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Genesis Chronologies

By Joe Spears

There are multiple ancient texts for the book of Genesis available in various languages. The Samaritan Pentateuch (SP), the Masoretic Text (MT), and the Greek Septuagint (LXX) are the three major ones. However, the chronologies found in Genesis chapters 5 and 11 in these various texts do not all agree with each other. There is evidence the original Hebrew text was closer to the longer chronology of the LXX. This article will focus on the MT and the LXX to examine these chronology differences—for example, a difference of 950 years in the resulting date of the flood—and will suggest the LXX is best supported as containing the more accurate chronology.

Table 1: Differences between MT and LXX

	Adam to Flood (years)	Flood to Abraham (years)	Adam to Abraham (years)
MT	1656	352	2008
LXX	2262	1132	3394
Difference	606	780	1386

One might ask, “Is getting the Genesis 5 and 11 chronologies correct really important? Is this relevant to creation science? Does this matter?” One might also ask, “Is this questioning the word of God?” All of these questions are dealt with below.

One argument used by those that are skeptical of the veracity of the book of Genesis is that the dates in Genesis indicate that the Great Pyramid of Cheops was built before the flood.¹ However, per extra-biblical ancient history, it was built after the flood.² Therefore, the argument could be made that the Bible is incorrect. Getting the

dates correct is therefore important to apologetics in general.

When we examine the MT and the LXX, the date of the flood differs by almost a thousand years (950 to be precise). Obviously, the correct date for the flood is of value to creation scientists working on flood models. And of course, dates depend on (are referenced to) other dates, so getting the dates in Genesis correct is of obvious value to archaeologists and historians.

Is this questioning the Bible?

Is questioning the MT the same as questioning the Bible? Briefly, the answer is no. Also, the entire MT is not questioned – only some parts of the chronologies in Genesis 5 and 11.

To expand and elaborate on this answer, what we have as the Bible is not the original manuscript(s). We have copies—likely copies of copies of copies.

People have criticized various Bible versions: the King James Version, the New International Version, etc. Are these people questioning God or His word or the Bible itself? We all understand the questioning is not of the original documents, but of the translations and copies. This is identical to the questioning of the chronologies found in the MT and the LXX. Both the MT and LXX which we have today are copies, not the originals.

This article suggests that the LXX chronologies of Genesis more closely represent the chronologies in the original Hebrew text, which we don’t have, and that the MT, which we do have, was derived from copies of the modified Hebrew text. This does not discredit the original! Saying the MT chronologies are wrong is *not* saying the original Hebrew chronologies were wrong! Also, the LXX and the MT

¹ It is generally accepted that Khufu built the Great Pyramid in the 25th century BC. This is before the date of the Flood based on MT (2348 BC). Khufu, however, would

have lived after the flood since Egypt itself arose after the flood.

² Khufu. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Khufu> Last updated 2024 Mar 19

are largely in agreement for most of the text, other than these specific Genesis 5 and 11 chronologies.

Texts

The Old Testament of the Bible is available in several sources, listed below. Also listed is an important extra-biblical text.

- The Samaritan Pentateuch (SP) is the first five books of the Old Testament, written in the Samaritan script.³
- The Septuagint (LXX) is a translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek, translated several centuries before Christ.
- The Masoretic Text (MT) is the Old Testament text in Hebrew. The oldest extant copy dates to about 1008 AD.
- The Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum (LAB) is an important extra-biblical document. It was once erroneously thought to have been written by Philo, so the author is referred to as Pseudo-Philo. This Hebrew text contains important begetting ages (the age at which a man becomes a father to a specific person) as listed in Table 2.⁴

Table 2: Begetting ages from various texts

	MT	LAB	LXX	Josephus
Adam	130	Not listed	230	230
Seth	105	205	205	205
Enosh	90	190	190	190
Kenan	70	170	170	170
Mahalalel	65	165	165	165

³ Samaritan Pentateuch. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samaritan_Pentateuch Accessed 2024 Apr 16

⁴ Smith HB, Jr. (2017) Methuselah’s begetting age in Genesis 5:25 and the primeval chronology of the Septuagint: A closer look at the textual and historical evidence, *Answers Research Journal* 10:169–179; specifically, 170 (Table 1) and 173 (Table 2). <https://assets.answersresearchjournal.org/doc/v10/methuselah-primeval-chronology-septuagint.pdf>

⁵ Wright D (2012 Mar 09) Timeline for the flood. <https://answersingenesis.org/bible-timeline/timeline-for-the-flood/> Accessed 2024 Apr 17

⁶ Spears J (2007) Archaeology supports Exodus narrative. <https://tasc-creationscience.org/article/archaeology-supports-exodus-narrative> Accessed 2024 Apr 16

Differences between the chronologies of MT and LXX

Using the MT, Usher developed a chronology and a date for the Flood of Noah of 2348 BC.⁵ Per the LXX, the flood date is 3298 BC. The difference is 950 years!

Obviously, if researchers are investigating evidence for the Flood, and they erroneously assume the time of the flood by as much as 950 years, this is not helping their research!

We have seen that smaller errors have major impact on archaeological research, to the extent of fueling the denial that Israel was present at the destruction of Jericho; all because of a chronological error. When the chronology is corrected, per David Rohl, then we see that the evidence is supportive of the biblical narrative.⁶ For apologetic purposes and for just getting to the truth, resolving this 950-year discrepancy regarding the date of the Flood is important.

Also, the difference between the MT-derived and the LXX-derived dates for day 1 of the creation week of Genesis is significant; Usher’s MT-based date of 4004 BC compared to the LXX date of 5560 BC gives a difference of 1556 years.⁷ There are other differences, some of which are summarized in the Table 1.

The vast majority of the MT does not contradict the LXX, but in a few places, particularly in the begetting ages in Genesis, there are interesting divergences (Table 2).⁴

For those interested in delving further into researching the chronologies in Genesis, the differences in the two chronologies have been discussed by Henry Smith.⁸ This analysis by Smith was responded to by Lita Sanders (*née* Cosner) and Robert Carter in an article on the Creation Ministries International website⁹, which in turn was responded to by Smith.¹⁰ Sanders and Carter preferred the

⁷ This date is arrived at by adding the years from Adam to the flood, 2262, to the date of the flood, 3298 BC, giving the result of 5560 BC.

⁸ Smith HB, Jr. (2018) The case for the Septuagint’s chronology in Genesis 5 and 11. *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference on Creationism*, ed. J.H. Whitmore, Creation Science Fellowship, Pittsburgh, PA, 117–132. <https://biblearchaeology.org/images/Genesis-5-and-11/Smith-Henry-The-Case-for-the-Septuagints-Chronology-in-Gen-5-and-11-ICC.pdf> Accessed 2024 Apr 17.

⁹ Sanders L, Carter R (2018 Sep 25) Is the Septuagint a superior text for the Genesis genealogies? <https://creation.com/lxx-mt-response> Accessed 2024 Apr 16.

¹⁰ Smith HB, Jr. (2018) Setting the record straight on the primeval chronology of the Septuagint: A response to

MT chronologies over those from the LXX, while Smith preferred the chronologies from the LXX. While space prevents going into all the details, I lean toward Smith's view.

I now want to provide some evidence in support of the LXX chronologies and to share a hypothesis explaining the reason for the discrepancies between the MT and the LXX chronologies.

This author's hypothesis is that the chronology of the LXX is more accurate than the MT chronology. The following is an outline of one theory of how the differences in the chronologies came about.

Hypothesis regarding the different chronologies

There was a view among the Jews that the Messiah would come at a certain time period in history.¹¹ The Jewish religious leaders in the early days of the Christian church wanted to discredit Jesus as the Messiah. For example, Paul persecuted the church in those early days of the church. To show that Jesus appeared at the wrong time in history would disqualify him as Messiah. Changing the begetting dates of Genesis 5 and 11 would change the chronologies. This would change the creation date by over a thousand years, which would change the time period during which the Messiah was expected to appear. This would result in Jesus appearing at a time that would disqualify him as the Messiah.

We don't have an exact date for these changes to the Hebrew text, but external sources suggest a time in the early centuries after the beginnings of the church, during the writings of Josephus (37–100 AD). The MT we have today inherited those modified versions of Genesis. In contrast, the LXX was created/translated before Jesus appeared, so it had not been modified to discredit Jesus.

Since they were willing to go to great lengths to accomplish their goals, including crucifying their own messiah, it seems they would have been willing to modify the biblical text to discredit someone they were willing to crucify. The rabbis had motive, means, and opportunity. They were the authorities in control of the Hebrew text. Dan Gruber's book on Rabbi Akiba suggests the rabbis were also willing to question the authority of scripture and place their own authority above that of scripture.¹² The hypothesis is that those rabbis changed the original text as described above and that these changes were passed down in copies to eventually become incorporated in the MT. The changes were likely made centuries before the

date of the MT which we have today, which is dated 1008 AD.

Smith says the differences of the numbers among the chronologies in the various texts is, in most cases, not accidental but intentional. These differences are often differences of one hundred years, though a difference of fifty years also appears. Scribal errors would have been caught and not allowed to be propagated by religious authorities. So, religious leaders (rabbis) would have known about the changes and would have had to approve the changes.

The changes were widespread over many different begetting ages, though similar modifications of round numbers were made, suggesting a systematic (i.e., intentional) approach. Also, the changes were *not* made to well-known figures such as Noah, Moses, or Abraham; rather, the changes were made to less well-known individuals so that the changes would more likely go undetected by the readers.

The MT and LXX Genesis 5 and 11 chronologies are different. The differences seem intentional. Let us now examine some arguments for and against the hypothesis suggested by this article.

Inflation theory

This is the theory that the begetting ages for Adam and others were increased, or inflated, in the LXX.

Arguments for inflation

1. There was motive for inflation, to bring the Genesis chronology into agreement with Egyptian chronology. The LXX was supposedly created (translated) in Alexandria, Egypt; therefore, there could have been pressure to agree with Egypt's longer chronology.
2. The religious authorities would not have changed the MT, so the LXX must have been changed.

Arguments against inflation

1. The "inflated" numbers still fail to come close to Egyptian chronology.
2. There is no evidence of efforts to include other aspects of Egyptian culture into the LXX.
3. The SP numbers largely support the LXX numbers. However, the motive to agree with Egyptian

Cosner and Carter. *Bible and Spade* 31(4): 114–133.
<https://biblearchaeology.org/images/Genesis-5-and-11/Setting-the-Record-Straight-Cosner-Carter-Response-Fall-2018-BAS.pdf> Accessed 2024 Apr 16

¹¹ Smith, HB, Jr. (2018) The case for the Septuagint's chronology, 122

¹² Gruber D (2013) *Rabbi Akiba's Messiah: The Origins of Rabbinic Authority*, Elijah Publishing, Hanover, NH

chronology does not apply to the SP, which was not written in Egypt.

4. External (non-Biblical) evidence argues against inflation.

Deflation theory

This is the theory that the begetting ages for Adam and others were decreased, or deflated, in the MT.

Arguments for deflation

1. Motive existed (this motive was to discredit Christianity and to discredit Jesus as the Messiah).
2. Opportunity existed.
3. Means existed.
4. External (non-Biblical) evidence exists.

Arguments against deflation

1. Rabbis would not modify their holy scripture.
2. Rabbis were meticulous.

Historical evidence of the LXX chronologies

Pyramid date

It is generally accepted that Khufu (Cheops) built the Great Pyramid in the 25th century BC. This is *before* the date of the Flood based on the MT (2348 BC). Khufu, however, would have lived *after* the flood since Egypt itself arose after the flood.² It is obviously impossible for the builder of this pyramid to live both before the flood and after the flood. This chronology has been used to discredit the Bible. It seems more likely that the MT chronology is refuted, not the Bible.

Time for population increase sufficient to support building the Tower of Babel

The LXX chronology provides additional time between the Flood and the building of the Tower of Babel. This provides more time for the population to increase sufficiently for the undertaking of such a project, and to be split into various nations. Eric Hovind mentioned this in a recent video.¹³

Textual evidence for the LXX chronologies

Jacob of Edessa

Jacob of Edessa lived around 700 AD and claimed that the chronology of the Hebrew text was intentionally changed in order to discredit Jesus as being the Messiah. According to Smith:

In his *Commentary on the Octateuch*, Jacob claims that the Hebrew text of Gen 5/11 had been deliberately deflated by Jewish authorities to demonstrate that the Christ had not yet come.¹⁴

He also claimed that at his time there were extant copies of the Hebrew text which agreed with the LXX chronology, implying that the LXX chronology was the original chronology of the original Hebrew text, before the changes made shortly after Jesus's death. These copies of the Hebrew text would have been those which escaped modification by the rabbis who were attempting to discredit Jesus as the Messiah.

Josephus

Earlier writings of Josephus agree with the LXX. Later writings of Josephus seem to agree more with the MT. This inconsistency is easily explained by the modifications to the Hebrew text. Those modifications were likely made while Josephus was writing, shortly after the death of Christ. So, Josephus could easily have had access to both earlier, unmodified Hebrew texts, as well as later, modified Hebrew texts. Josephus himself claimed that he translated from the Hebrew. So, the numbers he provides in agreement with the LXX were from the early, unmodified, Hebrew text. The fact that Josephus's earlier writings agree with the LXX supports the hypothesis that the later Hebrew text had been modified sometime during the writing of Josephus's documents. Josephus lived and wrote during the first century AD. He died in 100 AD.¹⁵

Demetrius the chronographer

Demetrius wrote approximately 220 BC. Per Demetrius, there were 2264 years from Adam to the flood. This is very close to 2262 years recorded in the LXX and nowhere near the 1656 years recorded in the MT.

Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum (LAB)

This document, written in the first century AD or perhaps even BC, agrees with the chronology of the LXX, not that of the MT. According to Smith:

¹³ Hovind E, Smith H (2023 Nov 02) Genealogies of Genesis, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zG2EB9qY3Hc&t=1475s> Accessed 2024 Apr 18

¹⁴ Smith HB, Jr. (2018) Setting the record straight, 120

¹⁵ Poole GW. Flavius Josephus. *Encyclopedia Britannica* <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Flavius-Josephus> Last updated 2024 Apr 25

Since LAB was written in Hebrew by a Hebrew in the land of the Hebrews, there are no grounds to surmise that it depends on the LXX. ... Even if the author of LAB did somehow consult with the LXX, his endorsement of the longer chronology means it agreed with his Hebrew text of Gen 5/11.¹⁶

There is also internal evidence in LAB that it was not based on the LXX.

We know LAB numbers came from Hebrew, *not* from the LXX. Also, significantly, LAB was written before 70 AD. According to Smith:

In LAB we have the product of rabbinic, Pharisaic Judaism initially written in Hebrew, originating before AD 70 in Israel,¹⁷

Therefore, the Hebrew numbers that LAB used were written before 70 AD, perhaps even BC. The logical conclusion is that the Hebrew chronologies were modified after Jesus's death.

For more details, see Smith HB, Jr. (2018) The case for the Septuagint's chronology in Genesis 5 and 11.

Eusebius

Smith tells us:

Eusebius (ca. AD 310) argued that the LXX should be followed (in part) because it "was translated from old and accurate Hebrew copies." Conversely, the MT's timeline was deflated, and Eusebius states: "Therefore we suspect that this was something which the Jews did."¹⁸

Eupolemus

Writing near 160 BC, Eupolemus came up with the same creation date as Demetrius. Eupolemus used both the LXX and the Hebrew texts. (Note: the Hebrew text of 160 BC was *not* the MT of today!) He was a member of a leading priestly family and would have had access to temple scrolls.

Eupolemus would never have used the LXX's primeval chronology unless it closely matched the Hebrew text(s) of Genesis available to him. His choice of an erroneously inflated LXX chronology would have embarrassed the priesthood, his family, and the

nation. His writing, chronology, place of residence, and status strongly indicate there were Hebrew texts in Jerusalem with the longer chronology in the 2nd century BC.¹⁹

SP

The SP agrees with the LXX concerning much of the Genesis chronologies, which differ from those of the MT. See the Table 1.

Other extra-biblical authors

There is even more external documentary evidence in support of the LXX chronologies as being closer to the early Hebrew (pre-MT) text. There is not space to list all this evidence, but it includes work of Augustine of Hippo, Julian of Toledo, George Syncellus, Bar Hebraeus and Muhammad ibn Ahmad Biruni.²⁰

Scientific evidence of the LXX chronologies

There is very interesting scientific support for the chronology of the LXX over the MT.

Hydroplate Theory

A flood date determination based on the Hydroplate Theory and astronomical data gives the date of 3290 ± 100 BC for the flood.²¹ This is amazingly close to the LXX date of 3298 BC, thus supporting the LXX flood date.

Cosmology

A cosmology has been developed which resolves not only distant starlight and time problems for Young Earth Creation (YEC) but also resolves radiometric dating and time problems for YEC.²² Per this cosmology, day 1 of creation was between 7500 and 8000 years ago. Per the LXX, day 1 of the six days of creation described in Genesis was also between 7500 and 8000 years ago!

Summary

While I don't want to be dogmatic, and I want to be open to the evidence and willing to change my view if new evidence warrants such, it seems to me the preponderance of the evidence supports the LXX chronology of Genesis 5 and 11 as being closer to that of the original Hebrew than is the MT. I hope this article helps to gain more attention

¹⁶ Smith HB, Jr. (2018) The case for the Septuagint's chronology, 124

¹⁷ Smith, HB, Jr. (2018) The case for the Septuagint's chronology, 124–125


¹⁸ Smith HB, Jr. (2018) Setting the record straight, 115

¹⁹ Smith HB, Jr. (2018) The case for the Septuagint's chronology, 123

²⁰ Smith HB, Jr. (2018) Setting the record straight, 117–120

²¹ Hydroplate Theory website (2013 Oct 13) Ancient LXX & modern astronomy support HPT. <https://hydroplate.org/news-item/lxx-research-supports-hpt> Accessed 2024 Apr 16

²² Setterfield B (2015 Dec) Equations and the time question https://barrysetterfield.org/Equations_and_Time.html Accessed 2024 Apr 23

for this issue. Henry Smith has mentioned that he originally assumed the MT was more accurate, to such an extent that he ignored the LXX until someone prompted him to investigate the LXX. The evidence ought not to be ignored. The correct chronology, as pointed out earlier, is important for creation research, apologetics, archaeology, and history. 

COMING EVENTS

TASC Zoom Meeting, May 9, 7:00 pm EDT

When was the Flood? Are Bishop Ussher's calculations correct? What are the dates of early events in Genesis? What are the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint? These topics will be explored, with evidence supporting answers that may surprise you.

Join Zoom meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4490299372>

Meeting ID: 449 029 9372

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