחָמָה אָבְרָהָם concerning the book of אֵל דִי אָבְרָהָם. 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? 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 אֵל דִי אָבְרָהָם 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.


24 See סֵפֶר וֹתֶנָּה concerning מִלְחָמָה אָבְרָהָם as the justification for committing the Oral Law to writing.
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 merited 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 course, a struggle to negate this decision. 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.

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:

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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”ז. 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 הנא דר אליהו:

סנהדרין ד"ה א': ... אמר ליה אליהו לרבי יהודה אהיה דרב סלא חסידא נל halkim מגי לשלמה שמימא בלוב כדי מסלה והלוא ד라면 מלת די להלואו הישרנא. מלתהוו הטור דורו והיון פק ית מלתהוו המלוע פקז 26 מצומצומת ותמשו ירובל והלוע פקכז

The Gemara offers no hint as to any rationale for this figure. Abarbenel says that that the source is the parsha of בנסועויהי (Bamidbar 10:35-36) which has 85 letters and is set off by 2 inverted נ’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, שמיטה הלכות יפרק ויובל ג, writes ישראלètre יובל עשר שבעה, which means 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 yovelos that the Gemara predicts is 5 times the 17 yovelos 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 אליהו דבי 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*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 yovel).

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 Ηαφλαγα - 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*1656=3338, 2*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,
predicted mashiach would come sometime in the 85th yovel, i.e., between 4200 and 4250. However, when רב והוה אתוה ראב pressed him as to if it would be at the start or the end of the period, לא ידע he could not say. He then asked if it would be after the period or before its end and לא ידע again could not say. The Gemara concludes with אסי רב אשי resolving what had previously gone unanswered by ראב. But how could אסי רב אשי offer a definitive answer when ראב 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 tells of an incident involving רב והוה אתוה ראב and נאהו רב and we know רב והוה אתוה ראב, נאהו רב, and הונא רב died around 4050 JC (Seder Hadoros). Thus, when ראב revealed to רב והוה אתוה ראב 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, הונא רב died about 4216 (i.e. 166 years later) and ראב 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 ראב 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,
A Y2K Solution to the Chronology Problem

Eliezer said he did not know. Rav Ashi’s follow-up remark must occur before his death 4186 CE, 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 Eliezer 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 Eliezer 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:

Shelah levi bar mishafrim levi zevach hasam, amen bador megal.
Achat kohach eshovit vešinor kev dower khatov vešinor matov.
Elleihat shel unim shalchamim hota dower khatov.

Seder Hadoros puts the death of bar mishafrim levi zevach at 4082 CE. If so, bar mishafrim levi zevach 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 citesurai bar mishafrim 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. Rashi and others thus say that bar mishafrim as referring back to the statement that mashiach will come in 4291, and he corrects29 this to read 5291. We know from many places in yosef that bar mishafrim as was a contemporary of Rav Ashi and died 4179 CE. 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 Rab Akiva to change the date of mashiach’s arrival from 4291 to 5291. However, if the Gemara is using CC, Rab Akiva, his follower Rab Chananya, who lived in the first half of the 43rd century and Rab Akiva himself who lived mid 44th century. Thus Rab Akiva offered a time for the arrival of mashiach about 43 years in his future while Rab Akiva, his follower Rab Chananya, who 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. 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 Eliezer ibn Azariah:

In saying that when the Gemara described a date in time it did not necessarily supply all of the integers for the year. For example, in Teitz it is presented that 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: Therefore: Rab Akiva, his follower Rab Chananya, and Rab Akiva himself took the higher order positions without assistance. Similarly, Rambam dates the Teshuva to 486 from Shtaros when it is really 1486 (or 4935 JC). What we are suggesting is that Rab Akiva’s date in Sanhedrin is saying that the document cited by Rab Akiva, his follower Rab Chananya, read 291 (i.e., no thousands position) which the latter took to mean his own millennium, i.e., the 4,000’s. Rab Akiva then says that in retrospect this was incorrect and it obviously meant 5291.
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, Gra 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 י"ע 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, רבי חנינא, who relates the story, appears nowhere else in שס. In 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 חמא בר חנינא רבי, a 1st generation Eretz Yisrael amora circa 4000 (see e.g., כתות 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 בר חנינא, 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 רבי חנינא בר חנינא רבי who spoke to Rav Yosef.

\(^{32}\) Soncino Shas footnote b2 points out that this Baraisa is the only known tanaim 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 חנינא knew to change the prediction listed in the Baraisa and why he did not simply give the year as 4228. In our explanations of the two mashiach predictions in Sanhedrin we suggested that Rav Ashi and רב אחא בר רביה דרמא 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 רב חנינא refers to דציפורין חנינא 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. 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 רב חנינא 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 רב חנינא who would have died circa 4171 CC 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 ביטויותינו של ה' על אלהים.
Thus according to Rashi’s understanding of \( ט׃ \) the amoraim in both Sanhedrin as well as Avodah Zarah, who immediately follow the claim of \( אליהו דבי תנא \), 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 Sanhedrin and Avodah Zarah to follow up the statement of \( יהו דבי אלי \) 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,

\[ \text{תורה אלפים שני מאימת תора ממתן נימה אי לי, ли} \]

which according to Ritva was said by Rav Ashi, is not asking a question (as Rashi and Ritva claim\(^36\)) 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 \( tohu \) lasted far too long. Rav Ashi’s (unsaid response) would most probably attribute the delay to …\(^37\)

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

\(^{36}\) 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 תוהו and its molad is וברח), 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.

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 קדושה המועד פרק ז. 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 בהר is not mentioned anywhere in גמרא.

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38 This word is used to represent the metaphysical state of a Torah-less world. It is used in בראשית 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 תוהו (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 קדושה המועד. 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 בהר is not mentioned anywhere in גמרא.
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 Rabbenenu 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.

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 Rabbenenu 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

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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 Yehoshua 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*.

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*.

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 או״ח). 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.,

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.
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 reinstitution of shemittah. This was then the 14th year of the 9th yovel cycle and shemittah, i.e. (414 Mod 50) 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 יוסי רבי 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, 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 Mod 50) Mod 7 = 2. Presumably, by the time of יוסי רבי 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:

43 I.e., X Mod Y is the remainder of X divided by Y. Hence 414 Mod 50 = 14, and 14 Mod 7 = 0. In a Mod 50 system all answers are between 0 and 49, and 0 means it is yovel. In a Mod 7 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.

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 immediately with the building of the 2nd Temple, it was the arrival of Ezra that was designated as שניה ביאה 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 הלכות:

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, it was the arrival of Ezra that was designated as השניה ביאה 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 הלכות:

45 The idea that we can count shemittah from the start of the 2nd Temple
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., (586Mod50)Mod7=1. Thus, while רבי יוסי on the one hand was omitting 166 years of history (זרה עבודה) he was making sure that it did not effect shemittah observance by explicitly stating (ריכר) 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 רבי יוסי 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 שמטה והובל, by saying:

א ... ומאיתמי החתויו למוזנ: מקוה ארבע תעשה שנה
משѭים לארץ --станוסר "עם שמות תורת שך, ושם שמות
תחומך órgך" (ירא, כ,ג), שעשה על אותר אוחר ממלך
ארץ; ובשל שמות משכアクセבם הארץ, משכアクセב בֶּית
ב שמצה/year לולמות עם ישראל, משכアクセב לארץ ונד סימן;
ושנה שנה והי, שחר ברב רבואת, מוצא שביעית מירעה,משנה שמחים בֶּית
ונגה שמחים בֶּית livro ויהי--שראבע חלק שנה והי
שנים, תעשút בחית 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 ד הלכה 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

(ארוחה רבי سمן כ, ה) ומיה אניש
הרה אמירה asks this question on the Gemara in ערכין that the years prior to Ezra should have also been counted and answered:

אמשי רברא דתלפיטים שבאיא קדר קדם שמה שא או נגדו קרר אלה התומך יהא התומך
أمל קדרות הארי שאמה בפועשה אלא בירשות ימים, קדרות פיינ קדרות כלמא לה כאם
והיה שמתה והיה

We are suggesting that this אמירה may in fact be correct.
comments on this:  ואעשיג דלآ דמי אטודימי מני ין שיא מראק
ר בוכיימ מותית ליוו הבריתא מותיתא וכף בול המידא... 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 1, identifies the year in which he wrote these halachos as 1107 years after the churban and “4936 from creation:”

ר וolf החבון, ذو, שנה והשאינה שנת אלף ומאית ושבעת חותם,
שיהיה שנת עシン שם סומא זלקא זוקא בראים לאית מקמוד
שיהיה שנת ושלישים וריעים זמאווין Akron
--זריא
והא שנת שמותה, והיה quận אבת וושחרי מך היובל.

Unlike today, when “years from creation” is our normal way of identifying yearly time, in the era of the המשנה, 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 וירש, יז חבל ust מלתו שאותה הוזה, ust מלתות
מדעי, ust מלתות וווס, טבליות ההנה, ust מלתות
...

46 Rashi, תרכיז, 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 halakhah רמברם uses several of these designations, i.e., years from the destruction of the Temple, לפני החיזור (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* (איזו רימי קפ) 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.

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:

בכל הלכות במאירים שלינו התleineי אלו בהלוות אין בלבד ההירח ראיית לחשבון אלא שממנו העיקר עשינו לפיכך.

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 תוהו, Adam was created on Rosh Hashanah of year 2. Our current calendar system uses תוהו as its base. See Appendix.

49 Edgar Frank, page 25, *Talmudic and Rabbinical Chronology* also makes the association between Rambam in *החודש Kiddush Hachodesh* (K"H) and Rambam in *ויובל שemitah* (K"H). 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 שemitah 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.
His association of 4938 “from creation” with 1109 after the churban (and 1489 from שמחה) is exactly consistent with his designation in ויובל שמחה יובל of the year 4936 “from creation” with 1107 from the churban (and 1487 from שמחה). But in K”H he also explains that all years from creation are reckoned from the molad BaHaRaD of תשרי of the year prior to the creation of Adam, i.e. the nomenclature used today in our calendar:

Extrapolating backwards, we now know that Rambam wrote שמחה יובל in 1175 CE/1176 CE and, according to him, the churban took place in 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 calendar now in use. When Rambam in ויובל concludes that the year 4936 is a שמחה יובל year he is using the standard שמחה יובל 7/50 year model. Thus, the year 4936 was 414+1107=1521 years after the

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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 \((1521 \text{Mod} 50) \text{Mod} 7 = 0\), 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 הָלְכָּה 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. \(X \text{Mod} 7\):

\[
\text{ז אלכ ל הנוייוכ אפרי שהפורר היא בידיה 아 ש פ מ אט,}
\]

שלא בין באתן השביעיםشتנה שבין חורבן בין ראשות זכרים

בית שרה לא שימורות מתלבד, אלא יול; וכעשתו מחמנים,

ל农副 שנות המשיימין אלא שבש עשת מבלי לשתה

החורבן. וכעולה מלתמוד עבודה וرؤי, כעשתו הזה שוהא

הקל.

ה vídeosת השמימה זעה ואמבר פור CGRectMake, על שנט房车 וארש

ארונ ישראול; וכלל לא מנה לא לטעם, משניכים אתן

שבוע שבוע. זו שבון הז טור שנות, והא שנה שבע ראות

ואלה חורבון, פוצרות שביעית. וינו הז דר תמרון, וכעשתון

וזי לא מיום לניינ יטשרות שביעית ושנטנה כפסים--

שבתבלה והמעשתו טונין וידמים בהראהת, זגה ראי

הליתהלת.

Hence 4936 is a post-*shemittah* year because \(1107 \text{Mod} 7 = 1\) 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 הָלְכָּה by backing the Gaonic position.

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\(^{51}\) 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 \((1107 \text{Mod} 50) \text{Mod} 7 = 0\) it follows that 4936\(=3829\) 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 *churban*. Using only 1136 we get \((1136 \text{Mod} 50) \text{Mod} 7 = 1\), 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 \((1550 \text{Mod} 50) = 0\), i.e., it is a *yovel* year.
We most recently observed שמחה in 5761 (2000/2001). In the Gaonic system, with respect to their position in the שמחה cycle 4935 (1174/1175 CE)≡5761 and thus also שמחה (i.e., (5761-4935)Mod7=826Mod7=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 שמחה cycle. Regressing this further back 1107 years to the period of the ב障 and applying 1107Mod7=1, means that 3829 (68/69) was a שמחה year. Since Rambam, places the מים of the 2nd Temple in שמחה that means he dates the מים to ו’ of 3829 or equivalently the summer of 69. Historical records, however, seem to place the מים in 70 CE or in the first year of a שמחה 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 שמחה designation for all post מים years. The only difference is whether the מים took place in 69 (Rambam, שמחה) or 70 (Historical, Post-שמחה). Based on the above we argue that Rebbe Yosi statement in ערכין 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 שמחה years.

52 Rambam’s dating of the מים to 3829 is not inconsistent with our previous calculation that identified 3828 as the year of the מים. Looking at the three alternatives previously presented by איש חזון 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 תבנית.

As we have seen before, Rambam counts from year תבנית. If the Gemara’s count is from year תבנית then Rambam’s 3829 and the Gemara’s 3828 are reconcilable.

53 This dates the מים 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 איש חזון).
**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**

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

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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 נמרוד (תנ"א, p. кат, מאמר אל בהר
(ק))

We suggest טזרה ע"ש 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creation</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2448</th>
<th>3828JC/3994CC</th>
<th>3948JC/4114CC</th>
<th>4254JC/4420CC</th>
<th>4360JC/4526CC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Start of Savoraim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Start of Gaonim.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The tanna'im, not knowing what was to follow, started Torah with Avraham's proselytizing not long after the haflagah 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 tanna'im. 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 tanna'im, 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 tanna'im; gaonim cannot disagree with amoraim.55

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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, 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 terafos 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 terafos because our frame of reference must always be the Era of Torah. In support of his view, Chazon Ish references:

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 generally messianic and non-halachic in nature. In light of this we suggest that here is referring to 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 Shas (e.g., Berachos 3a) where Rebbe Yosi bar Chalafta’s encounters with are mentioned. Similarly, we find in Baba Metzia 59b and other places that Rebbe Nasan (the co-author of the Mishnah with Rebbe) met with . 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 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) קדושין מ: (5, דע הינד) מslideUp: 4,سفוחות קד: 3,سفוחות ד: 2, שמח ז: 1.
Only #3 is directly related to a halacha. All of the rest deal with תורת המשים, Mashiaich, 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 אלייהו visiting Rebbe Yosi and Rebbe in Baba Metzia 83-84.

If our assumptions are correct, the chronology and the statement of D’Bei Eliyahu offered in ט-ח 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 (מְיָאָלֵיהוּ כָּה):

ונא דבי אלייהו כל משנה הלכות בכל יום מוכחת לו שווה ב
עולמ זה.

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 tannaitic and amoraitic periods:
שנדהון דק אָמֶר: אָמֶר רב ווֹהוֹד אָמֶר רב כְּהוּנָה לַחֲכָל מַעְלָה מַעְלָה
עֶמְנָוָה שְׁמֶאֶרָה (דְּבוֹרָה לֶזֶז) הָוָה אֶזֶכֶל מַשָּׂה מַשָּׂה וּקְוֵיָה מַשָּׂה אֶזֶכֶל לֵלָל שָׂרָא.
משעַת יָמָּה בָּרָאָה.

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 Arodah 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 Arodah 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

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58 In Sanhedrin 94a, a disciple of Rebbe, asserts that Hashem wanted to make חזיה mashiach but decided not to. According to all chronologies, חזיה was definitely before 4000. Is a disciple of Rebbe, asserts (Sanhedrin 97a) and suggests that חזיה was so great that Hashem was contemplating altering his plans for him. We suggest that the Gemara (Sanhedrin 94b) lauds the period of חזיה 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 Antifes 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 חזיה era could have been a catalyst for mashiach. Alas, as the Maharsha points out, it was not to be because of other considerations (“raza ba, raza ba’”).
itself contradicted by Rebbe Akiva proclaiming Bar Kochba as Mashiach, because as Rashi explained in Sanhedrin, "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. 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 Torah 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 מֵיהָסָכָל was built and became operational. The reality of a central place of worship for the Jewish people continued in some form of the מֵיהָסָכָל 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. 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

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59 As Rashi explains in Sanhedrin.
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. 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 Torah (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 which presents a dispute between Rebbe Yosi and Rebbe Meir as to whether the holidays listed in were still in effect after the destruction of the 2nd Temple:

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.

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61 For over 800 years of (i.e. Shiloh and the 1st Temple) the , which symbolizes Torah, resided in the . The remaining time it did not. Yet even without the the 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 took place in almost exactly 4000, i.e., the time that the next era in world evolution was scheduled to start.

63 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 :
In this light, we suggest that 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.

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.

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 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
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Age of Father At Birth of Next Generation</th>
<th>Year of Birth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seth</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enosh</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenan</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mehalalel</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yered</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enoch</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methuselah</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamech</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
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<td>Noah</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shem</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arpachshad</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelah</td>
<td>35</td>
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<td>1948</td>
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<td>Peleg</td>
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<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serug</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nahor</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terah</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avraham</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1948</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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
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.