

WHO WAS BORN WHEN ENOSH WAS 90?  
A SEMANTIC REEVALUATION OF WILLIAM HENRY GREEN'S  
CHRONOLOGICAL GAPS

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I. *The Genesis of the Primeval Chronology Debate*

In 1890, William Henry Green, professor of Oriental and Old Testament Literature at Princeton Theological Seminary, published his seminal essay “Primeval Chronology.”<sup>1</sup> He argued that “the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 were not intended to be used, and cannot properly be used, for the construction of a chronology.”<sup>2</sup> He concluded that “the Scriptures furnish no data for a chronological computation prior to the life of Abraham.”<sup>3</sup>

Green’s proposal challenged the long-established approach to Gen 5 and 11. Biblical interpreters had been reading the genealogies as chronologies since before Christ. Jewish historians Demetrius (ca. 200 BC), Eupolemus (ca. 160 BC), and Josephus (ca. AD 93), as well as the authors of *Jubilees* (ca. 150 BC) and *Seder Olam Rabbah* (ca. AD 150), used the genealogies for chronological computation.<sup>4</sup> Several early and medieval churchmen—for example, Theophilus of Antioch (ca. 168), Julius Africanus (ca. 218), Origen (ca. 230), Eusebius (ca. 315), Augustine (ca. 354), Bede (ca. 723), and Cedrenus (ca. 1060)—did likewise.<sup>5</sup> Luther dated creation to 3960 BC, Melanchthon to 3963 BC, and “Geneva” to 3943 BC.<sup>6</sup> During the interval between the Reformation and the publication of Green’s essay, Ussher dated creation to 4004 BC, Vossius to 5590 BC, Playfair to 4007 BC, Jackson to 5426 BC, Hales to 5411 BC, and Russell to

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<sup>1</sup> William Henry Green, “Primeval Chronology,” *BSac* 47 (1890): 285–303.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 286.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 303.

<sup>4</sup> E. H. Merrill, “Chronology,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 117–18.

<sup>5</sup> William Hales, *A New Analysis of Chronology and Geography, History and Prophecy*, 2nd ed. (London: C. J. G. & E. Rivington, 1830), 1:211–12; Hugh Magennis, *The Cambridge Introduction to Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 100–101.

<sup>6</sup> Zacharias Ursinus, *The Commentary of Dr Zacharias Ursinus on the Heidelberg Catechism*, trans. G. W. Williard, 2nd ed. (Columbus, OH: Scott & Bascom, 1852), 145.

5441 BC.<sup>7</sup> This is merely a small sampling of those who used Gen 5 and 11 for the construction of a chronology. By 1890 the chronological interpretation had deep roots.

Chronological computation has always been so inviting because Gen 5 and 11 specify the age of each patriarch at the birth of his descendant, unlike any other genealogies in Scripture or in extant ancient Near Eastern writings.<sup>8</sup> The text says that when Adam was 130, he begat Seth (Gen 5:3); when Seth was 105, he begat Enosh (5:6); when Enosh was 90, he begat Kenan (5:9); and so forth. It appears that one can construct a chronology from Adam to Abraham by adding up the patriarchs' begetting ages. Green conceded that Gen 5 and 11 give "the *prima facie* impression" of a chronology, but he attempted to refute the chronological interpretation by arguing for the possibility of genealogical gaps created by the biblical author's "omission of unimportant names."<sup>9</sup>

During the twentieth century, Green's proposal became the consensus view among evangelical OT scholars. Walter C. Kaiser Jr. included Green's landmark paper in his compilation of *Classical Evangelical Essays in Old Testament Interpretation*, considering it one of "the finest moments in Old Testament scholarship."<sup>10</sup>

Green's hypothesis is attractive because it reconciles Scripture with the academically accepted antiquity of mankind. According to the chronological interpretation of Gen 5 and 11 in the Masoretic Text (MT), God created Adam ca. 4000 BC. The Septuagint (LXX), with its higher begetting ages, puts the creation of Adam ca. 5500 BC. Few anthropologists accept such recent dates for the origin of the human race. Green's theory also removes any discrepancy between the conventional chronology of ancient Egypt and the date of the flood. A deluge that destroyed all of mankind must have happened before Egypt's first dynasty, whose accepted date of commencement is ca. 3000 BC.<sup>11</sup> The problem is that Noah's flood, according to the chronology in the MT, dates to ca. 2500 BC at the earliest (Ussher dated it to 2348 BC). The longer chronology in the LXX puts the flood before Egyptian history, but Green insisted on the accuracy of the MT's begetting ages.<sup>12</sup> He proposed an appealing solution: gaps in Gen 5 and 11 that do not impose a timeline on the interpreter.

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<sup>7</sup> Michael Russell, *A Connection of Sacred and Profane History*, rev. J. Talboys Wheeler, 2nd ed. (London: William Tegg, 1865), 1:31–32, 88–90. The earlier dates for creation (ca. 5500 BC) are based on the Septuagint's longer primeval chronology, to which most Christian interpreters before the Reformation, and many afterward, subscribed (see Appendix B below).

<sup>8</sup> Gerhard E. Hasel, "The Meaning of the Chronogenealogies of Genesis 5 and 11," *Origins* 7 (1980): 53, 62; see also Gerhard E. Hasel, "The Genealogies of Gen 5 and 11 and Their Alleged Babylonian Background," *AUSS* 16 (1978): 361–74.

<sup>9</sup> Green, "Primeval Chronology," 285–86.

<sup>10</sup> Walter C. Kaiser Jr., ed., *Classical Evangelical Essays in Old Testament Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972), 7.

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., Anthony J. Spalinger, "Chronology and Periodization," *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, ed. Donald B. Redford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1:267.

<sup>12</sup> Green, "Primeval Chronology," 300.

## II. Green's Gaps

### 1. The Case for Genealogical Gaps

In the first half of his essay, Green shows that biblical genealogies are sometimes “abbreviated by the omission of unimportant names.”<sup>13</sup> He appeals first to the familiar omissions in the genealogy of Jesus in Matt 1.<sup>14</sup> For example, Matt 1:8 says that “Joram begat Uzziah,” even though Uzziah (also called “Azariah”) was Joram’s great-great-grandson (1 Chr 3:11–12). Green then points out omissions in OT genealogies (e.g., Ezra 7:1–5; cf. 1 Chr 6:3–14).<sup>15</sup> He also discusses OT passages that use the Hebrew verb יָלַד (“to bear, give birth to, bring forth, beget”).<sup>16</sup> The *hiphil* of יָלַד occurs fifty-three times in Gen 5 and 11:10–26, thirty-six times as יוֹלֵד (“he begat”) and seventeen times as הוֹלִידוֹ (“[after] he begat”).<sup>17</sup> Green’s purpose is to show that this verb can be used of remote descendants as well as immediate offspring.

Green recognizes that the *hiphil* verbs יוֹלֵד and הוֹלִידוֹ describe the event of birth throughout Gen 5 and 11. Commenting on Gen 5:9 (“When Enosh had lived 90 years, he begat [יוֹלֵד] Kenan”), Green affirms that “when Enosh was ninety ... one was born.”<sup>18</sup> Eight more times Green acknowledges that the genealogies specify the age of each patriarch at the “birth” of his “son.”<sup>19</sup> Modern OT scholars concur. Hamilton states that יוֹלֵד and הוֹלִידוֹ refer to “the birthing process,” that is, “the actual delivery of a son or daughter.”<sup>20</sup> He notes in his commentary on Genesis that the genealogies provide “the age of the father at the birth” of his son, for יוֹלֵד “repeatedly” describes “the son’s birth.”<sup>21</sup> Lessing and Steinmann agree that the genealogies furnish “the age of each ancestor at the birth of his descendant.”<sup>22</sup> Waltke and O’Connor show that the *hiphil* and *hophal* (the causative forms) of יָלַד describe the “event” of birth.<sup>23</sup> They translate יוֹלֵד בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת in Gen 5:4 as “he *begat* (*Hiphil*) sons and daughters (lit., *caused* sons and daughters *to be born* [as an event]).”<sup>24</sup> They translate אֶת־פְּרָעָה יוֹם הַלְדוֹת אֶת־פְּרָעָה

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 286.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 286–93.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 290–94; see BDB, *HALOT*, *DCH*, *NIDOTTE*, *TLOT*, *TDOT*, and *TWOT*, s.v. “יָלַד.”

<sup>17</sup> יָלַד occurs only in the *hiphil* stem throughout Gen 5 and 11.

<sup>18</sup> Green, “Primeval Chronology,” 298.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 296–97, 300–301.

<sup>20</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, “יָלַד,” *NIDOTTE* 2:456. Hamilton wrote the following to me: “The Hebrew word *yalad* refers to the actual delivery of a son or daughter. That is what I mean by ‘the birthing process.’ The birthing process begins and ends with delivery” (quoted with permission).

<sup>21</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 255.

<sup>22</sup> R. Reed Lessing and Andrew E. Steinmann, *Prepare the Way of the Lord: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2013), 55–56.

<sup>23</sup> Bruce K. Waltke and Michael P. O’Connor, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 447–48.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 447 (parentheses, brackets, and italics original).

in Gen 40:20 as “on Pharaoh’s *birthday* (*Hophal*) (lit., on the day of Pharaoh’s *having been caused to be born* [as an event]).”<sup>25</sup> One is “caused to be born” on the day, and in the event, of birth. Isaiah 45:10 illustrates well that the *hiphil* of יָלַד refers to delivery. The child *in utero* asks his father, “What will you bring forth [מָה תוֹלִידֶנִּי?]” (Isa 45:10), which indicates that the father has not yet “brought forth” or “begotten” (יָלַד, *hiphil*) the child. Oswalt says that the *hiphil* verb תוֹלִיד in this verse makes “future reference” to the time when the unborn child will be “brought to birth.”<sup>26</sup> Young similarly explains that this verse points ahead to the time when the father “will bring forth” (תוֹלִיד) his already conceived child.<sup>27</sup> A father “begets” or “brings forth” (יָלַד, *hiphil*) his child on the day in which his child is “brought to birth.” Tov argues that the *hiphil* of יָלַד throughout the genealogies “refers to the birth of the son rather than the fathering [of the son].”<sup>28</sup> The translation “begat” (as well as “fathered”) potentially obscures this point. English Bibles convey the “birthing” sense of יָלַד in Gen 5 and 11 when they translate it as “had.” For example, the NIV, ESV, NKJV, NASB, CEB, RSV, NRSV, and NLT say that Enosh “had [וַיּוֹלֵד]” other sons and daughters (Gen 5:10b). Throughout the genealogies, the *hiphil* of יָלַד describes “the birthing process” or “the actual delivery” of descendants. Neither Green nor modern Hebrew scholars dispute this semantic reality. A descendant was “brought to birth” at the specified age of each patriarch in Gen 5 and 11.

Green argues that יָלַד can be used “of descendants beyond the first generation.”<sup>29</sup> He supports this conclusion initially with some biblical passages that use יָלַד in the *qal*.<sup>30</sup> Then he cites two verses (Deut 4:25 and 2 Kgs 20:18) that use the *hiphil* of יָלַד and that uphold his contention unquestionably.<sup>31</sup> Deuteronomy 4:25 contains the following dependent clause: “when you have had [תוֹלִידֶיךָ] children and grandchildren and have grown old in the land.” Here the *hiphil* verb תוֹלִיד takes as its direct objects both immediate offspring (“children”) and remote descendants (“grandchildren”). Second Kings 20:18 records Isaiah’s prediction that Hezekiah “will bring forth [תוֹלִידֶיךָ]” remote “sons” who will be taken into exile. These “sons” turn out to be Hezekiah’s great-great-great-grandson Jehoiachin and great-great-grandson Zedekiah (2 Kgs 24:12–17; 25:1–7). We must agree with Green that יָלַד can be used “without restriction to the immediate offspring.”<sup>32</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 448 (parentheses, brackets, and italics original).

<sup>26</sup> John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 209.

<sup>27</sup> Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 3:204.

<sup>28</sup> Emanuel Tov, “Genealogical Lists in Genesis 5 and 11 in Three Different Versions,” in *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, Qumran, Septuagint*, vol. 3 of *Collected Essays*, VTSup 167 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 222n3.

<sup>29</sup> Green, “Primeval Chronology,” 293.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 291–93.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 294.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

In the second half of his essay, Green turns to the genealogies in Gen 5 and 11. He contends that the inspired author may have condensed these genealogical tables by omitting unimportant links. For example, Kenan may have been “a remote descendant of Enosh.”<sup>33</sup> We concede Green’s point, granting for argument’s sake that Gen 5 and 11 contain genealogical gaps.

2. From Genealogical Gaps to Chronological Gaps

Green assumes, without explicit argument, that chronological gaps are a corollary of genealogical gaps. He states that if the author of Genesis had intended to provide a gapless chronology, then “he must of course have aimed to make his list complete. The omission of even a single name would create an error.”<sup>34</sup> However, an unbroken *chronology* does not logically or semantically require an unbroken *genealogy*. As long as Seth was born when Adam was 130, and Enosh was born when Seth was 105, and Kenan was born when Enosh was 90 (whether Kenan was Enosh’s son, grandson, great-grandson, or great-great-grandson), and so on, the chronology would remain intact.

The formula that links together the generations in Gen 5 and 11 is “When A had lived X years, he had [וַיֹּלֵד] B.”<sup>35</sup> This construction communicates how old each patriarch was when he “had” or “brought to birth” his descendant. Table 1 uses Gen 5:9 to illustrate the grammar of this recurring formula:

Table 1: The Grammar of Genesis 5:9

אֶת־קִינָן	וַיֹּלֵד	שָׁנָה	תְּשַׁעִּים	אֶנוֹשׁ	וַיְחִי
Kenan	he had	years	90	Enosh	when he had lived
“When Enosh [A] had lived 90 [X] years, he had Kenan [B].”					

Who was born when Enosh was 90? The untranslatable particle אֶת marks קִינָן (“Kenan”) as the direct-object accusative of וַיֹּלֵד (“he had”). A “*direct-object accusative* is the recipient of a transitive verb’s action.”<sup>36</sup> The transitive verb וַיֹּלֵד describes birth. Therefore Gen 5:9 refers to Kenan’s birth when Enosh was 90.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 297.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 296.

<sup>35</sup> See Gen 5:3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 25, 28; 11:12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26. Gen 5:32 and 11:10 replace “had lived X years” with “was X years old.”

<sup>36</sup> Waltke and O’Connor, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 164, italics original.

<sup>37</sup> The particle אֶת, which precedes “B” in the formula “When A had lived X years, he had B,” is not merely an object marker. This “emphatic particle” can also precede the subject of לֵד in its passive forms (Waltke and O’Connor, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 177–82). Genesis uses אֶת with the *qal*, *hiphil*, *niphal*, and *hophal* of לֵד to mark the name of the person born:

- (1) *Qal*. Gen 10:24: “Shelah had [יָלַד] Eber [אֶת־עֵבֶר].”
- (2) *Hiphil*. Gen 11:14: “Shelah ... had [וַיֹּלֵד] Eber [אֶת־עֵבֶר].”
- (3) *Niphal*. Gen 21:5: “Abraham was 100 years old when there was born [בְּהוֹלֵד] to him Isaac [אֶת־יִצְחָק].”

Could Gen 5:9 be describing the birth of someone other than Kenan when Enosh was 90? Green supposes so. He suggests that Enosh's anonymous son "from whom Kenan sprang" could have been born that year.<sup>38</sup> Thus Gen 5:9 may mean "When Enosh had lived 90 years, he had [the son from whom sprang] Kenan." On Green's reading, we have no way of knowing when Kenan himself "sprang." He could have been born thousands of years later. Green asserts this semantic premise directly:

When it is said, for example, that "Enosh lived ninety years and begat Kenan," the well-established usage of the word "begat" makes this statement equally true and equally accordant with analogy, whether Kenan was an immediate or a remote descendant of Enosh; *whether Kenan was himself born, when Enosh was ninety years of age or one was born from whom Kenan sprang.*<sup>39</sup>

Green assumes that asking "whether Kenan was an immediate or a remote descendant of Enosh" (a semantically legitimate question) is tantamount to asking "whether Kenan was himself born, when Enosh was ninety years of age or one was born from whom Kenan sprang." Green's contention is unwarranted. Whether Kenan was an immediate or a remote descendant of Enosh, the text says that when Enosh was 90, he had *Kenan*, not Kenan's ancestor. Kenan himself was born when Enosh was 90.

Green complicates what is lexically and grammatically straightforward. He inserts an unstated direct object, B's unnamed ancestor, into the text, creating chronological gaps. Yet he offers no semantic evidence that לָדָה in any active form can describe the birth of someone other than its stated object. Here is Green's argument presented as a syllogism:

Premise 1: Gen 5 and 11 may contain genealogical gaps (that is, B may be a remote descendant of A in some cases).

Premise 2: Where B is a remote descendant of A, the formula "When A had lived X years, he had B" means "When A had lived X years, he had [the son from whom sprang] B."

Conclusion: Gen 5 and 11 may contain chronological gaps.

We grant P1. However, we find several problems with P2.

(1) As noted above, in general, "the *direct-object accusative* is the recipient of a transitive verb's action."<sup>40</sup> With a *hiphil* verb in particular, "the object participates in the event expressed by the verbal root."<sup>41</sup> For example, Lev 23:30b ("I will cause that soul to *perish* from among his people"), which uses the *hiphil* verb

(4) *Hophal* Gen 40:20: "... the day on which was born [הַלְדָתָה] Pharaoh [אֶת־פְּרַעֲוֹה]. When אֶת is used with לָדָה, it identifies the one born (J. Kühlewein, "לָדָה," *TLOT* 2:544).

<sup>38</sup> Green, "Primeval Chronology," 298.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 297–98, emphasis added.

<sup>40</sup> Waltke and O'Connor, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 164, italics original; see n. 36 above.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 435.

וְהָאֵלֹהִים, “presents the object, that soul, as an actor in the event of perishing.”<sup>42</sup> Similarly, Gen 5:9b (“*he caused Kenan to be born*”), which uses the *hiphil* verb וַיֵּלֶד, presents the object, Kenan, as an actor in the event of being born. Kenan himself received the action of וַיֵּלֶד when Enosh was 90. Kenan, not his anonymous ancestor, participated in the event expressed by the root of וַיֵּלֶד (the event of birth) when Enosh was 90.<sup>43</sup>

(2) P2 does not follow from P1, but actually undermines it. On the one hand, P1 affirms that ילד can be used of “a remote descendant,” that is, “without restriction to the immediate offspring.”<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, P2 restricts the use of ילד to the birth of the immediate son “from whom [the remote descendant] sprang.”<sup>45</sup>

(3) The standard Hebrew lexicons (BDB, *HALOT*, *DCH*) lend no credence to P2. None of them suggests that ילד ever describes the birth of an unstated object instead of its grammatical object.

(4) P2 cannot be established from usage. Nowhere does ילד (or either of its Greek counterparts, τίπτω and γεννάω) take a remote descendant as its object while describing the birth of the remote descendant’s anonymous ancestor. No text is clarified by positing that ילד describes the birth of an unmentioned object instead of its explicit object.

(5) It is counterintuitive to think that the statement “When A had lived X years, he had B” describes the birth of someone other than B when A was X years old. Green illustrates this when he refers to “the ages of different patriarchs at the birth of the son named.”<sup>46</sup> This slip of the pen betrays the natural reading: “the son *named*” (not an unnamed ancestor of the son named) was born at the specified age.

(6) The evidence from usage shows that the *hiphil* of ילד describes the birth of its grammatical object *even when its grammatical object is a remote descendant* (contra the logic of P2). Unambiguous examples of this occur in Deut 4:25 and 2 Kgs 20:18 // Isa 39:7, to which we now return.

(a) *Deuteronomy* 4:25. In Deut 4:25, Moses utters this temporal clause: “when you have had [תוליד] children and grandchildren and have grown old in the land.”<sup>47</sup> This supports P1, confirming that the *hiphil* of ילד can take as its grammatical object “grandchildren” (בְּנֵי בָנִים) as well as “children” (בָּנִים). But it defies P2, because the verb תוליד describes the *births* of both objects, the grandchildren as well as the children.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> The translations of Gen 5:10a in the New Jewish Publication Society *Tanakh* (“After the birth of Kenan, Enosh lived 815 years”) and the Holman Christian Standard Bible (“Enosh lived 815 years after the birth of Kenan”) capture well that Kenan was born when Enosh was 90. So also the RSV and NRSV.

<sup>44</sup> Green, “Primeval Chronology,” 294, 297.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 298.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 300.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. the NIV: “After you have had children and grandchildren and have lived in the land a long time.”

Let us apply the logic of P2 to this clause: “when you have had children and [children from whom will spring] grandchildren and have grown old in the land.” On this reading, Moses awkwardly refers to the births of the same immediate offspring twice (“when you have had children and children”). This interpretation also ignores the progression of thought in the clause, for Moses intends to give an overview of life in the land: God’s people will have children, then grandchildren, as they grow old in Canaan.

This example is instructive because it comes from the Pentateuch and because לָדָד appears in the *hiphil* with a masculine subject. It illustrates that when the *hiphil* of לָדָד is used of grandchildren, it describes the births of the grandchildren, not the births of the children from whom the grandchildren spring.

(b) *Second Kings 20:18 // Isaiah 39:7*.<sup>48</sup> In 2 Kgs 20:12–15, Hezekiah shows the envoys from Babylon all the treasures in his storehouses. In response, Isaiah tells Hezekiah that one day the Babylonians will come and take back to Babylon all these treasures, along with some of Hezekiah’s descendants (vv. 16–18). In v. 18 (// Isa 39:7) Isaiah tells Hezekiah that the Babylonians “will take away some of your sons, who will issue forth from you, whom *you will bring forth* [תּוֹלִיד].” Isaiah’s prediction here, uttered in the late eighth century BC, is that Hezekiah “will bring forth” or “will have” remote “sons” who will be taken to Babylon. This prophecy was fulfilled in the early sixth century BC when Jehoiachin (Hezekiah’s great-great-grandson) and Zedekiah (Hezekiah’s great-great-grandson) were taken captive (2 Kgs 24:12–17; 25:1–7). Isaiah’s usage supports P1, but it challenges P2, because Isaiah is describing the births of Hezekiah’s distant grandsons, not the birth of the son (Manasseh) from whom Hezekiah’s grandsons sprang.

Isaiah is not predicting, as the logic of P2 would require, that Hezekiah will bring forth the *ancestor* of the remote sons who will be taken into exile. The second relative clause in Isaiah’s prophecy (“whom you will bring forth”), no less than the first (“who will issue forth from you”), makes future reference to the births of the remote sons themselves, not the birth of their ancestor Manasseh.<sup>49</sup> According to Thiele, Hezekiah’s son Manasseh was already born when Isaiah spoke this prophecy.<sup>50</sup> And Hezekiah died before his grandson, Manasseh’s son Amon, was born. Thus Isaiah’s “whom you will bring forth” refers to the

<sup>48</sup> These two verses are identical in the Hebrew (*qere*).

<sup>49</sup> The ESV translates וּמִבְּנֵיךָ אֲשֶׁר יֵצְאוּ מִמֶּךָ אֲשֶׁר תּוֹלִיד in 2 Kgs 20:18 as “and some of your sons, who shall be born to you.” This recognizes that both of Isaiah’s relative clauses (“who will issue forth from you, whom you will bring forth”), which the ESV reduces to one clause (“who shall be born to you”), describe the births of the remote sons themselves.

<sup>50</sup> Isaiah spoke his prophecy to Hezekiah at some point during the last 15 years of Hezekiah’s life (2 Kgs 20:6). According to Edwin R. Thiele in *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 173–77, Manasseh co-reigned with his father Hezekiah during the last 10 years of Hezekiah’s life, beginning when Manasseh was 12 years old (2 Kgs 21:1). Thus Manasseh would have been about (12 + 10 =) 22 when Hezekiah died and so at least (22 – 15 =) 7 when Isaiah prophesied.



births of descendants born after Hezekiah's death. Hezekiah had Jehoiachin and Zedekiah postmortem just as Joram had Uzziah postmortem (Matt 1:8).

To save P2, one OT scholar proposed to me that an unmentioned immediate son must have been born to Hezekiah sometime after Isaiah's prophecy, and that Isaiah's "whom you will bring forth" refers to the birth of this unknown son, whose descendants must have been exiled to Babylon in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. This unprecedented interpretation reverts to speculation for the sole purpose of upholding the semantic logic of P2. Moreover, 2 Kgs 24:12–17 and 25:1–7 unmistakably identify the captivity of Manasseh's descendants, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah, as the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. Provan affirms that the deportations of Jehoiachin and Zedekiah constitute the prophecy's realization.<sup>51</sup> Additionally, *Mart. Isa.* 1:2 states that Manasseh was Hezekiah's only son.

Deuteronomy 4:25 and 2 Kgs 20:18 // Isa 39:7 reinforce the implausibility of Green's ad hoc conjecture (P2). The *hiphil* of 𐤇𐤊 describes the birth of its grammatical object, whether that object is an immediate or a remote descendant.

### III. Goodenow's Little-Known Response to Green's Essay

Shortly after Green published his paper, Smith Bartlett Goodenow wrote a critical response in which he showed that "the 'begat' indicates *the birth of the person named* after it; and the date of that birth being given, it matters not how many un-named generations intervene. The *chronology* is fixed and unchanged. No such anomaly is known in Scripture, or in reason, as a dating given to an *un-named ancestor's* birth."<sup>52</sup> Goodenow submitted his critique of Green's hypothesis to *Bibliotheca Sacra*, along with a second manuscript titled "Primeval Man."<sup>53</sup> The editor, G. Frederick Wright, wrote the following in an acceptance letter to Goodenow dated June 29, 1893: "The two Mss. which I have in my hand ought to be published in the Bibliotheca, and I can say to you positively, that if you will let them remain in my hands, I will work them into the January and April numbers."<sup>54</sup> Inexplicably, Goodenow's response to Green's essay never appeared in the journal.<sup>55</sup>

### IV. Green's Unimportant Begetting Ages

We noted above that in all of Scripture and known ancient Near Eastern literature, only the genealogies in Gen 5 and 11 contain begetting ages. Even

<sup>51</sup> Iain W. Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, NIBCOT 7 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 278–80.

<sup>52</sup> Smith Bartlett Goodenow, *Bible Chronology Carefully Unfolded* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1896), 322, italics original.

<sup>53</sup> Smith Bartlett Goodenow, "Primeval Man," *BSac* 51 (1894): 158–64.

<sup>54</sup> Goodenow, *Bible Chronology*, 317.

<sup>55</sup> Goodenow's response (later published in Goodenow, *Bible Chronology*, 317–27) also includes a critique of Frederic Gardiner's attempt (in 1873) to provide a non-chronological interpretation of Gen 5 and 11 (see Appendix A below).

if Green were correct that the genealogies technically allow for chronological gaps, we would need to ask why the author provided nineteen begetting ages, one for each patriarch, if not for the purpose of indicating when the named descendants were born. According to Green, these temporal qualifiers may only record how old the fathers were when they brought forth “unimportant names.”<sup>56</sup> Green does not explain why the author would date the births of unimportant (that is, unnamed) names.

The biblical author did not need to include begetting ages for *genealogical* purposes; every ancient genealogy outside of Gen 5 and 11 communicates lineage without using begetting ages. In the immediate context, for example, Gen 4 and 10 illustrate the genealogical conventions that do not use begetting ages: “to Seth also was born a son, and he called his name Enosh” (4:26); “the sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram” (10:22); “Arpachshad had Shelah, and Shelah had Eber” (10:24). The genealogy in 1 Chr 1:1–27 goes from Adam to Abraham without using begetting ages. The genealogy in Ruth 4:18–22 links its patriarchs together with the *hiphil* of לָדָה, but without using begetting ages. I have been unable to find a published interpretation that posits a reason why the author of Gen 5 and 11 included the begetting ages if not for a *chronological* purpose.

In response to this point, one dialog partner proposed to me the following non-chronological purpose: the begetting ages in Gen 5, when compared to the lower ones in Gen 11, suggest the virility of the antediluvians. This scholar noted more broadly that the intent of Gen 5 and 11 is to continue the themes (developed in Gen 1–4) of life, death, and reproduction. First, the themes of life, death, and reproduction could have remained in Gen 5 and 11 without the begetting ages. Second, the begetting ages indicate neither when the patriarchs became virile nor when they became sterile. Adam fathered children before he had Seth at age 130 (Gen 4:25; 5:3), “which shows it to be no purpose of these birth-dates to give the age of beginning paternity.”<sup>57</sup> And the fathers on both sides of the flood stayed virile indefinitely after their specified ages of begetting, having “other sons and daughters.” So we know when the patriarchs were born, when they had their important sons, and when they died, but not when they gained or lost virility. Nothing suggests that the antediluvians were virile for a larger percentage of their lives than the postdiluvians. It is difficult to deny that Green’s “theory *takes away all purpose* on the part of the sacred writer in giving the birth-dates he has so carefully arranged.”<sup>58</sup>

Green assigns importance only to the patriarchs’ life spans, which reveal “the original term of human life. They show what it was in the ages before the Flood. They show how it was afterwards individually narrowed down.”<sup>59</sup> We agree that

<sup>56</sup> Green, “Primeval Chronology,” 286.

<sup>57</sup> Goodenow, *Bible Chronology*, 324.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 322, italics original.

<sup>59</sup> Green, “Primeval Chronology,” 297.

Gen 5 and 11 communicate each father's length of life. However, if the author of the genealogies had wanted to supply life spans, but not chronology, he could have accomplished this more efficiently without begetting ages. The genealogy in Exod 6:16–20 gives the fathers' life spans without using begetting ages.<sup>60</sup> For example, Exod 6:18 says, "The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. And the years of the life of Kohath were 133." Genesis 5:9–11 would still provide Enosh's life span if v. 9 did not specify how old Enosh was when he had Kenan, and if v. 10 did not mention how long Enosh lived after he had Kenan. It would read thus: "<sup>9</sup>Enosh had Kenan. <sup>10</sup>And Enosh had other sons and daughters. <sup>11</sup>And all the days of Enosh were 905 years, and he died." As the text stands, v. 9 specifies and v. 10 accentuates the year in which the important son, Kenan, was born: "<sup>9</sup>When Enosh had lived 90 years, he had Kenan. <sup>10</sup>Enosh lived 815 years after he had Kenan, and had other sons and daughters."

Green argues that since the genealogies provide numbers that are of no use chronologically (i.e., "how long each patriarch lived after the birth of his son, and what was the entire length of his life"), we ought not to think that *any* of the numbers were intended for a chronological purpose.<sup>61</sup> However, the author surely could have had one aim for the begetting ages (to provide a chronology) and another for the ages at death (to show the patriarchs' longevity and humanity's declining life span).

Green says that the author of Genesis "nowhere sums these numbers [that is, nowhere sums the begetting ages], nor suggests their summation," and that "there is no computation [of primeval chronology] anywhere in Scripture."<sup>62</sup> However, the author of Genesis does more than merely suggest the summation of the begetting ages. He uses words and grammar that inescapably link these numbers together chronologically (as I have demonstrated in this article). That Scripture never computes the chronology is irrelevant, inasmuch as the semantics and syntax of the genealogies support chronological computation. Green himself acknowledges that the author of these genealogies expected his readers to make some important computations with the numbers provided. Genesis 11 does not total the length of the fathers' lives, but Green determines that we can know the life span of each postdiluvian patriarch by adding his begetting age to the number of years he lived after his son's birth.<sup>63</sup> Thus Green deduces that "the term of human life" was "individually narrowed down" after the flood.<sup>64</sup>

One of Green's own arguments for genealogical gaps (P1) involves tallying the names in each genealogy: "Each genealogy includes ten names, Noah being

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<sup>60</sup> James B. Jordan, "The Biblical Chronology Question: An Analysis (Part 1)," *Creation Social Science and Humanities Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (1979): 14.

<sup>61</sup> Green, "Primeval Chronology," 297. See James B. Jordan, "The Biblical Chronology Question: An Analysis (Part 2)," *Creation Social Science and Humanities Quarterly* 2, no. 3 (1980): 17–19, 21–22, who demonstrates the "implicit reductionism in this line of reasoning" (21).

<sup>62</sup> Green, "Primeval Chronology," 297.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

the tenth from Adam, and Terah the tenth from Noah.”<sup>65</sup> Green sees this as one of the “striking numerical coincidences” in Gen 5 and 11, and concludes that “the symmetry of these primitive genealogies is artificial.”<sup>66</sup> While an artificial ten-and-ten symmetry would only entail genealogical (not chronological) gaps, it is worth noting that MT Gen 11 comprises only nine names.<sup>67</sup> To arrive at ten names in each genealogy, Green includes Noah in both genealogies, even though Noah does not appear in the second one. In a later publication, Green acknowledges that the two genealogies have “nearly the same number of links (one ten, the other nine).”<sup>68</sup>

Actually, it is Green’s interpretation that generates the most striking numerical coincidence. According to Green, we cannot know when Methuselah died in relation to the flood, because we cannot know how big the chronological gap was between him and Noah. Methuselah could have died thousands of years before the flood. According to the chronological interpretation, however, Methuselah died in the very year of the deluge (Gen 5:25–29; 7:6).<sup>69</sup> Green does not discuss this phenomenon, but on his premises, it is a mere happenstance of unsanctioned chronological computation. To avoid this improbability, one must concede that the author of MT Gen 5 expected his readers to use the begetting ages of Methuselah and Lamech for chronological computation. To maintain Green’s hypothesis, however, one must restrict the author’s chronological intent to the begetting ages of Methuselah and Lamech. Such a restriction requires much special pleading, and it still contradicts Green’s claim that the author “nowhere . . . suggests” the summation of the begetting ages.<sup>70</sup> The simplest explanation of the data is that the author provided all the begetting ages, not just Methuselah’s and Lamech’s, for chronological computation.

### V. Summary

Green’s hypothesis must bear five burdens. (1) It must show that Gen 5 and 11 may contain genealogical gaps (P1). (2) It must demonstrate that  $\aleph$ , in the case of a genealogical gap, can describe the birth of the named descendant’s unnamed ancestor (P2). (3) It must explain why  $\aleph$  functions according to the logic of P2 in Gen 5 and 11, but not in Deut 4:25 or 2 Kgs 20:18 // Isa

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 302.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> The Septuagint alone includes ten generations in each genealogy (Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, WBC 1 [Waco: Word Books, 1987], 251).

<sup>68</sup> William Henry Green, *The Unity of the Book of Genesis* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1895), 146. Some seek to arrive at ten links in the second genealogy by counting Abram (Gen 11:26). However, this logic requires that we also count Shem in the first genealogy (Gen 5:32), giving it eleven links (Hasel, “Meaning of the Chronogenealogies,” 60). Ten-and-ten symmetry is unachievable in the MT.

<sup>69</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 130; see also the note on Gen 5:27 in the ESV Study Bible.

<sup>70</sup> Green, “Primeval Chronology,” 297.

39:7. (4) It must establish a purpose for the nineteen begetting ages. (5) It must account for the striking numerical coincidence discussed in the previous paragraph. Green and subsequent proponents of his gaps have only borne the first burden, at most.<sup>71</sup>

## VI. *Green's Offspring*

In 1911, Benjamin B. Warfield published his essay "On the Antiquity and the Unity of the Human Race," using as his exegetical starting point Green's "illuminating article."<sup>72</sup> Warfield's commendation helped to propel Green's gaps into wider acceptance among conservative scholars.

Green's hypothesis became a staple of evangelical literature during the second half of the twentieth century. Leading the way, Francis Schaeffer argued that because "the word *begat* in Gen 11 does not require a first-generation father-son relationship" (P1), "it can mean, *fathered someone who led to*" (P2).<sup>73</sup> However, P1 does not imply that הָיָה לְ ( "he begat") can describe the birth of "someone who led to" its named object. The action of הָיָה לְ is accomplished only when its grammatical object is born.

K. A. Kitchen rehearses Green's semantics in his book *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*. Kitchen defends P1 and then asserts P2: "A fathered B" may mean "A fathered [P, who fathered Q, who fathered R, who fathered S, who fathered T, who fathered ...] B."<sup>74</sup> He does not show how P2 follows from P1, and his ensuing comments indicate that the impetus for positing chronological gaps is extra-biblical data: "Thus we can neither date the flood before Abraham nor the creation before Noah merely by counting the Genesis figures continuously as did the worthy Archbishop Ussher in the carefree days when no evidence from outside the Bible was even imagined," for "in the context of that external data, any such literalism fails.... So an Ussherite solution is ruled out."<sup>75</sup> Kitchen's use of "literalism" here is a distraction, because Green's approach, which Kitchen adopts, is no less literal than the chronological interpretation. Kitchen contends for chronological gaps precisely because he believes the text communicates literal history, and he wants to show how that history can be reconciled with the "evidence from outside the Bible." Kitchen puts forth the semantics of P2 because he realizes that we may not rule out the chronological interpretation until we can demonstrate that the words and grammar of Gen 5 and 11 literally allow for time gaps.

<sup>71</sup> Wenham notes that even Green's notion of genealogical gaps in Gen 5 and 11 (P1) "requires special pleading" (*Genesis 1–15*, 133).

<sup>72</sup> Benjamin B. Warfield, "On the Antiquity and the Unity of the Human Race," *Princeton Theological Review* 9 (1911): 3.

<sup>73</sup> Francis A. Schaeffer, *Genesis in Space and Time: The Flow of Biblical History* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1972), 155, italics original.

<sup>74</sup> K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 440–41.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 441.

C. John Collins, professor of Old Testament at Covenant Theological Seminary and Old Testament editor of the *ESV Study Bible*, has made regular use of Green's theory. In 1994, Collins wrote, "W. H. Green showed, however, that these genealogies have an unknown number of omissions; that is, when we read that X *begat* Y, this need only mean that X *became the ancestor of* Y (as in the NIV margin)." <sup>76</sup> We grant that Enosh, at 90, may have become Kenan's "ancestor" rather than his immediate father (P1). However, this still means that Kenan was born when Enosh was 90, for a man only "becomes the ancestor of" his descendant when the descendant himself is born. Hence the translation "became the ancestor of" creates genealogical gaps (P1), but not chronological gaps (P2). In 2003, Collins opted for the translation "fathered an ancestor of." <sup>77</sup> This wording incorporates both P1 and P2. Like Green, though, Collins never defends P2; he merely assumes that it follows from PL. In his 2006 commentary on Gen 1–4, Collins begins his defense of Green's hypothesis with the subheading "*Do biblical genealogies have gaps?*" <sup>78</sup> The entire section merely argues for P1. In his 2011 book on Adam and Eve, Collins again fails to differentiate genealogical gaps from chronological gaps when he says that the genealogies "do not claim to name every person in the line of descent, and thus are not aimed at providing detailed chronological information." <sup>79</sup> This non sequitur epitomizes Green's argument.

The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, the only lexicographical work known to me that affirms the possibility of P2, says that when לָיַד points to a remote descendant (PI), the verb nevertheless may describe the birth of the offspring at "the beginning" of the line (P2). <sup>80</sup> For support, *TWOT* cites only Matt 1:1, where "Christ is called a son of David and a son of Abraham." <sup>81</sup> But Jesus did not become Abraham's son when Isaac was born, or David's son when Solomon was born. Jesus became "the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt 1:1) when *Jesus* was born.

*TWOT* also makes this supporting claim: "In Hebrew thought, an individual by the act of giving birth to a child becomes a parent or ancestor of all who will be descended from this child." <sup>82</sup> This appears to say that an individual becomes an ancestor of his grandchildren, not when his grandchildren are born, but when his child leading to the grandchildren is born ("by the act of giving birth to a child"). The author does not cite where this notion exists in so-called Hebrew thought. Perhaps the author had in mind Heb 7:9–10, which says that Levi existed figuratively ("so to speak," v. 9) "in the loins of his ancestor

<sup>76</sup> C. John Collins, "How Old Is the Earth? Anthropomorphic Days in Genesis 1:1–2:3," *Presbyterian* 20 (1994): 115–16, italics original.

<sup>77</sup> C. John Collins, *Science and Faith: Friends or Foes?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2003), 108.

<sup>78</sup> C. John Collins, *Genesis 1–4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2006), 203, italics original.

<sup>79</sup> C. John Collins, *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist? Who They Were and Why You Should Care* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 115.

<sup>80</sup> לָיַד, *TWOT* 1:379 (no author listed).

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

[Abraham]” (v. 10). Still, Abraham did not become Levi’s ancestor when Isaac was born. Figuratively, Abraham already was Levi’s ancestor before Isaac was born (Levi existed in Abraham’s loins). Literally, Abraham was “childless” (Gen 15:2) before he had children and “grandchildless” before he had grandchildren. A man only “becomes a parent or ancestor of” a descendant when that descendant himself is born. This analysis of Heb 7:9–10 applies equally to *b. Sanh.* 37a, which says that every “soul of Israel” contains “an entire world” of descendants.<sup>83</sup> None of this suggests that *וַיְהִי לְדָוִד אֶת־קֵינָן*, “he had Kenan,” can mean “he [in the act of having Kenan’s ancestor] had Kenan.”

## VII. Conclusion

Many evangelicals treat Green’s chronological gaps as a settled conclusion, but the crucial F2 remains unwarranted. Green conflated genealogical gaps and chronological gaps, and failed to provide a *raison d’être* for the begetting ages. In Deut 4:25 and 2 Kgs 20:18 // Isa 39:7, the *hiphil* of *לָדַד* describes the births of its grammatical objects, which are remote descendants. Green needed to show why the *hiphil* of *לָדַד* does not necessarily describe the births of its grammatical objects throughout Gen 5 and 11. He also needed to account for the striking numerical coincidence that exists in a chronological interpretation of the MT, Methuselah’s death in the year of the flood.

We commend Green for seeking a scriptural response to the aspersions of skeptics, but we must conclude that he did not find a tenable one. A computable chronology of the human race, going back to Adam on the sixth day of creation (Gen 1:26–27; 5:1–3), is lexically and grammatically inescapable. If we suppose that the genealogies in Gen 5 and 11 do not communicate chronology, then the possibility of a chronogenealogy becomes difficult to imagine, for “no mode of speech could be contrived to give successive dates to Bible generations if those tables in Genesis be denied as such.”<sup>84</sup>

## VIII. Appendix A: Other Non-chronological Interpretations

### 1. Gardiner’s Hypothesis

One of Green’s contemporaries, Frederic Gardiner, suggested that the begetting ages indicate how old each patriarch was at the birth of his firstborn,

<sup>83</sup> Thanks to Joel Garver for this observation.

<sup>84</sup> Goodenow, *Bible Chronology*, 323. In response to this, an interlocutor suggested to me that the use of a passive form of *לָדַד* throughout Gen 5 and 11 would have ensured an intact chronology. But if we accept the semantic logic of P2 in the active voice, we must allow its application in the passive voice as well. Had the author used a passive form of *לָדַד* throughout the genealogies, a proponent of chronological gaps might insist that Gen 5:9 can mean, “When Enosh had lived 90 years, there was born to him [a son from whom sprang] Kenan.” Such an assertion would indeed be unjustifiable, but not more so than Green’s hypothesis. The active-voice version of P2 is not more plausible than its passive-voice equivalent. A chronogenealogy is as achievable in the active voice as it is in the passive voice.

and that the named son, though an immediate offspring, was not necessarily the firstborn; thus, the named son could have been born at any point in the patriarch's life after the birth of the firstborn.<sup>85</sup> According to Gardiner, then, "Seth, e.g., might have begun to be a father at 105, but might have actually begotten Enos[h] at any reasonable time during the 807 years which he afterward lived."<sup>86</sup> Gardiner's proposal, unlike Green's, does not allow for unlimited time gaps in Gen 5 and 11, for it requires that the named son be born during the father's lifetime.

Gardiner first appeals to Gen 5:32, which lists all three of Noah's sons, only the oldest of whom was born when Noah was 500. Gardiner shows persuasively that Shem, though named first, was not the oldest. Gardiner makes the same point about Terah's three sons in Gen 11:26, demonstrating that Abram, though named first, was not the oldest. (These interpretations of Gen 5:32 and 11:26, which I uphold below, are not original to Gardiner.) Gardiner extrapolates from this that "any of the patriarchs named may have been begotten at any reasonable time in the life of their fathers subsequent to the date given for the beginning of paternity."<sup>87</sup> Thus Gen 5:6 may mean "When Seth had lived 105 years, he had [his unnamed firstborn, and later in life had] Enosh."<sup>88</sup>

Gardiner's hypothesis has severe problems. (1) Genesis 5:7 says, "Seth lived 807 years *after he had Enosh*, and had other sons and daughters." According to Gardiner, Enosh may have been one of the "other sons and daughters" born in the final "807 years" of Seth's life. The text, however, says that these other sons and daughters were born to Seth "after he had Enosh" and that the final 807 years of Seth's life likewise came "after he had Enosh." Gardiner never explains how this recurring temporal clause, "after he had B," fits into his theory.

(2) Another "great fault of [Gardiner's] theory" is that it leaves "*no adequate motive* for giving the dates."<sup>89</sup> This problem besets both Gardiner's and Green's proposals.

(3) Gardiner provides no criteria for determining when the begetting ages apply to "the beginning of paternity." If they always do, then Adam was 130 when his first son Cain was born (Gen 5:3). That is implausible. Adam was 130 when *Seth* was born. Consequently, Gardiner uses Seth and Enosh (Gen 5:6–8), rather than Adam and Seth (Gen 5:3–5), to illustrate his hypothesis (see the quote in the opening paragraph of this section). Genesis 5:3 establishes at the beginning of the genealogy that the begetting ages date the births of sons named in the text.

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<sup>85</sup> Frederic Gardiner, "The Chronological Value of the Genealogy in Genesis V," *BSac* 30 (1873): 323–33.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 325.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 329.

<sup>88</sup> Gardiner's argument resurfaced recently in Mark A. Snoeberger, "Why a Commitment to Inerrancy Does Not Demand a Strictly 6000-Year-Old Earth: One Young Earth's Plea for Realism," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 18 (2013): 11–12.

<sup>89</sup> Goodenow, *Bible Chronology*, 321, italics original.



(4) As for Gen 5:32 and 11:26, each of these verses names the son born at the specified date; he does not remain anonymous. That he is not named first is a literary move in keeping with the theology of Genesis, wherein younger brothers (e.g., Seth, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Joseph, Perez, and Ephraim) often replace, or are chosen over, their older brothers. It is therefore fitting that Shem and Abram, listed first because of their theological significance, are younger brothers.

Furthermore, Genesis fills in the chronological gaps created by 5:32 and 11:26, indicating how old Noah and Terah were when their sons Shem and Abram were born. Noah was 600 at the flood (Gen 7:6). Shem was  $(100 - 2 =) 98$  at the flood (Gen 11:10). Therefore Noah was  $(600 - 98 =) 502$  at Shem's birth.<sup>90</sup> Terah died at 205 (Gen 11:32). Abram was 75 at Terah's death (Gen 12:4; Acts 7:4). Therefore Terah was  $(205 - 75 =) 130$  at Abram's birth.<sup>91</sup> The Bible displays its chronological meticulousness here.

## 2. *Non-literal Numbers*

In his commentary on Genesis, Gordon Wenham questions whether the ages in the genealogies are literal. He determines that non-literal numbers would avoid the "historical problems" of a chronology that "is hard to correlate with archeological discoveries about the origins of mankind."<sup>92</sup> However, non-literal ages do not help Wenham, who both accepts that all the names in Gen 5 and 11 refer to "real people" and rejects Green's gaps.<sup>93</sup> To lengthen the chronology between Adam and Abraham, Wenham would need the actual begetting ages to be higher than those in the text (lower begetting ages would shorten the chronology and so exacerbate the historical problems). However, only exceedingly higher begetting ages would satisfy most anthropologists. For example, to date Adam to ca. 40,000 BC (a recent date by mainstream standards), the average begetting age of the nineteen patriarchs would need to be roughly 2,000 years old. An average begetting age of 1,000 years old (still unreasonably high) would not get us much beyond 20,000 BC.

I am unaware of any interpreter who argues that the actual begetting ages were higher on average than the ones in the text. Proponents of non-literal numbers generally attempt to account for the high figures in Gen 5 and 11 by positing that the actual ages were *lower* than those in the text. Theories about non-literal numbers do not readily serve to extend the primeval chronology.

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<sup>90</sup> The translation of Gen 10:21 in the Septuagint confirms that Shem was a younger "brother of Japheth the elder [ἀδελφῶν Ἰαφεθ τοῦ μεῖζονος]." The KJV, NKJV, and NIV (see also the NASB margin) similarly translate the Hebrew to show that Japheth was older. Ham, though listed second in Gen 5:32, was the youngest (Gen 9:24).

<sup>91</sup> R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles 1-14* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2008), 262-63; Henry Girdlestone, *Genesis: Its Authenticity and Authority Discussed: The First Eleven Chapters* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1864), 183-86; see also the note on Acts 7:4 in the NIV Study Bible.

<sup>92</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 133-34.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

IX. *Appendix B: Was Enosh 90 or 190 at Kenan's Birth? A Textual Reevaluation of the Chronology in Genesis 5 and 11*

The conventional Egyptian chronology presents the most concrete challenge to the primeval timeline in the Hebrew Bible (MT). Even some “young earthers,” who maintain literal creation days, point to the accepted antiquity of Egypt as evidence for chronological gaps in Gen 5 and 11. Snoberger, for example, contrasts scientific arguments that are based on “uniformitarian presuppositions” with “a class of much ‘harder’ evidence,” namely, “a well-established Egyptian chronology that extends back many centuries before the flood date demanded by the chronogenealogist.”<sup>94</sup> Green acknowledged that some interpreters adopted the Septuagint’s longer chronology, which affords “the needed relief,” but he insisted on the “incontrovertibly established” accuracy of the MT’s lower begetting ages.<sup>95</sup> The evidence, however, does not show the incontrovertibility of the MT at this point.

Before the Reformation, the church in the east and the west subscribed to the longer chronology (that is, the higher begetting ages) in LXX Gen 5 and 11.<sup>96</sup> Jewish histories written before the second century AD (e.g., the chronologies of Demetrius and Eupolemus, and Josephus’s *Jewish Antiquities*) also adopted the higher begetting ages.<sup>97</sup> The Septuagint dates Noah’s flood 780 years earlier, and the creation of Adam 1,386 years earlier, than the MT does (see Table 2). Although Jerome used the MT’s lower begetting ages in his Vulgate, in his *Chronicon* he followed Eusebius’s LXX-based chronology, which “gained general acceptance in the west.”<sup>98</sup> The Venerable Bede in the eighth century was castigated as an innovator for constructing a chronology from the smaller numbers in the Vulgate.<sup>99</sup> The Roman Catholic Church officially regarded the Septuagint’s higher begetting ages as original until after the Reformation.<sup>100</sup>

The Reformers, in their return *ad fontes*, broke with the consensus and subscribed to the MT’s shorter chronology. However, many biblical scholars in the west during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries (e.g., Vossius, Pezron, Des Vignoles, Hayes, Jackson, Hales, Faber, Russell, Seyffarth, Rawlinson, Budd, and Goodenow) called for a return to the numbers in the

<sup>94</sup> Snoberger, “Why a Commitment to Inerrancy Does Not Demand,” 13.

<sup>95</sup> Green, “Primeval Chronology,” 300.

<sup>96</sup> Franz Delitzsch, *A New Commentary on Genesis*, trans. Sophia Taylor, 5th ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1888), 1:206.

<sup>97</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 1.67, 83–87, 149–50; Jeremy Hughes, *Secrets of the Times: Myth and History in Biblical Chronology*, JSOTSup 66 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 241; John Jackson, *Chronological Antiquities* (London: J. Noon, 1752), 1:69–73; Hales, *New Analysis of Chronology*, 1:289–303; Russell, *Connection of Sacred and Profane History*, 1:33–37; Goodenow, *Bible Chronology*, 222, 302, 325, 383–84.

<sup>98</sup> Hughes, *Secrets of the Times*, 260.

<sup>99</sup> Delitzsch, *New Commentary on Genesis*, 1:206; see also Thomas Wright, *Biographia Britannica Literaria: Anglo-Saxon Period* (London: John W. Parker, 1842), 295–96.

<sup>100</sup> Delitzsch, *New Commentary on Genesis*, 1:206.

Table 2: The Begetting Ages in Genesis 5 and 11<sup>101</sup>

	MT	LXX	SP	Josephus
Adam	130	230	130	230
Seth	105	205	105	205
Enosh	90	190	90	190
Kenan	70	170	70	170
Mahalalel	65	165	65	165
Jared	162	162	62	162
Enoch	65	165	65	165
Methuselah	187	187*	67	187
Lamech	182	188†	53	182
Noah	500	500	500	—
Shem	100	100	100	—
Arpachshad	35	135	135	135
Cainan	—	130	—	—
Shelah	30	130	130	130
Eber	34	134	134	134
Peleg	30	130	130	130
Reu	32	132	132	130‡
Serug	30	130	130	132
Nahor	29	79	79	120
Terah	70	70	70	70

\* In some minuscules and manuscripts of the Greek Bible (e.g., Codex Vaticanus and Berlin Papyrus 911) Methuselah begets at 167, while in others (e.g., Codexes Alexandrinus, Cottonianus, and Coislinianus) he begets at 187. The chronologies of Demetrius (ca. 200 BC) and Eupolemus (ca. 160 BC), who used the Septuagint, imply 187 (Hughes, *Secrets of the Times*, 241; Jackson, *Chronological Antiquities*, 1:69–72; Russell, *Connection of Sacred and Profane History*, 1:33–34). Swete's edition of the Septuagint, though based on Codex Vaticanus, prefers 187 (Henry Barelay Swete, ed., *The Old Testament in Greek According to the Septuagint* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1887], 1:8). Hayes, Shuckford, Hales, and recently Merrill put forth 187 as the original begetting age for Methuselah in the LXX (Charles Hayes, *A Dissertation on the Chronology of the Septuagint* [London: T. Woodward, 1741], 91, 136; Samuel Shuckford, *The Sacred and Profane History of the World Connected*, rev. James Creighton, 5th ed. [London: William Baynes, 1819], 1:50; Hales, *New Analysis of Chronology*, 1:272; Merrill, "Chronology," 115); contra Hughes, *Secrets of the Times*, 6n1, 14n9; Ronald S. Hendel, *The Text of Genesis 1–11: Textual Studies and Critical Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 66.

† Jackson presents evidence for both 182 (MT) and 188 (LXX), ultimately favoring 182 (*Chronological Antiquities*, 1:37–39).

‡ Apparently Josephus accidentally transposed Reu's and Serug's begetting ages.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. the table in Merrill, "Chronology," 115; see Josephus's begetting ages in *Ant.* 1.67, 83–87, 149–50.

Septuagint.<sup>102</sup> This text-critical discussion lost steam after the publication of Green's essay, which left the begetting ages with no clear purpose.

### 1. *The Case for LXX Genesis 5 and 11.*

The higher begetting ages have existed in the Septuagint since its inception in Alexandria in the third century BC, and this raises an important question: Did the LXX translators use a Hebrew text with these higher begetting ages or did they fabricate the longer chronology? A common assumption in the west since the Reformation has been that the Alexandrian Jews, who supposedly "had none of that almost superstitious veneration for the letter of Scripture, which characterized the Jews of Palestine," intentionally expanded the chronology in Gen 5 and 11 to reconcile it with Egyptian antiquity.<sup>103</sup> A major difficulty with this supposition is that "no ancient author says any such thing."<sup>104</sup> Green was loath to accept this theory because it assumes that "the original intent with which these textual changes were made, was after all a chronological one."<sup>105</sup> He proffered instead that the numbers in the Septuagint were invented "to make a more symmetrical division of individual lives" and "to introduce something like a regular gradation" to the begetting ages.<sup>106</sup> This speculation similarly lacks historical grounding and plausibility. The evidence, as we shall see, suggests that the Greek translators used a Hebrew text with the higher begetting ages.

Textual scholars generally recognize a distinct Hebrew *Vorlage* behind the Septuagint, that is, a Hebrew text used by the LXX translators that differs from the MT in many places. "For books other than Isaiah," write Jobes and Silva, "the LXX translation offers a larger proportion of genuine variants, that is, readings that very likely reflect a *Vorlage* different from the MT."<sup>107</sup> Anneli Aejmelaeus, leader of the Research Project for Textual Criticism of the Septuagint at the University of Helsinki, says,

The scholar who wishes to attribute deliberate changes, harmonizations, completion of details and new accents to the translator is under the obligation to prove his thesis with weighty arguments and also to show why the divergences cannot have originated with the *Vorlage*. That the translator *may* have manipulated his original does not mean that he necessarily did so. All that is known of the translation techniques employed in the Septuagint points firmly enough in the opposite direction.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.; G. Seyffarth, *Summary of Recent Discoveries in Biblical Chronology, Universal History and Egyptian Archaeology*, 2nd ed. (New York: Henry Ludwig, 1859), 114–59; Russell, *Connection of Sacred and Profane History*, 1:1–6, 94; Goodenow, *Bible Chronology*, 301–16; Martin Anstey, *The Romance of Bible Chronology* (New York: Marshall Bros., 1913; repr., Mountain City, TN: Sacred Truth, 2012), 1:50–53.

<sup>103</sup> Anstey, *Romance of Bible Chronology*, 1:15.

<sup>104</sup> Seyffarth, *Summary of Recent Discoveries*, 123.

<sup>105</sup> Green, "Primeval Chronology," 300.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 300–301.

<sup>107</sup> Karen H. Jobes and Moisés Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 149.

<sup>108</sup> Anneli Aejmelaeus, *On the Trail of the Septuagint Translators* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1993), 92–93, italics original; quoted in Jobes and Silva, *Septuagint*, 149.

According to Tov, the LXX “variants are equally as important for text-critical analysis as the readings found in Hebrew sources. Some scholars even claim that they are more important than these sources since the [LXX] readings are often superior to elements in [the MT].”<sup>109</sup> Tov concludes that “the assumption is unavoidable that the Hebrew scrolls used for the Greek translation were valuable, authoritative, and sometimes more ancient than [the MT].”<sup>110</sup>

Textual scholars specifically recognize a distinct Hebrew *Vorlage* behind the Septuagint’s primeval chronology. Tov states that the variants in LXX Gen 5 and 11 “should not be ascribed to the translator, but to his Hebrew *Vorlage*.”<sup>111</sup> Tov also cites Klostermann’s defense of the Septuagint’s longer chronology, “which, according to Klostermann, was based on Hebrew sources.”<sup>112</sup> The historical evidence points to the Hebrew origin of LXX Gen 5 and 11. As noted above, the chronologies of Jewish historians Demetrius (ca. 200 BC) and Eupolemus (ca. 160 BC) bear witness to the Septuagint’s higher begetting ages. Eupolemus was a Palestinian Jew who “utilized the Hebrew text as well as the LXX.”<sup>113</sup> Eupolemus’s Hebrew and Greek texts must have shared the same numbers in Gen 5 and 11, for Eupolemus likely did not choose the Septuagint over a differing Hebrew text. The higher begetting ages in the LXX also appear in Josephus (*Ant.* 1.67, 83–87, 149–50).<sup>114</sup> This is especially noteworthy, because Josephus worked directly from the Hebrew (*Ant.* 10.218; *Ag. Ap.* 1.1).<sup>115</sup> Hales states that the “book of *Enoch*, as cited by *Alexander Polyhistor*” in the first century BC, puts the patriarch Enoch in the “1286th year of the world, which exactly accords with the *Greek* chronology.”<sup>116</sup> The Septuagint’s longer chronology existed in Hebrew texts during the centuries before and the century after Christ’s birth.

Modern textual critics have rightly questioned whether the MT preserves the original primeval chronology.<sup>117</sup> Hughes says that “it is far from obvious that the original figures are preserved in MT,” and Hendel concludes more decisively that it is “no longer tenable” to maintain that the MT perfectly reflects the archetypal chronology.<sup>118</sup> Yet we should question the general assumption among

<sup>109</sup> Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 136.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>111</sup> Tov, “Genealogical Lists in Genesis 5 and 11,” 221.

<sup>112</sup> Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 306.

<sup>113</sup> Merrill, “Chronology,” 117.

<sup>114</sup> For thorough discussions of the chronology and corruptions in Josephus, see Hayes, *Dissertation on the Chronology of the Septuagint*, 127–220; Goodenow, *Bible Chronology*, 351–84.

<sup>115</sup> Dov Gera, “Unity and Chronology in the Jewish Antiquities,” in *Flavius Josephus: Interpretation and History*, ed. Jack Pastor, Pnina Stern, and Menahem Mor (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 125; Hales, *New Analysis of Chronology*, 1:274; Russell, *Connection of Sacred and Profane History*, 1:36–37.

<sup>116</sup> Hales, *New Analysis of Chronology*, 1:281, italics original.

<sup>117</sup> See, e.g., Hendel, *Text of Genesis 1–11*, 61–80; Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 138, 306; R. W. Klein, “Archaic Chronologies and the Textual History of the Old Testament,” *HTR* 67 (1974): 255–63; Hughes, *Secrets of the Times*, 5–30, 267; Tov, “Genealogical Lists in Genesis 5 and 11,” 237; Ronald S. Hendel, “A Hasmonean Edition of MT Genesis? The Implications of the Editions of the Chronology in Genesis 5,” *HBAI* 1 (2012): 448–64.

<sup>118</sup> Hughes, *Secrets of the Times*, 6; Hendel, *Text of Genesis 1–11*, 63.

western textual critics that “the higher set of figures” in LXX Gen 5 and 11, SP Gen 11, and three generations of MT Gen 5 “was secondarily derived from the lower set” in SP Gen 5, MT Gen 11, and six generations of MT Gen 5 (SP = Samaritan Pentateuch).<sup>119</sup> The evidence indicates that the lower begetting ages are secondary and the higher ones original. While the ancient Jewish witnesses betray no demonstrable attempt to inflate chronology, the tendency toward chronological deflation is confirmed in several places. (1) The text of *Ant.* 1.148 has been altered (the interval between the flood and the birth of Abraham having been reduced by 700 years) to make Josephus reflect the timeline in MT Gen 11, contra Josephus’s longer postdiluvian chronology in *Ant.* 1.149–50.<sup>120</sup> (2) A similar corruption was attempted in *Ant.* 1.82 (the interval between Adam and the flood having been reduced by 600 years in the bracketed insertion of “1,656”) to make Josephus reflect the timeline in MT Gen 5, contra Josephus’s longer antediluvian chronology in *Ant.* 1.83–87.<sup>121</sup> “Plainly,” notes Goodenow, “a mighty effort has been made by corruptors to make Jos. seem to endorse the present Heb. text.”<sup>122</sup> (3) The antediluvian chronology in the SP is 349 years shorter than the one in the MT (see Table 2).<sup>123</sup> (4) The antediluvian chronology in *Jubilees* “agrees for the most part with SP’s antediluvian chronology.”<sup>124</sup>

<sup>119</sup> Hughes, *Secrets of the Times*, 19. Hendel and Hughes, building on Klein, argue that Jared, Methuselah, and Lamech outlived the flood in the original antediluvian chronology, and that the three editions of Gen 5 in the MT, the LXX, and the SP represent three scribal recensions aimed at resolving this exegetical problem. Accordingly, the minimal revisions in the SP essentially preserved the original begetting ages, but adjusted the life spans of Jared, Methuselah, and Lamech so that they die in the year of the flood; the moderate revisions in the MT put Jared’s and Lamech’s deaths before, and Methuselah’s death in the year of, the flood; the major revisions in the LXX ironically failed to accomplish their chief end, with Methuselah still outliving the flood (this view maintains that Methuselah began at 167 in the LXX instead of 187). This theory, which focuses internally on “the differences concerning who dies before, in, or after the flood,” fails to account adequately for Jared’s higher begetting age in the MT and most of the higher begetting ages in the LXX, which could have remained lower and still avoided the postulated “problem of the aquatic antediluvians” (Hendel, “Hasmonean Edition of MT Genesis?,” 454–55). A more plausible explanation of the internal data emerges when we focus externally on the documented tendency toward chronological reduction among ancient Jews, and on a discernible motivation behind this tendency (see below). We shall find that the higher set of begetting ages predates the lower set and prevails in our earliest witnesses. The begetting ages in LXX Gen 5 and 11, SP Gen 11, and three generations of MT Gen 5 compose the original chronology, to which the oldest Jewish writings bear ample witness.

<sup>120</sup> Hayes, *Dissertation on the Chronology of the Septuagint*, 211–20; Goodenow, *Bible Chronology*, 304, 384; Jackson, *Chronological Antiquities*, 1:67; see also William Whiston, “Dissertation 5: Upon the Chronology of Josephus,” in *Josephus: The Complete Works*, trans. William Whiston (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 1037.

<sup>121</sup> Hayes, *Dissertation on the Chronology of the Septuagint*, 127–210; Goodenow, *Bible Chronology*, 304, 384. The non-bracketed number in *Ant.* 1.82 is also corrupted, reading “2656” instead of “2256,” which is the sum of the begetting ages in *Ant.* 1.83–87.

<sup>122</sup> Goodenow, *Bible Chronology*, 304.

<sup>123</sup> The timeline in SP Gen 5 is also thirty-five years shorter than Hendel’s (as well as Klein’s) reconstructed antediluvian chronology, and two years shorter than Hughes’s (Hendel, “Hasmonean Edition of MT Genesis?,” 463–64; Hughes, *Secrets of the Times*, 21, 267).

<sup>124</sup> Hughes, *Secrets of the Times*, 22.

(5) The antediluvian chronology in “Jerome’s Samaritan” (no longer extant) was 100 years shorter than the one in the MT.<sup>125</sup> (6) *Seder Olam Rabbah* (ca. AD 150), a Jewish chronology that dates creation to 3761 BC, reduces the interval between the Babylonian captivity and the destruction of the second temple in AD 70 by approximately 185 years.<sup>126</sup> Notably, we find in this compromised Jewish history “the first mention of the present Hebrew values of Gen. v, xi.”<sup>127</sup> That is, the chronologically corrupted *Seder Olam Rabbah* is our earliest witness to the MT’s begetting ages. Even apart from the unreliable nature of *Seder Olam Rabbah*, it is significant that our earliest witness to the longer chronology (the LXX) predates our earliest witness to the MT’s chronology (*Seder Olam Rabbah*) by about 400 years. The evidence suggests that the chronology in the MT did not exist before the second century of the Christian era. Russell concludes that “in the days of Josephus, as well as in those of the annalists who preceded him as compilers from the Jewish Scriptures, there was no difference in the numerical statements of the Greek version, as compared with the text of the original Hebrew.”<sup>128</sup>

Interpreters have discussed what likely motivated the second-century Jews to reduce the interval between creation and Christ to less than 4,000 years (3,761 years in *Seder Olam Rabbah*). Prevalent among the ancient Jews and early Christians was the belief that the Messiah was supposed to come in the sixth millennium after creation (between AM 5000 and AM 6000). The Septuagint’s primeval chronology, which existed in Hebrew texts before the second century AD, puts the birth of Jesus at ca. AM 5500. Many scholars have argued that during the second century AD, the Palestinian Jews shortened the chronology in the Hebrew copies of Gen 5 and 11 to remove the life of Jesus far from the sixth millennium of the world.<sup>129</sup> A similar tendency may exist in *Seder Olam Rabbah*’s

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<sup>125</sup> Whiston, “Dissertation 5: Upon the Chronology of Josephus,” 1037. Jackson, Russell, and Goodenow also discuss a lost Hebrew text (what Whiston calls “Jerome’s Samaritan [Pentateuch]”) whose antediluvian chronology was 100 years shorter than the MT’s (Jackson, *Chronological Antiquities*, 1:51–52; Russell, *Connection of Sacred and Profane History*, 1:48–49; Goodenow, *Bible Chronology*, 311). The difference between the antediluvian chronology in the MT and that in Jerome’s Samaritan is the latter’s reduction of Jared’s begetting age from 162 to 62 (this lower number survives in the SP). In reducing Jared’s begetting age by 100, Jerome’s Samaritan (or in Jackson’s terms, “the Babylonian Hebrew Text, which was followed by the Eastern Jews”) carried the MT’s revisional scheme “to its utmost practicable limits” (Russell, 1:49) (Jared’s is the only higher begetting age remaining in the MT that could have been reduced by 100 without creating problems).

<sup>126</sup> Goodenow, *Bible Chronology*, 306, 311; see also J. Paul Tanner, “Is Daniel’s Seventy-Weeks Prophecy Messianic? Part 1,” *BSac* 166 (2009): 184–85; Merrill, “Chronology,” 118.

<sup>127</sup> Goodenow, *Bible Chronology*, 311; see also Hayes, *Dissertation on the Chronology of the Septuagint*, 89; Jackson, *Chronological Antiquities*, 1:xxxi; Russell, *Connection of Sacred and Profane History*, 1:45.

<sup>128</sup> Russell, *Connection of Sacred and Profane History*, 1:38.

<sup>129</sup> See, e.g., Seyffarth, *Summary of Recent Discoveries*, 114–23; Jackson, *Chronological Antiquities*, 1:92–100; Russell, *Connection of Sacred and Profane History*, 1:41–43; Goodenow, *Bible Chronology*, 304–8. Tov writes, “The frequent use of [the LXX] by Christians caused the Jews to dissociate themselves from it and to initiate new translations” (*Textual Criticism*, 141). Says Jackson, “For had they not altered their Hebrew Copies, there could have been no Occasion for a new Translation,

postexilic chronology, which (having been reduced by roughly 185 years) artificially lays the groundwork for the Jewish interpretation of Daniel's seventy weeks (Dan 9:24–27), specifically the belief that the cutting off of the מָשִׁיחַ ("anointed one") in Dan 9:26 was fulfilled ca. AD 70.<sup>130</sup> This manufactured timeline in *Seder Olam Rabbah* was apparently an attempt to undermine the Christian interpretation of Daniel's messianic prophecy. Goodenow concludes, "Since the Jews of that day did thus fabricate a false [postexilic] chronology in their attempt to defeat Christianity; the only question is, Did they go further, and corrupt the numbers of Genesis for the same purpose?"<sup>131</sup> Additionally, Hughes notes that "according to the Babylonian Talmud, the Rabbinic 'school of Elijah' calculated that the world would last for a total of 6000 years: 'the first 2000 years are to be void, the next 2000 years are the period of the Law, and the following 2000 years are the period of the Messiah' (T. b. *Abodah Zarah* 9a; T. b. *Sanhedrin* 97b)."<sup>132</sup> This may explain why the second-century Jews reduced the chronology as much as they did: their new timeline removed Jesus from (and put themselves on the verge of) "the period of the Messiah." The view that the Palestinian Jews in the second century AD condensed the primeval chronology in the Hebrew text to discredit Jesus as the Messiah extends back at least to Christian theologian Ephraem Syrus (325–378).<sup>133</sup>

## 2. *The Particularly Strong Case for LXX Genesis 11.*

(1) The begetting ages in LXX Gen 11 are attested not only in Demetrius, Eupolemus, and Josephus, but also in the SP, and there is no evidence of dependence between the LXX and the SP at this point. Two important differences corroborate the independence of these two major textual witnesses: unlike the SP, the LXX in Gen 11 closes each generation with "and he died" (as does Gen 5) and includes the generation of Cainan (as does Luke 3:36). The higher begetting ages shared by the LXX and the SP in Gen 11 are not likely the result of a desire to inflate the chronology, for the SP exhibits a tendency to deflate the chronology in Gen 5 (see Table 2), and any explanation for the higher begetting ages must apply to the SP as well as the LXX.<sup>134</sup>

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because it was confessed but about thirty-five Years before it was made, by the *Jews* themselves universally, and especially by their two most learned Writers, *Philo* and *Josephus*, that the Septuagint was an accurate and faithful Interpretation of the Law of *Moses*. But as soon as the new *Greek* Version was published, there appeared numerous Differences between that and the old Translation of the Septuagint, and particularly in the Computation from the Creation to *Abraham*" (*Chronological Antiquities*, 1:93, italics original). Russell states that "before the second century of the Christian religion, no traces can be found of any controversy as to differences supposed to exist in the Greek and Hebrew texts of the sacred books" (*Connection of Sacred and Profane History*, 1:38).

<sup>130</sup> See Tanner, "Is Daniel's Seventy-Weeks Prophecy Messianic?," 184–85.

<sup>131</sup> Goodenow, *Bible Chronology*, 306–7.

<sup>132</sup> Hughes, *Secrets of the Times*, 261.

<sup>133</sup> Anstey, *Romance of Bible Chronology*, 1:46.

<sup>134</sup> Benjamin Shaw, "The Genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 and Their Significance for Chronology" (PhD diss., Bob Jones University, 2004), 72–73.



(2) Cainan's begetting age of 130 in LXX Gen 11:13 is accounted for in the computations of Demetrius and Eupolemus.<sup>135</sup> The book of *Jubilees*, which "attests an independent form of the Hebrew text," also includes Cainan (*Jub.* 8:1–5).<sup>136</sup> More significantly, Luke 3:36 puts Cainan between Arpachshad and Shelah in agreement with the LXX. The MT omits Cainan and says that Arpachshad was only 35 at Shelah's birth (Gen 11:12). If Arpachshad was 35 at Shelah's birth, as MT Gen 11:12 says, and if Cainan belongs between Arpachshad and Shelah in Luke 3:36, as every NT editor has determined, then Arpachshad must have had Cainan at about 17, and Cainan must have had Shelah at a similar age. Far more likely, the Septuagint preserves the original chronogenealogical data in Gen 11.<sup>137</sup>

An objection to LXX Gen 11 is that its higher begetting ages (in the 130s) make Isaac's birth when Abraham was 100 seem unexceptional, whereas Gen 17:17 says that Abraham laughed at the thought of begetting the promised son at the century mark (cf. Rom 4:19).<sup>138</sup> But Abraham's laughter, whatever it means, does not imply that 100 years old was an unusual age for a man to have children. Terah had Abraham at 130.<sup>139</sup> Jacob had Benjamin at about 105.<sup>140</sup> Abraham himself had six children by Keturah (Gen 25:1–2) at some point after he was 86 (Ishmael's birth), most likely after he was 137 (Sarah's death). Abraham had six children by Keturah in his late eighties and nineties at the earliest. His laughter in Gen 17:17 must have been tied specifically to the thought of fathering a son through his wife Sarah at this point in their marriage.<sup>141</sup>

<sup>135</sup> Russell, *Connection of Sacred and Profane History*, 1:89–90; Hales, *New Analysis of Chronology*, 1:289.

<sup>136</sup> *The Book of Jubilees or The Little Genesis*, ed. and trans. R. H. Charles (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1902), xxxviii.

<sup>137</sup> Hughes concludes that Cainan "is clearly secondary, since he borrows his name from the fourth antediluvian ancestor, and his age of begetting [130] and remaining years [330] are borrowed from Shelah, whom he precedes" (*Secrets of the Times*, 9). Hughes assumes here that Cainan was inserted into the chronology sometime *after* the number of Shelah's remaining years was changed to 330. We agree with Hughes that Shelah's remaining years did not originally number 330 in the proto-LXX tradition. However, we best explain this corruption by maintaining that Cainan existed in the proto-LXX tradition *before* the number of Shelah's remaining years became 330. Hughes suggests that 330 evolved from 403 (the supposed original), becoming 430 and then 330. He thinks that this evolution from 403 to 430 to 330 "presumably occurred before" the addition of Cainan, "whose remaining years also number 330" (p. 18). But once again our thesis that Cainan and the higher begetting ages are original yields a simpler and more compelling explanation: In the original chronology, Shelah's remaining years numbered 303. This number survives in the SP. It is reflected in the MT's 403 (which was increased by 100 to offset the reduction of Shelah's begetting age by 100). In the LXX, or in its Hebrew *Vorlage*, the original 303 was altered to the graphically similar 330, an accidental assimilation to the number of Cainan's remaining years.

<sup>138</sup> Hughes, *Secrets of the Times*, 11.

<sup>139</sup> See discussion in Appendix A.

<sup>140</sup> Andrew E. Steinmann, *From Abraham to Paul: A Biblical Chronology* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2011), 76–78.

<sup>141</sup> According to Hendel, "Hasmonean Edition of MT Genesis?," 457–58, the notorious exegetical problem in MT Gen 11 suggests that the MT's postdiluvian chronology is original: "The chronological revisions in the MT of Genesis 5 were, I have argued, motivated by a local exegetical

The chronology in LXX Gen 11 relieves any discrepancy between the accepted antiquity of Egypt and the date of Noah's flood. On the assumption that Abraham was born in 2166 BC (a standard dating), the flood dates to 3298 BC in the Septuagint. According to the conventional Egyptian chronology, the first dynasty dates to ca. 3000 BC.<sup>142</sup> Yet regardless of which begetting ages accurately reflect the autograph, we must accept the chronological intent of Gen 5 and 11. We may question *where* the original chronology exists text-critically, but not *whether* it exists lexico-grammatically.<sup>143</sup>

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problem. A comparable situation exists in Genesis 11, where the chronology also differs among MT, SP, and LXX. As Klein has convincingly maintained, this is also due to an exegetical problem. To the dismay of many commentators, in MT all of the postdiluvian ancestors of Abraham are alive during his lifetime, including Noah. Hence, according to rabbinic midrash, Isaac studied Torah at the academy of Shem (*Genesis Rabbah* 56.11).” Hendel concludes that while the scribes in the proto-MT tradition “apparently did not perceive this cluster of living ancestors as a problem,” the scribes in the proto-SP and proto-LXX traditions “did respond to this problem” by inflating the postdiluvian chronology. This theory forces us to imagine that the original author created a problematic chronology. More likely, this “cluster” problem in the MT is recensional rather than original, the unavoidable consequence of a grand-scale chronological reduction. (Gen 25:8 potentially sharpens the problem. It says that Abraham, at 175, “died in a good old age, an old man and full of years,” even though in the MT’s chronology Eber was still alive and far more than twice Abraham’s age at this point.)

<sup>142</sup> Peter James and four of his colleagues, all non-cvangelical antiquarians, have made a plausible argument that the conventional Egyptian chronology is inflated “by some 250 years” (Peter James et al., *Centuries of Darkness: A Challenge to the Conventional Chronology of Old World Archaeology* [London: Pimlico, 1992], 257). Bimson, an evangelical expert in Near Eastern chronology, shows that *Centuries of Darkness* has not been refuted (John Bimson, (*When Did It Happen? New Contexts for Old Testament History* [Cambridge: Grove, 2003], 9–27). Snoberger dismisses *Centuries of Darkness* as one of several works in which “Velikovsky’s theories have been preserved, with substantial modification” (“Why a Commitment to Inerrancy Does Not Demand,” 17n47). But this description of *Centuries of Darkness* as a continuation of Immanuel Velikovsky’s discredited ideas is entirely baseless. Bimson responds, “I cannot agree with that description as the two schemes have insufficient common ground to justify it. They are similar only in the very general sense that both propose a revision of Egyptian chronology. The differences are enormous and the *Centuries of Darkness* revision does not rely on Velikovsky at any point” (quoted from private correspondence with permission). According to James, the “conventional scheme” dates Egypt’s first dynasty to ca. 2920 BC (*Centuries of Darkness*, 223). Thus, James implicitly dates the first dynasty to ca. (2920 – 250 =) 2670 BC, more than 600 years after the Septuagint’s flood date.

<sup>143</sup> Thanks to Peter Green for reading several drafts of this paper and suggesting its title. Thanks also to Jonathan Barlow and Robert Murphy for their invaluable feedback.



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