

# Comment on the Chronological Table of the Holy Bible

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## Abstract

This is a trial to prepare and set up the chronology of the Holy Bible for the calculation of data by a computer. I have elaborated the calculation for the first time by hand and thus have reached at the end an automatic data processing. The latest features of the program have not yet been finished. The computer is a huge simplification when calculating chronological tables and can realize corrections of the chronological table within short time.

## 1 Aim

The aim of the HISTORY project is to enable calculating of any historical chronology by electronical data processing (EDP), thus all tolerances of a dating, which anyhow are forced by the source situation, can be determined as exact as possible. Now if further sources occur that lead to a need of changed dating, then the correction of all data that has already been calculated, shall be enabled possibly comfortable and immediately understandable for *any* interested one.

Since with chronological tables there is a possibility of contradictions, if the tolerances are dealt with too narrow or not at all, a corresponding “contradiction” can be deleted under certain circumstances by a simple change of the tolerance. Because the building up of a good chronological table needs much care and time above all, in all books of history that are known to me, only datings are presented without documented derivation out of the sources. Therefore an immediate calculation check is impossible to the reader. Individual trials by hobby historians or amateurs now and then deviate from text book tables. Especially with the chronology of the Holy Bible this leads to discussions.

With the chronological table of the Holy Bible mainly the trials by A. Jepsen from Greifswald are considered to be important. He tried to harmonize the chronology of the Holy Bible with non-biblical chronologies. During his calculation Jepsen detected especially with the Kings’ books a lot of “contradictions” and thought, he had shown delivery mistakes. Based on this a “Historical Critical Text Research” has developed, which seduced to the view that the books of the Holy Bible would be collections of legends.

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A sample of this “theology” can be found at Fricke ([1], p. 209 bottom):

„Doch muß dieser Vers als Hinzusetzung eines Späteren angesehen werden, der sich dabei auf die vorliegenden chronologischen Angaben stützte, die jedoch bereits in Unordnung geraten waren.“

“But this verse must be considered to be the addition by a later one, who thereby based onto the present chronological statements, which however have already been in a mess.” (Comment on 2. Ki. 15:37)

Unfortunately in Württemberg (Germany) there is no further exegesis on the Kings’ books that is known to me. Instead of the theologian is asking, what God by his Holy Spirit is telling him through these scriptures, now is shown at almost 400 pages, that the author of the exegesis believes his lack of judgement on chronology. It would be better that he would take the text seriously to be a historical document or even the word of God. The need of tolerance calculation seems to be totally unknown to the text critics.

The very zealous ones even find a “contradiction” between “on the third day” and “after three days and three nights”, and believe that one could show, that the Lord Christ Jesus has not been crucified on a Friday and has risen already on Sunday morning. However, the correct description of the possibilities here is the interval between “> 1 day” (partial days count fully!) and “< 5 days”.

Peter writes on this (2. Pe. 1:16):

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

## 2 Procedure

For the first time there was a need to set up an own mathematics for historians. Good historians anyhow can thoroughly calculate in this kind for long times, but an automatizable algorithm how needed by a computer was not yet found by me. The main problem to be solved was how to arrange the data, which is enclosed in a prosaic or even poetic text, into summarizing tables, and how this summary fits the needs of an amateur to clearness, and also the advanced needs of the historian to correctness and proper source documentation.

The now available start seems to satisfy the needs:

- For each event there is a possibility of each 6 singular datings, thus e. g. for a person the begin of life, the begin of his first periode, and of a second periode, and each end of them can be localized in the same line.

### Abbreviations:

*	=	Birth
B (“Begin”)	=	Begin of 1 <sup>st</sup> Periode, or a Singular Event
$\alpha$ (“Alpha”)	=	Begin of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Periode
$\Omega$ (“Omega”)	=	End of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Periode
E (“End”)	=	End of 1 <sup>st</sup> Periode
+	=	End of Life (‘ $\Omega$ ’ and ‘E’ automatically are before, or take place the same time as ‘+’.)

- Each of the datings consists of an upper and a lower interval limit. The presentation of a mean followed by “±...” seduces to confusions with measured data or statistical elaborations, where the mean also is the “most probalbe value” or “expected value”. The preconditions of such measurements or probability calculations (repetition possibility, random scattering of the measured data by experimental inaccuracies, etc.) with historical problems do not fit. For the very calculation a mean followed by “±...” would be possible, but this would cause 3 instead of 2 datings per event and thus enlarge the calculation time by waste.

Anyway it is convenient to discuss intervals instead of mathematical “exact” numbers.  $1 + 1 = 1$  in a historical context is quite possible (addition of ordinary numbers).

- Relative datings can be fully considered—so Lamech must have died the latest at the begin of the great flood, because he was not in Noah’s ark—and can be applied to each of the 6 possible events.

From this example the following records result:

Question:	Input Text:
“NAME /EVENT”:	Great Flood
Before was at “1st PREDECESSOR” :	+
Directly before ? ( Yes / No )	N
Name of “1st PREDECESSOR”:	Lamech
From then on was at “NAME /EVENT”:	B
“SOURCE”:	Ge. 5:28,30; 6:21

- Absolute datings can be given in both of the needed forms:
  - Direct sequence to an event before (e.g. succession of the throne, etc.)
  - Use of the year numbers, etc., that are mentioned in the source, e.g.:  
 And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him. (Dan. 2:1)
- With absolute datings by year numbers there is a possibility to set the tolerance explicitly, that belongs to the dating:
  - ’<’ (less) = Input of an Ordinary Number
  - ’=’ (equal) = Input without Tolerance
  - ’±’ (plus–minus) = Both Upper and Lower Tolerance
  - ’>’ (greater) = Input of a Persian Ordinary Number

The notions “less” and “greater” could be misleading, therefore a small clarification:

In physics has been an agreement that the absolute value of time increases by running of the time. The cause of this is that a human cannot say when telling the age, how long e.g. a thing will go on to exist, but only how long it has been existing. Since the use of negative ages is considered to be “unlovely”, a begin usually starts with time  $t = 0$ , while the end takes place with  $t > 0$ .

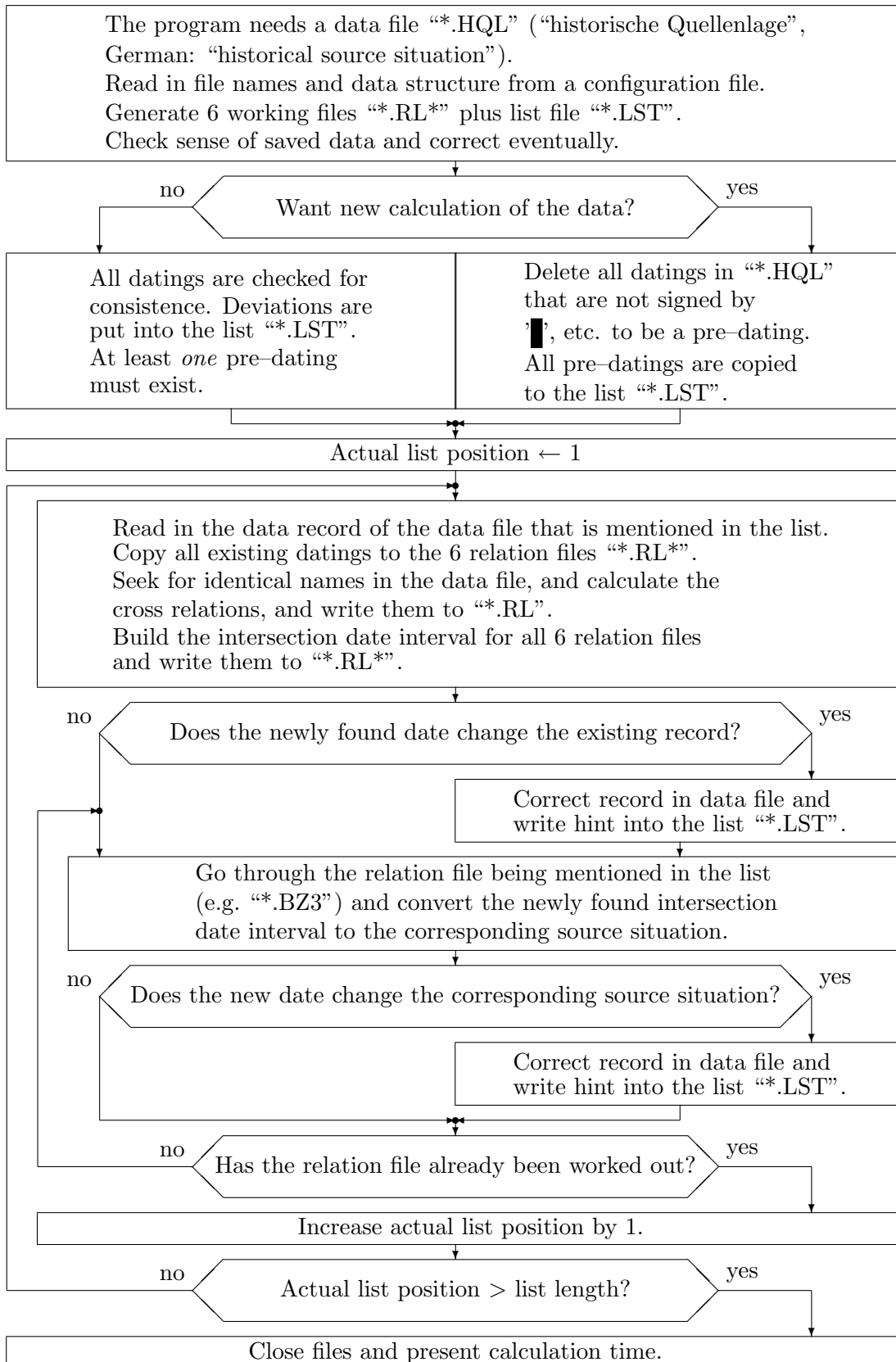
By this convention the signs ’<’ and ’>’ in a historical context are to be understood in the above given manner.

- If the dating is mentioned e.g. with precision in months, then the tolerance is set to  $\pm 1$  month, with years  $\pm 1$  year, etc.

These tolerances surely are too large. By this results, that first the maximum of thinkable tolerance for a dating is exhausted, before a contradiction is reported. Therefore the calculation becomes very exciting and often fits barely. With this kind of calculation evidently less contradictions occur, than up to now has been supposed by the historians. For an example you can compare the here yielded chronological table for the Holy Bible with the historical literature.

- The calculation runs in years each with 12 months à 30 days. Thus a distinguishing between “moon year” and “sun year”, etc. is omitted. This convention is not severe, because most of the datings are with a tolerance of one year only. Intercalary months, days, or even seconds are of no importance.
- There is a possibility to mention for each statement the necessary sources. The space for each entry is maximally 21 characters, because each entry for “NAME /EVENT” must be presented clearly at a screen of  $25 \times 80$  characters.
- The order of the date statement for the calculation is fixed by year.month.day. For the presentation of the datings however can be considered, whether all 6 combinatorical combinations of order should be eligible.

### 3 Flow-chart of the Coarse Program Algorithm



## 4 Historic

On January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1985 I found out that via 1. Ki. 6:1 a complete dating from Adam to Cyrus is possible. Thus it was sure that the statement in the appendix of the revised Luther Bible (German version) of 1964 is wrong:

“Das Alte Testament ist reich an chronologischen Aussagen, doch lässt sich die Zeit der Patriarchen nicht festlegen.”

“The Old Testament is rich of chronological statements, but the time of the patriarchs cannot be fixed.

Therefore I have started with the calculation of the chronological table for the Holy Bible and since then tinkered at the same as my hobby. Also at the life dates of the kings of Israel resulted deviations. Furthermore exist several “Tables of Chronology for the Holy Bible” that deviate all at some detail.

The question, what then is correct now, has lead to the HISTORY program, by which a “neutral” calculation of chronological tables shall be possible. (A computer is so stubborn that it does with absolute reliability exactly what it is told to do. However a guarantee for correctness this is not before all programming errors have been removed.)

In autumn 1991 I had finally constructed the needed algorithm, thus I could start with the check calculation “by hand”. During the year 1994 at last succeeded a program that builds up and corrects the chronological table automatically. In the year 2003 a QBASIC program was completed so far, that it could be presented to publicity. In 2009 an English translation of the program was completed.

The chronology of the Holy Bible is mostly spread of all published sources. Therefore it was best fit for a general check of the program algorithm. It is interesting that the datings of the Holy Bible are so complicated and many-sided, that until the final result it was not clear, whether a general representation of the chronology actually can be build up without any contradictions.

The result corresponds in each detail to the theoretical expectations that can be set to a respectable delivered chronology:

- Statements that sound like ordinary numbers (“In the second year . . .”), turn out by the tolerance shifts automatically to be also the same.
- The Israelian Chronology that begins in autumn 3761 before Christ, can rarely be harmonized with the chronology of the Holy Bible. By the existance of this until today used chronology the absolute values of the tolerances do not go beyond 10 years within a time interval of more than 3000 years! Without control data one would expect about 100 to 200 years tolerance.
- The use of “sure” datings of the non-biblical sources does not cause any problems, but reduces the absolute value of the tolerances also significantly.
- The motto of Luther: “Das Wort sie sollen lassen stahn” (“The word of God shall firm abide”) leads to a representation of the chronological table without any contradictions. If several delivery variants occur, then the one should be followed, which needs the smallest time interval (compare Jer. 8:8 with St. Mt. 5:18). Obviously it is easier to invent additional history (e.g. “205” in the Masoretic text instead of “145” in the Samaritan Pentateuch at Ge. 11:32) than to ignore it.

- A lot of prayer and patience was necessary, until the Lord Christ Jesus granted the success of the program and its calculation.

Now the program works sufficiently. Therefore the now available lists are to be classified as reliable. They must be considered as successful trial to have regarded to the willfulnesses and features of the sources when calculating a chronological table.

The computer does not know of numerical errors. Each interested person therefore is recommended to seek through the present chronological table for interpretation mistakes or too liberal tolerance statements. For correction and change proposals of any kind I am always grateful.

Aalen, January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009

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## References

- [1] Klaus Dietrich Fricke: *Das 2. Buch von den Königen (The 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings' Book)*, Calwer Verlag (Publishing House) Stuttgart, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, (1972)

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<sup>1</sup>Otto-Schott-Straße 16, D-73431 Aalen, Germany