



## THE CASE FOR THE SEPTUAGINT'S CHRONOLOGY IN GENESIS 5 AND 11

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### ABSTRACT

Many biblical scholars who interpret the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 as yielding a continuous chronology from Adam to Abraham claim the Hebrew Masoretic Text (MT) preserves the original begetting ages for the patriarchs. The MT's total for this period is 2008 years. The Samaritan Pentateuch (SP) presents markedly different chronological data for each epoch, for a grand total of 2249 years. Calculations derived from the primary manuscripts (MSS) of the Greek Septuagint (LXX) yield a chronology of 3394 years for this period, 1386 years greater than the MT. The MT is classically represented by the Ussher chronology, which places creation at 4004 BC and the Flood at 2348 BC. Figures from the LXX place creation at *ca.* 5554 BC and the Flood at *ca.* 3298 BC (Table 1; Appendix, n. 1).

This paper proposes that the LXX preserves (most of) the original numbers in Genesis 5 and 11. Most of the MT's chronology in Genesis 5 and 11 does not represent the original text, and is the result of a deliberate and systematic post-AD 70 corruption. Corroborating external witnesses, internal and external evidence, text critical and LXX studies, and historical testimonies will be presented, along with arguments rebutting LXX inflation hypotheses. Explanations for important, accidental scribal errors will be discussed, and a text critical reconstruction of Genesis 5 and 11 will be proposed.

### KEY WORDS

Genesis 5 and 11; Primeval Chronology; LXX; MT; SP; Genealogy; Josephus; Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum (*LAB*)

### INTRODUCTION

For over two millennia and across a vast geographical span, Christian scholars and their Jewish predecessors commenting on Gen 5/11 almost universally concluded the genealogies yield a chronology. Until the Reformation, a majority of Christian chronologists believed the LXX preserved most of the original numbers (Hales, pp. 211–214). During the Reformation, the Hebrew Masoretic Text (MT) supplanted the LXX in the Western church, and eventually a chronological interpretation of Gen 5/11 using the MT's numbers became the majority viewpoint. In his seminal work *Primeval Chronology*, W.H. Green concluded that “the Scriptures furnish no data for a chronological computation prior to the life of Abraham” (1890, p. 193). Green's perspective eventually became the dominant interpretation in conservative scholarship, and the chronological interpretation was largely abandoned. [The most persuasive arguments for a chronological interpretation of Gen 5/11 can be found in Sexton 2015, 2018a and 2018b (See also, Goodenow 1896; Hasel 1980b; Kulling 1996; Sexton and Smith Jr. 2016; Tanner 2015)].

The widespread adoption of Green's thesis effectively halted any serious discussion amongst conservatives on the numerical divergences between the three textual witnesses of Gen 5/11 (Table 1). In the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, detailed interest in the evidence bearing on the begetting ages (*ba*), remaining years (*ry*), and lifespans in the MT/LXX/SP has become almost non-existent. Conservatives have, by and large, simply accepted the numbers in the MT as original, and tend to repeat superficial arguments for that perspective. Few attempts have been made to even probe the evidence in a serious manner (exceptions include: Cosner and

Carter 2015; Sexton 2015; Shaw 2004; Young 2003). Scholars who have proposed more in-depth resolutions almost invariably operate from the perspective of critical scholarship (Hendel 1998, p. 63; Klein 1974; Larsson 1983), often leading to conclusions incompatible with a high view of Scripture. The model of textual reconstruction proposed here begins with the premise that the original, inspired numbers were historically accurate, internally consistent, and mathematically correct.

### RAPID DISMISSALS OF THE LXX

Scripture's promises that God will preserve His Word do not specify how those promises will be carried out. He certainly does not promise to preserve the OT Scriptures in the Masoretic Text *alone*. Such a position is impossible to maintain in light of the textual and historical evidence. Most importantly, it cannot be supported by a doctrine of preservation derived from Scripture itself. Only the divinely authorized writers were uniquely and infallibly moved by the Holy Spirit, not scribes who translated, (re)copied, and/or transmitted the biblical text after it reached its final, canonical form. The Bible never promises the infallible transmission (copying) of Scripture in *any single* textual tradition. Rather, it merely promises preservation (Mat. 5:18; 24:35; Luke 16:17; I Pet. 1:24–25; Is. 40:8), which has subsequently occurred in complex ways over many millennia. Such complexity should not erode our confidence in God's Word, however. Rather, it brings glory only to God, the One who preserves His Holy Word while sovereignly controlling all of history, even the ink, pen and papyrus held in the hands of fallible and sinful men.

**Table 1:** The main numerical divergences in Genesis 5 and 11 in the Masoretic Text (MT), Septuagint (LXX), and Samaritan Pentateuch (SP). Numbers in ( ) are calculations derived from other texts. Brackets [ ] are proposed reconstructions for the original text of the MT. See Appendix for further details.

Patriarch	Genesis Verses	Masoretic Text			Septuagint			Samaritan Pentateuch		
		Begetting Age	Remaining Years	Lifespan	Begetting Age	Remaining Years	Lifespan	Begetting Age	Remaining Years	Lifespan
Adam	5:3-5	130	800	930	230	700	930	130	800	930
Seth	5:6-8	105	807	912	205	707	912	105	807	912
Enosh	5:9-11	90	815	905	190	715	905	90	815	905
Kenan	5:12-14	70	840	910	170	740	910	70	840	910
Mahalalel	5:15-17	65	830	895	165	730	895	65	830	895
Jared	5:18-20	162	800	962	162	800	962	62 <sup>3</sup>	785 <sup>3</sup>	847 <sup>3</sup>
Enoch	5:21-23	65	300	365	165	200	365	65	300	365
Methuselah	5:25-27	187	782	969	187	782	969	67 <sup>3</sup>	653 <sup>3</sup>	720 <sup>3</sup>
Lamech	5:28-31	182 <sup>2</sup>	595 <sup>2</sup>	777 <sup>2</sup>	188 <sup>2</sup>	565 <sup>2</sup>	753 <sup>2</sup>	53 <sup>3</sup>	600 <sup>3</sup>	653 <sup>3</sup>
Noah	5:32; 7:11; 8:13-14; 9:28-29; 10:21; 11:10	500/(502)	After the Flood 350	950	500/(502)	After the Flood 350	950	500/(502)	After the Flood 350	950
Shem	5:32; 11:10-11	100	500		100	500		100	500	600
Arpachshad	11:12-13	35	[430]/403 <sup>5</sup>		135	430/330 <sup>5</sup>		135	303 <sup>4</sup>	438 <sup>4</sup>
Kainan	11:13b-14b				130	330 <sup>11</sup>				
Shelah	11:14-15	30	403		130	403/330 <sup>6</sup>		130	303 <sup>4</sup>	433 <sup>4</sup>
Eber	11:16-17	34	[370]/430 <sup>7</sup>		134	370 <sup>7</sup>		134	270 <sup>4</sup>	404 <sup>4</sup>
Peleg	11:18-19	30	209		130	209		130	109 <sup>4</sup>	239 <sup>4</sup>
Reu	11:20-21	32	207		132	207		132	107 <sup>4</sup>	239 <sup>4</sup>
Serug	11:22-23	30	200		130	200		130	100 <sup>4</sup>	230 <sup>4</sup>
Nahor	11:24-25	29	[129]/119 <sup>8</sup>		79	129 <sup>8</sup>		79	69 <sup>4</sup>	148 <sup>4</sup>
Terah	11:26, 32; 12:1-4 Acts 7:2-4	70/(130)	(75)	205	70/(130)	(75)	205	70	(75)	145 <sup>9</sup>

**Table 2.** The Numbers in Josephus' Genesis 11 Hebrew Text

Patriarch	Genesis Citations	Begetting age
Shem	11:10-11	Years after the Flood 12/(2) <sup>a</sup>
Arpachshad	11:12-13	135
Shelah	11:14-15	130
Eber	11:16-17	134
Peleg	11:18-19	130
Reu	11:20-21	130 <sup>b</sup>
Serug	11:22-23	132 <sup>b</sup>
Nahor	11:24-25	120/(129) <sup>c</sup>
Terah	11:26, 32	70 205- Lifespan
Epochal Summation	<i>Antiquities</i> 1:148	992 years

a. 12 years is an early scribal error from the original, two.

b. Reu and Serug's *ba* in Josephus have been transposed.

c. Josephus' original *ba* for Nahor is restored to 129.

Overall, the MT is our most reliable and important witness to the original OT text. However, as Young notes:

In general, M[T] is a conservative, persistent, and stable text, and has been shown repeatedly to be the best and most important witness to the ancient Hebrew Bible. But it is not perfect; in places it has suffered corruption (p. 425; cf. Gentry 2009).

Even though the Reformers had largely accepted the Gen 5/11 MT chronology as original, a number of subsequent Christian chronologists argued that the LXX fundamentally preserves the original figures and the MT's primeval chronology is the result of a deliberate post-AD 70 corruption (Goodenow 1896; Hales 1830; Hayes 1741; Jackson 1752; Russell 1865; Seyffarth 1859). Unfortunately, modern conservatives have not engaged with their arguments. Instead, superficial reasons for dismissing the LXX's primeval chronology are widespread in the conservative academic literature. Kainan's inclusion or exclusion in Gen 11 (Appendix, n. 11) and Methuselah's begetting age (Smith Jr., 2017) are often used to pummel the LXX's credibility. Moreover, evangelicals tend to quickly dismiss LXX Gen 5/11 either because of the numerous (and often substantial) text critical divergences between the LXX and MT in other OT books, or because of unsubstantiated theological predispositions favoring the MT. A few brief examples should demonstrate my point.

Williams does not explicitly reject the LXX in Gen 5/11, but by citing text critical problems in books outside of Genesis (and the Pentateuch), the tenor of his argument encourages the reader to be dismissive of any serious consideration of its primeval chronology (pp. 99–100). Ray downplays the LXX by pointing out the number

of numerical variants in extant MSS, contrasted against the united witness of the MT (p. 35; similarly, Hasel 1980a, p. 36). Merrill claims that “[n]o good reason exists to scuttle MT in favor of the two major versions” (p. 270). Green asserts the MT's numbers are “incontrovertibly established” (p. 300). Whitcomb/Morris label the LXX's numbers as “obviously false” (p. 475). Jones' arguments are dogmatic and blatantly hostile: “It is deplorable enough that a witness so corrupt, depraved, and morally impaired as the LXX has been allowed by text critics and other scholars a place in the witness box as to the true text of the Old Testament.” Jones even makes the preposterous (and all too common) assertion that the LXX did not even exist until the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD (p. 19; 17, n. 2).

Williams' use of LXX books outside of Genesis to cast doubt on the Gen 5/11 LXX numbers is a defective text critical methodology. The Pentateuch was translated in Egypt more than a century before the rest of the OT books were translated by others, perhaps in Israel (Gentry, p. 24). Most LXX books developed independently of one another, and then circulated in individual scrolls. Thus, each book presents its own unique text critical challenges. Aejmelaeus explains:

With regard to textual criticism, this means that observations made about the text of one book cannot be generalized to cover other books... the text-critical problems concerning the Septuagint vary greatly from book to book... Because the various books were translated over a period of at least a hundred years by different individuals, it is impossible to draw up any general rules concerning the use or usefulness of the Septuagint in the textual criticism of the whole OT (pp. 59, 61, 63).

Consistent with Aejmelaeus' methodological framework is Shaw's thesis. His overview of the main textual variants found in Gen 1–11 (excluding the numbers) is actually relevant to this investigation, since Gen 5/11 appear in the same literary context, and reflect the work of the same translator(s). Shaw concludes the three witnesses—LXX/SP/MT—all go back to one original base text (pp. 16–45). Such an analysis is much more pertinent than appeals to the complex text critical challenges found in completely unrelated LXX books, such as Job, I Samuel, Jeremiah, or Ezekiel.

Ray's predisposition against the LXX because it has many more numerical variants in Gen 5/11 than the MT fails on numerous points. First, the Jewish Diaspora and the Church widely disseminated the LXX across a vast geography and time in antiquity (Hengel 2002). Conversely, the proto-MT (the precursor to the MT) was under the highly controlled authority of the rabbis in the post-70 AD period, whereby variants were purged from the MSS and strict measures were employed for copying the Hebrew text (Tov 2011, pp. 30–31). More variation in the LXX MSS is exactly what one would expect to find given these two different sets of historical circumstances.

Second, most of the numerical variants in LXX MSS of Gen 5/11 can be explained by basic scribal errors and/or variations in word order. Third, textual variation is an invalid argument against our ability to reconstruct the original text, as Wevers has meticulously shown in his magnum opus of LXX Genesis (1974b). Textual variation means there are many MSS available to us, and while that makes the work more complex, it does not preclude against

the LXX containing the original Gen 5/11 numbers. In fact, a larger volume of MSS greatly increases the likelihood that the original readings have not disappeared, whether purposefully or by accident.

Cosner and Carter attempt to approach the subject more objectively than most: “We did not come into the analysis with the agenda of proving MT superiority” (p. 105). While I certainly accept their intention as earnest, their method immediately moves into a pro-MT/anti-LXX stance. First, they quickly appeal to very brief pro-MT opinions from two conservative scholars. They do not adequately develop or defend the basis for these opinions. Second, they speculate that the LXX may have been inflated by the Alexandrian Jews to “agree with the Egyptian chronology of Manetho” (p. 99), a theory that has at least 8 fatal flaws (see below). No other viable motive for alleged LXX inflations is presented. Third, they utilize lifespans in SP Gen 11 as the foundation for reconstructing the post-Flood chronology. These numbers were added to the SP by uninspired scribes over 1000 years after Moses, and are not original (Hendel, p. 73). They cannot be used as a reliable foundation for textual reconstruction. Fourth, they provide no viable explanation for how/why the chronology in Gen 11 SP was (allegedly) inflated independently of the LXX. Fifth, they provide no analysis of external witnesses to Gen 5/11 from antiquity. This absence is striking and at odds with text-critical scholarship on the OT (Wevers 1974b; Hendel 1998; Kauhanen 2013). Sixth, there is no substantive interaction with LXX scholars who argue that the LXX translators treated the Genesis text very conservatively, and that the numbers came from the Hebrew *Vorlage*. In the end, Cosner and Carter deduce that the MT's chronology is original, a conclusion that was baked into the methodological cake from the outset. (Despite my criticisms of their methodology and conclusions, their article contributes positively to the subject).

This representative sampling of approaches can be categorized as either dismissive, superficial, or methodologically deficient. Getting to the bottom of this complex subject first requires shedding conservative evangelicalism's anti-LXX impulse. Gentry writes:

Differences, therefore, between the LXX and other witnesses to the text which are genuine textual variants should be evaluated on a case by case basis, and one should not prefer *a priori* either the LXX or the MT (p. 33).

Unquestionably, the numerical divergences in Gen 5/11 qualify as genuine variants. They are a unique problem, and by and large, are not the result of accidental errors. Many of the numbers have undergone deliberate and systematic revision. They must be judiciously evaluated on their own merits, while all relevant evidence is carefully assessed.

### CHRONOLOGICAL INFLATION OR DEFLATION?

Table 1 illustrates how the numbers vary among the three witnesses. While some of the differences can be ascribed to accidental errors (Appendix, nn. 5–8, 11), scholars universally acknowledge that the divergences of 100 years (50 for Nahor) in the *ba* signify deliberate alterations of the text. This is further confirmed by six 100-year variations in the *ry* in Gen 5, which were also deliberately amended so that the original lifespans would remain intact when

a mathematical cross-check is performed. These differences are of great chronological significance. This is particularly true for the post-Flood epoch, where the apologetic task of correlating pre-Abrahamic archaeological evidence with the primeval history is dependent on the accuracy of the begetting ages and the date of the Flood.

### 1. LXX Inflation Hypotheses

The longer LXX chronology is presently traceable to when Jewish scribes in Alexandria, Egypt originally translated the Pentateuch into Greek (*ca.* 281 BC). This means either: (a) the LXX translators used a Hebrew text with the longer chronology or, (b) the LXX translators fabricated it. If (a) is true, then a very ancient Hebrew text contained the longer chronology. Many MT proponents have assumed that (b) must be true, often claiming that the Alexandrian translators intentionally inflated the chronology to reconcile it with Egyptian history. Many specifically point to the Egyptian priest Manetho's chronology as the catalyst. Numerous scholars have used this argument to explain the length and origin of the LXX's primeval chronology.

First, to my knowledge, this explanation originated in the 19th century AD. No ancient author made this claim (Sexton 2015, p. 212). Second, the hypothesis fails to achieve its stated goal. Bickerman notes that according to Manetho the pharaohs began to reign in 4244 BC (1975, p. 76, n. 14), about one millennium before the earliest Flood date which can be derived from the LXX (*ca.* 3298 BC). Ray concurs:

The suggestion that the LXX chronology resulted as a response to the Egyptian chronology of Manetho is inadequate. The modern scheme is dated to about 3000 B.C. However, Manetho's actual figures total 5471 years by dead reckoning, from the First Dynasty to the conquering of Egypt by Alexander the Great, a figure which was assumed as fairly accurate until recently (p. 36, n. 7).

Ancient witnesses such as Julius Africanus (AD 170–240) affirm that Egyptian chronologies in general were much longer than the LXX's:

The Egyptians, indeed, with their boastful notions of their own antiquity, have put forth a sort of account of it by the hand of their astrologers in cycles and myriads of years... *they think they fall in with the eight or nine thousands of years...* (Wallraff, p. 25, emphasis added).

Similarly, Theophilus of Antioch (d. AD 183) argues the age of the world (5529 BC) is much more recent than the “...15 times 10,375 years, as we have already mentioned Apollonius the Egyptian gave out...” (Schaff 2004, p. 1118). And, Eusebius suggested that Egyptian chronologies in antiquity should be *deflated* to bring them in line with the comparatively shorter (and in his view, accurate) LXX chronology (Adler, pp. 479–480).

Moreover, Genesis LXX exhibits no evidence of a large-scale accommodation to Egyptian cosmogony, theogony, or anthropogony. It is highly implausible that the Jewish scribes in Alexandria would thoroughly capitulate to Egyptian worldview claims only in Gen 5/11. Hanhart agrees:



The LXX translators never had the freedom to take over non-Israelite tradition in its written form into the context of their translations... The freedom given to them was not that of alteration; rather, theirs was the responsibility of preservation (p. 350).

One might simply claim that the Alexandrian translators or other unknown scribes arbitrarily inflated the chronology, but for no discernable reason. This kind of *ad hoc* explanation is deeply inadequate. First, a compelling reason and motive for this kind of systematic revision is essential for any reconstruction theory. Answering the question, “why did this change occur in the text?” is central to the text-critical enterprise. Second, LXX studies by experts in the field provide daunting arguments against LXX inflation hypotheses. Aejmelaeus begins:

Now, knowing the translators considered the text they were reading to be authoritative Scripture and, on the other hand, that most of them, after all, were fairly literal, it would seem to be a good rule of thumb to start with the assumption that larger divergences from the MT mainly come from the *Vorlage* [the Hebrew text behind the translation], and only exceptionally and with imperative reasons [should they be attributed] to the translator... 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 (p. 68, 71).

Davila continues: “We have strong reason to believe that the translators of Genesis treated their *Vorlage* with respect and rendered the Hebrew text before them into Greek with great care and minimal interpretation,” (p. 11). Focusing on the Gen 5/11 numbers, Wevers writes: “It can be safely concluded that [the LXX translator of] Gen had another [non-MT] chronology in the background. It was not the product of his imagination...” (1993, p. 73). Tov’s study concludes:

Although the LXX has been transmitted into Greek, these details [the numbers in Gen 5/11] should not be ascribed to the translator, but the Hebrew *Vorlage*... they did not go as far as to recalculate the logic or system of genealogical lists. The LXX translation of Genesis is relatively literal, although some freedom in small details is recognizable, but no large scale translational pluses, minuses or changes are found in this version... Accordingly, any recalculation of chronological lists by a translator is highly unlikely. Furthermore, the LXX version of the lists has much in common with the SP, especially in chapter 11, strengthening the assumption that the two phenomena took place *at the Hebrew level* (2015, p. 221, n. 1, emphasis added).

Building on Tov’s argument, LXX inflation hypotheses cannot account for the higher *ba* in SP Gen 11, which fundamentally match

two completely independent sources: LXX Gen 11 and Josephus’ Hebrew text of Genesis (Tables 1 and 2).

In addition, the SP’s antediluvian chronology differs drastically from the LXX, where it exhibits severe deflation. The SP matches the artificially constructed chronology found in *Jubilees* (Smith Jr. 2018a; Appendix, n. 3). Evidence of deliberate deflation in SP Gen 5 from the original is found in Jerome. In his SP MSS, the figures for Methuselah and Lamech in Genesis 5:25–28 do not match the numbers in any present-day SP MSS (Table 1). Instead, Jerome’s SP MSS contained Methuselah’s numbers (187, 782, 969), matching the MT and some LXX MSS. A reading from the *Samareitikon*, a Greek translation of the SP or a Samaritan Targum (Joosten 2015), also has 782 as the *ry* for Methuselah (Wevers 1974b, p. 106). Thus, the SP was deliberately reduced (at minimum) for the lives of both Methuselah and Lamech (Hayward, p. 35; Smith Jr., 2017, p. 170, n. 5; 175) to bring it in line with *Jubilees*. While the SP scribes deflated Gen 5 SP to match *Jubilees* (Smith Jr., 2018a), no adequate motive has been proposed for their alleged inflation of the Gen 11 begetting ages.

In summary, LXX inflation hypotheses fail (in part or whole) on eight major points:

1. They cannot explain the matching *ba* in the SP and LXX of Genesis 11, which would need to arise separately and independently, and yet somehow identically, if *any* LXX inflation hypothesis were true. The SP certainly did not originate from the LXX.
2. There are no ancient testimonies to support them.
3. It would have been impossible for the LXX translators (or anyone else) to get away with such a fraud due to the subsequent dissemination of the LXX throughout the Diaspora. Jewish communities embraced and used the LXX for several centuries before the advent of the Church. A falsely inflated primeval chronology would have been quickly exposed as fraudulent.
4. LXX Genesis bears no evidence of significant conformity to Egyptian world view claims, making it dubious that the translators would have corrupted the sacred text to conform solely with Egyptian chronology.
5. The LXX’s chronology fails to equal or surpass ancient versions of Egyptian chronology.
6. If the goal of equaling or surpassing Egyptian chronology was real, then the LXX’s chronology should be much longer than it presently is. Gen 5 could have been expanded by at least two millennia. Gen 11 could have been inflated by several centuries.
7. Septuagint and OT textual scholars maintain that the numbers in LXX Gen 5/11 should be attributed to the LXX’s Hebrew *Vorlage*, not the translators. Thus, the LXX testifies to an early 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC Hebrew text of Genesis with the longer chronology.
8. There is external evidence of Hebrew Genesis texts that contained the longer primeval chronology in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD and earlier.

Any inflation theory must provide a specific and adequate motive for inflating the numbers. To my knowledge, a coherent, rational explanation and viable motive for inflations in the LXX that can account for all of the evidence has yet to be produced.

## 2. The Rabbinic Deflation Hypothesis

In previous articles, I have argued that evangelicals should jettison LXX inflation hypotheses in favor of a different model that far better explains the textual and historical evidence: deliberate chronological deflation in the proto-Masoretic Hebrew text by the Jewish rabbis in the post-AD 70 period (Sexton 2015, pp. 215–216; Sexton and Smith Jr., pp. 45–48; Smith Jr. 2017, p. 169, nn. 3–4). Eusebius (AD 310) was the first historian to explain that the proto-MT chronology was deliberately deflated by the rabbis (*Chronicle* 23; 25; Karst pp. 39–40). Julian of Toledo (AD 642–690), Jacob of Edessa (AD 640–708), Byzantine chronologist George Syncellus (d. AD 810), and Armenian annalist Bar Hebraeus (AD 1226–1286) also made this claim (Smith Jr. 2017, p. 171, n. 14).

Why would the rabbis deflate the primeval chronology by 1250 years? Chronological speculations and calculations pertaining to the time of the messiah's arrival (messianic chronology) were widespread in Second Temple Judaism (Beckwith 1981; 1996, p. 217; Wacholder 1975). Messianic chronologies were connected to the prophecy of Daniel 9:24–27 and closely associated with the days of Creation, with each day symbolizing 1000 years of world history. In some schemes, the messiah would arrive in the 6th millennium from creation (AM 5000–5999 AM), and usher in the kingdom in the 7th millennium (AM 6000; Wallraff, et. al 2007, pp. XXIII, 291). Other schemes held that the Messiah would arrive in/around the year AM 4000 (Beckwith 1981; Silver, pp. 6, 16), an idea later repeated in the rabbinic Babylonian Talmud (*Abodah Zarah* 9a; *Sanhedrin* 97b).

The rabbinic world chronology in the *Seder Olam Rabbah* (ca. AD 140–160; Guggenheimer 1998), based on the MT, dates Creation to 3761 BC, placing the arrival of the Messiah to around AD 240 (Beckwith 1981) in the AM 4000 messianic scheme. *The Seder Olam* was developed and written by the very same rabbis who deflated the MT's numbers in Gen 5/11 to discredit Jesus and the ascending Church. Simply stated, the rabbinic date of Creation derived from the authoritative *Seder Olam* places Jesus' life too soon for him to be the Messiah.

The *Seder Olam*'s massive chronological deflation scheme is also exhibited in its erroneous post-Exilic chronology, which the rabbis significantly reduced by about 185 years (Hughes, p. 257). This reduction was done in conjunction with their reinterpretation of Daniel 9, which they associated with the Temple's destruction instead of the Messiah (Beckwith 1981, p. 536). Reinterpreting Daniel 9, adopting the *Seder Olam* as authoritative, and reducing the primeval chronology in their Hebrew texts worked together as rationales for rejecting Jesus as the Christ.

Silver explains further:

The collapse of the Bar Kochba [revolt, ca. AD 135] movement at the close of the putative fifth millennium prompted the Rabbis not only to project the Messianic date to a more distant future, but also to *revise their notion of the Creation calendar*. They were living not at the close *fifth* millennium [ca. 4999 AM] but at the close of the *fourth* [ca. 3999 AM] millennium. The people need not despair of the Messiah. He is still to come... Christian polemics may also have been responsible for this 1000–

year revision in the Creation calendar, which took place before the third century. Christian propagandists from the first century on maintained that Jesus was the fulfillment of prophecy, and that he was born at the close of the fifth [4999 AM], or in the first part of the sixth millennium... The Rabbis found it necessary to counter this by asserting that this claim is false, inasmuch as the sixth millennium is still far off (p. 18–19, emphases added).

In an ideological and historical context rife with apocalyptic expectation expressed in various forms of chrono-messianism, Pharisaic/rabbinic Judaism was facing a cataclysmic crisis. The Gospel was spreading like wildfire, while the Romans had razed the Temple to the ground, set Jerusalem ablaze and ravaged Israel twice in 65 years. Barely clinging to life was the rabbinic community, desperate to preserve its heritage and intensely threatened by the expanding Jesus movement. Their circumstances were dire, and their intense hatred of Jesus and His Church has undeniable NT theological support.

The small core of Judaism that arose from the ashes had autonomous control over the few surviving Hebrew MSS from the Temple. Judaism was no longer variegated, but dominated and controlled by the “scribes and Pharisees” (Mark 2:16). The powerful Rabbi Akiba (40–137 AD) was a fierce enemy of the Gospel. Akiba could decree certain Hebrew texts in the Temple Court to be unfit for public reading, and have them removed from use (Nodet 1997, pp. 193–194). Akiba and his fellow rabbis possessed the necessary authority and opportunity to introduce wholesale chronological changes into the biblical text while also purging the higher numbers from the textual stream (Sexton 2015, pp. 210–218). In the aftermath of 70 AD, it became possible for the rabbis to amend their Hebrew MSS and hide the trail of evidence. Akiba's disciple Aquila, along with the later Jewish recensions of the LXX, also deflated the numbers in their Greek translations to match the MT (Wevers 1974b, pp. 102–105). “In short, after the destruction of Jerusalem it was possible to introduce a corrupted Biblical chronology” (Seyffarth, p. 125).

The rabbis possessed adequate motive, authoritative means, and unique opportunity to systematically revise the sacred text, introduce the shorter chronology in the *Seder Olam* and proto-MT as authoritative, and remove evidence of the longer chronology. They are the only group who could have made this kind of radical chronological alteration permanent in future manuscripts.

## 3. Internal Evidence for Chronological Deflation

The rabbis did everything they could to hide evidence of these systematic changes, but ultimately, the MT betrays internal evidence of its monumental 1250-year chronological reduction.

First, the change of 50 years in Nahor's *ba* points to chronological deflation (Table 1). If we assumed for the sake of argument that the MT preserves Nahor's original *ba*, and that the LXX's 79 (Wevers 1974b, p. 146) is the result of chronological inflation, we must ask why the corruptors only added 50 years instead of 100. Nothing prevented them from increasing Nahor's *ba* by 100 years. Not only would 129 have been consistent with the (alleged) 100-year inflations throughout the rest of the primeval chronology, this number would also fit in better with the previous LXX *ba* in Gen

11. Nahor's *ba* in the LXX should be 129, not 79. Advocates of any inflation theory must also explain why SP scribes independently and separately chose to inflate Nahor's *ba* by only 50 years as well.

Now consider that if the goal was deflation, and if Nahor's original *ba* was 79, then the rabbis realistically could only reduce this number by 50 years to 29 to make it consistent with the rest of the MT's numbers from Arpachshad to Serug. 79 in the SP serves as independent verification of its originality. The 50-year adjustment of Nahor's *ba* can only be logically explained as an intentional chronological deflation in the MT (Sexton and Smith Jr., p. 48).

Second, the rabbis avoided deflating the figures for Methuselah, Lamech, Noah, Shem and Terah, which would have resulted in internal chronological errors relating to other biblical passages (Hales, p. 281). Their goal was not only to deflate the chronology, but to limit the changes to prevent them from being discovered. Conversely, if the goal truly were inflation, Jared, Methuselah and Lamech's begetting ages could (and should) have been increased by one hundred years each (to 262, 287, 288), and would not create such difficulties. The careful selection of the begetting ages that were altered, as well as the amount that each age was adjusted, confirms that the original chronology was deflated.

Third, and most significantly, the MT's post-Flood chronology creates four genuine and irreconcilable errors when compared to Gen 25:8. The verse indicates that the 175-year-old Abraham "died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years..." (ESV). In the MT: 1. Eber was still alive at age 464 when Abraham died at 175. 2. Similarly, Shem's death at age 600 occurs in the MT only 25 years before Abraham's death, thrice Abraham's age. 3. Most remarkably, Noah's death at 950 occurs *only two years before Abraham was born*.

Lastly, Gen 11:10–25 (Table 1) repeatedly indicates that the named patriarchs had "[other] sons and daughters." Thus, thousands of post-Flood descendants would have lived to ages similar to Arpachshad (438), Eber (464) and Shelah (433), making Abraham's death premature when compared to other unnamed contemporaries. Using the MT, Abraham would have been neither "an old man," nor "full of years" compared to the world around him. This would be analogous to applying similar statements to a modern man who died at the age of 30 or 35.

In the LXX, however, Noah had been deceased for nearly 1000 years, Shem for about eight centuries, and Eber for about four, when Abraham died. Only in the longer chronology of the LXX/SP had lifespans dropped to the point where Abraham's epitaph could be considered accurate and coherent. The MT's post-Flood chronology creates an insurmountable problem for MT advocates, for it yields genuine and irreconcilable errors within the sacred text.

#### EXTERNAL EVIDENCES VERIFY THE LONGER CHRONOLOGY IS ORIGINAL

Citations in external sources using Hebrew and Greek texts of Genesis circulating in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD and earlier should contain the higher *ba* in Gen 5/11 (and lower *ry* in Gen 5) if the rabbis soon thereafter deflated the chronology by 1250 years. And that's exactly what we find.

#### 1. Demetrius the Chronographer (ca. 220 BC)

The historian Demetrius wrote in Alexandria during the reign of Ptolemy IV (221–205 BC). Demetrius' works are preserved in Eusebius and Clement. He wrote in Greek (Hanson, p. 183, n. 6) and is the earliest known external witness to the primeval chronology. He dates Creation to 5307 BC and the Flood to 3043 BC (Finegan, p. 145).

Fragment 2:18 reads, "[F]rom Adam until Joseph's brothers came into Egypt, there were 3624 years; and from the Deluge until Jacob's coming into Egypt, 1360 years" (Hanson, pp. 851–852). These figures yield a period of 2264 years from Adam to the Flood (3624–1360), a figure only consistent with the longer chronology (Smith Jr. 2017, p. 172, n. 19). As "the earliest datable Alexandrian–Jewish author we know" (Finegan, p. 141), his witness to the longer primeval chronology predates the first reliable witness to the MT's chronology by several centuries.

#### 2. Eupolemus (ca. 160 BC)

Eupolemus was a Jewish historian of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC (Wacholder 1974, p. 3). His Greek work is entitled, "On the Kings in Judea." Fragment 5 appears in Clement's *Stromata* (Fallon 1983). In it, Eupolemus calculates 5149 years from Adam to the 5<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Demetrius I (ca. 158 BC; Wacholder 1974, p. 7), yielding the same Creation date as Demetrius the Chronographer (5307 BC; Finegan, p. 145).

Eupolemus used the LXX, and since he was a high-ranking Jerusalem official, this indicates both the LXX and the longer chronology were embraced in Israel proper. Because of his status, he also had access to and used Hebrew texts, writing in a "koiné-Judaeo-Greek" with a "strong Hebrew flavor" (Wacholder 1974, pp. 12–13, 246–248, 256–257; Holladay, p. 95, 99, nn. 2–3). Fallon adds: "... Eupolemus has also used the Hebrew text, as his rendering of the name Hiram indicates... use of the Hebrew text is further indicated by his translation of terms that the Septuagint has merely transliterated" (pp. 862–863; Holladay, p. 101 n. 15). Josephus' praise of Eupolemus' work (*Against Apion* 1:23) also supports the accuracy of his chronology.

Eupolemus' writing and chronological statements would have been under intense scrutiny in Jerusalem. He was an official delegate sent to Rome by Judas Maccabeus in 161 BC (Holladay 99, n.6). Since he "belonged to one of the leading priestly families of Jerusalem" (Holladay, p. 93), he would have had access to Hebrew scrolls in the Temple library. 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 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC.

#### 3. Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (LAB, 1<sup>st</sup> century AD)

*LAB* is also called the *Book of Biblical Antiquities*, a work presently extant in Latin, translated from an intermediate Greek text (Harrington 1970, p. 507). Upon (re)discovery in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was wrongly attributed to Philo of Alexandria. *LAB* chronicles biblical history from Adam to Saul, and includes parallels from



**Table 3.** The LXX and First Century AD Hebrew Text-Based Witnesses to Genesis 5. Numbers in parentheses are not explicitly stated. See Appendix for further details.

Patriarch	Genesis Citations	Septuagint			Josephus			<i>Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum</i>		
		Begetting Age	Remaining Years	Lifespan	Begetting Age	Remaining Years	Lifespan	Begetting Age	Remaining Years	Lifespan
Adam	5:3-5	230	700	930	230	700	930	(230)	700	(930)
Seth	5:6-8	205	707	912	205	(707)	912	205 <sup>10</sup>	707	(912)
Enosh	5:9-11	190	715	905	190	(715)	905	190 <sup>10</sup>	715	(905)
Kenan	5:12-14	170	740	910	170	(740)	910	170 <sup>10</sup>	740 <sup>10</sup>	(910)
Mahalalel	5:15-17	165	730	895	165	(730)	895	165	730	(895)
Jared	5:18-20	162	800	962	162	(800)	962	162 <sup>10</sup>	800	(962)
Enoch	5:21-23	165	200	365	165	(200)	365	165	200	(365)
Methuselah	5:25-27	187	782	969	187	(782)	969	187	782	(969)
Lamech	5:28-31	188 <sup>2</sup>	565 <sup>2</sup>	753 <sup>2</sup>	182/188 <sup>2</sup>	(595)	707/(777) <sup>2</sup>	182 <sup>10</sup>	595 <sup>2,10</sup>	(777)
Noah	5:32; 7:11; 8:13-14; 9:28-29; 11:10	500/(502)	After the Flood 350	950	-	-	950	500 <sup>10</sup>	After the Flood 350	950
Epochal Summation Figures	From Adam to the Flood	2262 years			2262/ 2256 years	<i>Antiquities</i> 1:67, 82-87		2256 years	<i>LAB</i> 1:1-22; 5:8	

non-canonical Jewish traditions.

*LAB* 1:2–22 includes *ba* and *ry* from Seth to Lamech (Table 3). *LAB* contains a few accidental scribal errors, but they are easily reconstructed and are only compatible with the longer Gen 5 chronology (Appendix, n. 10). Scholars who have extensively studied *LAB* unanimously agree that it was originally written in Hebrew (Jacobson, pp. 210, 215–224; Harrington 1970, pp. 508–514). The author had a strong Pharisaic background (Ferch 1977) and wrote in Israel proper (Feldman 1996, p. 58) during the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, and before the destruction of the Temple (Harrington 1983, p. 299). *LAB* breathes “that spirit of rabbinic Judaism which arose partly prior to, and mostly after, the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem” (Ferch, p. 141). Feldman adds:

In his approach, Pseudo-Philo [*LAB*], like the authors of the Apocalypse of Baruch [2 Baruch] and of IV Esdras [4 Ezra] and like Josephus, represents a Pharisaic outlook; but he is more overt in stressing the current theological viewpoints of the rabbis... (1996, p. 82).

Moreover, the author used a Hebrew text of Genesis (Harrington 1971, pp. 2–6). 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. Jacobson adds:

Aside from the prima facie improbability of this, it is hard to understand why someone who could write a skillful Hebrew prose in biblical style and clearly had an expert knowledge of the Hebrew Bible would have felt the need or desirability of consulting translations of the Bible... (p. 255–256).

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.

More specifically, Lamech's *ba* of 182 (Table 3; Appendix, n. 2) confirms that *LAB* was based on a Genesis Hebrew text. The LXX almost universally reads 188 (Wevers 1974b, p. 107). The MT reads 182. If *LAB* were originally written or later amended with the LXX as its guiding text, Lamech's *ba* would undoubtedly have been 188. Further, Lamech's *ry* (585) in *LAB* is easily clarified as an accidental scribal error (Appendix, n. 10; Jacobson, p. 292), and was 595 (=MT) originally. The 182 and 595 figures can only be explained by the direct use of a Hebrew text, adding up to the MT's lifespan of 777 (see also Josephus, below). No LXX MSS contain these three numbers (Wevers 1974b, p. 107), disproving any notion *LAB*'s Gen 5 numbers were altered to conform it with the LXX.

In *LAB* we have the product of rabbinic, Pharisaic Judaism initially



written in Hebrew, originating before AD 70 in Israel, and utilizing a Hebrew text of Genesis which contained the longer antediluvian chronology of 2256 years. *LAB* serves as a devastating witness against the MT's shorter chronology.

### 5. Josephus (ca. AD 94)

Most of the higher *ba* found in Gen 5 of *LAB* and LXX Gen 5/11 also appear in *Antiquities of the Jews* (1:67, 83–87, 149–50; Tables 2 and 3). Josephus' numbers are often dismissed as a mere parroting of the LXX. A close examination reveals something quite different.

Josephus explicitly states that he worked directly from Hebrew texts (*Ant.* 1:5, 9:208, 10:218; *Against Apion* 1:1, 54). Studies by Norton (pp. 69–71), Attridge (pp. 29–33), and Feldman (1998, pp. 25–26, 30) all confirm that he had a Genesis Hebrew text in his possession. Shutt demonstrates how Josephus often “hellenized” names in Genesis directly from the Hebrew (pp. 169, 178). Noah, for example, always appears as Νῶε in the LXX, but as Νῶχός in Josephus (Nodet 2011, pp. 261–262). Other examples of translation from Hebrew to Greek by Josephus include:

Enosh (Gen 5:9)	LXX–Ενωσ	<i>Ant.</i> 1.83–Ανοσως
Mahalalel (Gen 5:15)	LXX–Μαλελεηλ	<i>Ant.</i> 1.84–Μαλαηλος
Enoch (Gen 5:21)	LXX–Ενωχ	<i>Ant.</i> 1.85–Ανωχος
Reu (Gen 11:18–21)	LXX–Ραβαν	<i>Ant.</i> 1.148–Ρεους
Serug (Gen 11:20–23)	LXX–Σερουχ	<i>Ant.</i> 1.149–Σερουγος

Moreover, Septuagint and Josephus scholar Henry Thackeray argues extensively that Josephus used a “Semitic” text for Genesis through Ruth (1967, pp. 75–99). After an exhaustive analysis of over 100 of Josephus' passages dealing with the Pentateuch, Josephus scholar Nodet concludes that “Josephus' ultimate Hebrew source (H) is quite close to the Hebrew *Vorlage* of G [LXX]” (1997, p. 174). This affirms Wevers' and Tov's conclusions that the higher numbers in Gen 5/11 LXX came from a Hebrew text of Genesis.

Due to his societal status, Josephus very likely used a high-quality Hebrew text. Nodet suggests that his Hebrew source(s) were Temple library scrolls that had been in use for a considerable period of time, perhaps a century or more (1997, pp. 192–194; *Ag. Ap.* 1:31). If correct, this would push Josephus' witness to the longer chronology in a Genesis Hebrew text back to the turn of the millennium.

Only in accord with the longer chronology, Josephus states that the history recorded in the Hebrew Bible covers 5,000 years: “Those antiquities contain the history of 5000 years; and are taken out of our sacred books, but translated by me into the Greek tongue” (*Ag. Ap.* 1:1). And: “The things narrated in the sacred Scriptures, are, however, innumerable, seeing that they embrace the history of 5000 years...” (*Ant.* 1:13). This figure begins with Adam and ends with Artaxerxes (*Ag. Ap.* 1:8; ca. 425 BC), and cannot be reconciled with the MT's chronology, which covers (generously, at maximum) ca. 3900 years for the same period (Hardy and Carter 2014, p. 95). The difference, strikingly, is explained by the 1250-year reduction in the MT by the rabbis. Hales is correct in stating the 5000-year statements are the “master key” to Josephus' overarching chronology of history since Adam:

The authenticity of this period of 5000 years is

unquestionable from its repetition; and it has providentially escaped the depredations of his editors because it was only mentioned thus incidentally, and not applied formally as a chronological character (pp. 295, 297).

“The depredations of his editors” to which Hales refers are instances where chronological statements in Josephus MSS of *Antiquities* were later corrupted by scribes. Epochal summation figures in *Ant.* 1:82 and 1:148 were deflated to match totals derived from the MT. A few of the *ba* have been deflated as well. Because of (alleged) internal chronological discrepancies, it has been asserted that *Antiquities* is an unreliable witness to the chronology of Gen 5/11. Hasel claims that Josephus had the longer (LXX) and shorter chronologies (MT) in his possession simultaneously, as do others (Hendel, p. 69; Klein, pp. 245–250; Wacholder 1974, p. 98, n. 7; Whiston, p. 851). He concludes that “Josephus does not seem to be of much help in answering the question of the time element” in the primeval history (1980a, pp. 25–26). Scholars making these claims consistently fail to closely examine the manuscript evidence.

First, it is impossible that Josephus, twice, could have made such colossally basic math errors in the immediate context of the begetting ages he provides for each patriarch. For the antediluvian era, Josephus assures the reader *Ant.* 1.82 is accurate: “These years, added together, amount to the aforementioned total” (*Ant.* 1.88). Second, an analysis of the extant textual variants of *Ant.* 1:67, 83–87, and 149–150 decidedly demonstrates that the original numbers in Josephus' Hebrew text essentially matched the higher *ba* found in the longer chronology.

Adam's *ba* of 230 and his 700 *ry* appear in a non-chronological context (*Ant.* 1.67), having survived any attempts at emendation. No variants match the MT. *Ant.* 1.83 also contains the *ba* of 230 for Adam, reflected in the best MSS of Josephus. In *Ant.* 1.83 Seth begets Enosh at age 205, with no textual variations. Enosh begets Kainan at age 190, with one Latin MS deliberately reduced to 90. In *Ant.* 1.84–85, the *ba* of 170 for Kenan, 165 for Mahalalel and 162 for Jared are all unanimously attested. The majority of *Ant.* 1.86 MSS indicate that Methuselah was born when Enoch was 165 years old (Niese et. al. 2008, pp. 16, 19–20).

For Methuselah's *ba*, the best MSS of Josephus attest to 187 as original, affirmed by Niese et. al. (2008, p. 20), Thackeray (1931, p. 40), and Whiston (p. 851). While some LXX MSS incorrectly have 167 (causing Methuselah to live 14 years past the Flood), no MSS of Josephus contain the erroneous 167 reading. There is no doubt that 187 is the correct number in Josephus, and its originality is confirmed by the MT, Demetrius, *LAB*, Julius Africanus, and various LXX MSS (Smith Jr. 2017, pp. 169–179).

For Lamech's *ba* in *Ant.* 1.87, the witness of Josephus is primarily divided between 188 and 182/82. Manuscripts S, P, and L contain 82 (Niese et. al., p. 20). The “100” (ἐκατὸν) dropped out by accident early in the transmissional history. There is no reason to surmise it was 82 originally. The Latin MSS contain 182 (Whiston, p. 851). Meanwhile, 188 is found in codices M and O. 188 appears in almost all extant LXX MSS (Wevers 1974b, p. 107), while 182 appears in the MT and *LAB*. Both Niese and Thackeray have chosen 188 as the original figure in Josephus, while Whiston has chosen 182. (We will return to Lamech in a moment).

The higher *ba* in *Ant.* 1.83–87 are preceded by an epochal summation in *Ant.* 1:82: “The time of [the Flood] was [2262/2656/1656] years from Adam...” Thackeray argues for 2262 as the original figure:

[Following] Niese, with the best MS. of Josephus here extant, cod[ex]. O... The figure 2262 is the correct total of the items which follow and is doubtless original... The figures in the other authorities [manuscripts] (2656 SPL Lat., 1656 Zonaras, 1056 Epitome) are due to conformation, partial or complete, to the Hebrew text of Genesis (1931, p. 38, n. d).

Thackeray accepts the 188 reading in *Ant.* 1.87 for Lamech's *ba*, which agrees with the summation figure of 2262 years (cf. Niese and von Destinon 2008, p. 28; Feldman 2000, p. 31, n. 201). Both the epochal summation (2262) and the correlating individual *ba* are found in manuscript O, considered one of the best witnesses of Josephus. The singular 1656 reading from the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD Chronicle of Zonaras is based on a now unknown MS of Josephus (Feldman 2000, p. XXXVIII), and is undoubtedly a corruption to conform *Ant.* 1.82 to the MT.

If 182 is Lamech's original *ba* (“82” in MSS S, P, and L), then it would reduce the years in *Ant.* 1.82 from 2262 to 2256. The figure of 2256 is unknown in witnesses of Josephus. I propose it was changed to 2656 by scribal error, where the “600” was accidentally picked up from Noah's age at the start of the Flood just two verses prior in *Ant.* 1.80 (Jackson 1752, p. 46, n. 88). 2656 in *Ant.* 1.87 is found in 4 MSS (S, P, L and Lat.; Niese et. al. 2008, p. 20), the same witnesses that contain [1]82/182 for Lamech's *ba*. The figure of 2656 is *not* the result of attempted conformity to the MT's 1656.

The 2656 reading originated by accident from 2256 in an archetype that preceded the four later MSS in which it appears. Both 2262 and 2256 correspond with extant individual *ba* found in *Ant.* 1.83–87, and closely match the sum of the numbers found in LXX Gen 5. The difference is found in Lamech's *ba*. Since Josephus himself and modern scholars state that he used a Genesis Hebrew text, 2256 is the original pre-Flood calculation in *Ant.* 1.82. It requires 182 for Lamech's *ba*, which only appears in Hebrew texts (*LAB*, MT) and not in any LXX MSS (Wevers 1974b, p. 107). This is confirmed even further by the appearance of 707 for Lamech's lifespan in all MSS of Josephus, almost surely the result of the 70 (ἑβδομήκοντα) dropping out in the very early stages of its textual transmission (Feldman 2000, p. 32, n. 223). It was 777 originally, matching the MT and inferred in *LAB*. No MSS of Josephus match the LXX's lifespan of 753, and 707 (or 777) cannot be reconstructed back into 753 in Greek via scribal error(s). The 777 year lifespan for Lamech serves as the most convincing evidence that Josephus was using a Genesis Hebrew text for the longer primeval chronology, not the LXX. [Future research will significantly expand upon this argument].

For the post-Flood epoch, *Ant.* 1:148 reads: “...Abraham... was born in the 992nd year after the deluge.” Manuscripts R and O contain 992 years (Niese and von Destinon, p. 28), and are often considered superior witnesses to Books 1–10 of *Antiquities* (Nodet 1997, p. 158, n. 12). *Ant.* 1:149–150 contain the higher individual *ba*, so the 992-year reading is correct, and is the only one that makes sense of the context. Thackeray concludes:

[Following] Niese's two principle MSS. R and O: the figure here given is approximately the total of the figures that follow... and is doubtless original. The reading of the other MSS. (292) has been taken over from the Hebrew Bible [MT] (1931, p. 72, n. h).

Codices M, S, P, L, Epitome, and Latin read “292,” 700 years short of the sum of the individual *ba* that immediately follow it. An examination of MSS of *Ant.* 1:149–50 support the 992-year post-Flood chronology, exposing the 292-year readings as wide-scale attempts to conform Josephus' chronology to the MT. Josephus begins with Terah, working his way back to the Flood. He places the birth of Abraham in Terah's 70<sup>th</sup> year, a number found in all witnesses. (We will return to Nahor in a moment). In *Ant.* 1:149, Serug fathered Nahor at age 132 (LXX/SP–130), and Reu was 130 (LXX/SP–132) when he fathered Serug. These have been accidentally transposed, and no variants match the MT. The begetting ages for Peleg, Eber, Shelah and Arpachshad all match the LXX/SP, with no variants (Niese et. al. 2008, p. 37). The absence of Kainan further confirms Josephus' use of a Genesis Hebrew text (Appendix, n. 11). The incorrect figure of “12” for Arpachshad's birth year after the Flood differs from the 2-year figure found in the MT/SP/LXX (Gen 11:10). It is surely a scribal gloss.

Nahor's original *ba* in *Ant.* 1:149 is usually considered to be 120 (Thackeray 1931, p. 73). This number diverges from the LXX/SP reading of 79 (Wevers 1974b, p. 146) and the MT (29). It is reasonable to surmise that Josephus originally wrote Nahor's *ry* of 129 accidentally (Hales, pp. 301–302; Wevers 1974b, p. 147). Or, his Hebrew MS contained an erroneous reading of 129 from a scribal error. 129 then became 120 by scribal error in the transmission of *Antiquities* (Hughes, p. 248, n. 16). If we accept 129 as the original number in Josephus, and we correct Arpachshad's birth year after the Flood from twelve to two, then the individual begetting ages add up exactly to 992, vindicating Josephus' original epochal summary found in MSS R and O of *Ant.* 1:148.

Despite the difficulties with reconstructing Nahor's *ba*, the total evidence from Josephus undoubtedly supports the longer chronology. Only 129 for Nahor's *ba*, combined with the higher *ba* unanimously attested in all extant MSS of *Ant.* 1:149–50, can explain the 992-year epochal summation figure in MSS R and O. Moreover, statements by Josephus himself cannot possibly be reconciled with a 292-year time span from Abraham back to the Flood (Hayes, pp. 66–69). The 292-year reading is not original, and should be recognized as a widespread and “palpable forgery” (Hales, p. 294).

One final piece of evidence confirms the longer chronology was in Josephus' Greek and Hebrew texts of Gen 5/11. I have argued that the MT's shorter chronology did not exist in biblical MSS of Genesis before 70 AD. However, some of the MT/SP begetting ages in Gen 5 do appear in the artificial primeval chronology of *Jubilees*. These begetting ages found in *Jubilees* were not derived from the Genesis text but were invented by the author to create a jubilees based chronology. *Jubilees* is the original source of the shorter pre-Flood chronology, not the Genesis text (Smith Jr. 2018; Appendix, n. 3). Halpern–Amaru has shown that Josephus was familiar with and used the *Book of Jubilees* (2001). If so, he would

have been familiar with the shorter antediluvian chronology (1307 years) found in it. However, he did not use any of the begetting ages in *Jubilees* that match the MT/SP, he used the longer chronology found in his Hebrew text of Genesis instead.

### Summary of the External Witnesses to Gen 5/11

A text-critical analysis of the extant MSS of *Antiquities* debunks the claim that Josephus was confused, or that he had both the longer and shorter chronologies in his possession simultaneously, or that his original chronology matched the MT. While Josephus also utilized the LXX at times, his endorsement of the longer primeval chronology shows there was no conflict between his Hebrew and Greek texts of Gen 5/11. Josephus' hellenizing of names in Gen 5/11 directly from the Hebrew, the manuscript evidence for *Antiquities*, detailed studies by Josephus scholars, Lamech's 182 and 707/777, the absence of Kainan, and the 5000-year statements all converge to demonstrate that Josephus possessed a Genesis Hebrew text with the longer chronology.

The other external witnesses to Gen 5/11—*LAB*, Eupolemus, and Demetrius—affirm the existence of the longer chronology in both Hebrew and Greek texts in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD and earlier. Before the destruction of the Temple, only one witness contains begetting ages unique to the short chronology of the MT (and Gen 5 SP): the chronologically fabricated *Book of Jubilees*.

### TEXT CRITICAL RECONSTRUCTION OF GENESIS 5 AND 11

We will now briefly summarize five main areas of textual reconstruction for Genesis 5 and 11. The proposed original numbers appear in Table 4.

#### 1. The Genesis 5 Lifespans

These figures serve as the foundational entry point for the textual reconstruction of Gen 5/11. We first note the significance of the unified witness for the lifespans of Adam through Mahalalel, then Enoch, in MT/LXX/SP (Table 1). Jared and Methuselah's lifespans match in LXX/MT. Lamech's 777 is found in the MT, Josephus, and *LAB*. Josephus provides external attestation for the correct lifespans, while *LAB* does so indirectly with the addition of its *ba* and *ry* (Table 3). Combined together, these lifespan witnesses serve to establish a singular textual origin for Genesis 5.

#### 2. The Matching Begetting Ages in the LXX—LAB—Josephus of Genesis 5

Table 3 presents the triple witness to the original *ba* for Gen 5. *LAB*'s *ry* match the LXX and are consistent with the *ba* and lifespans found in LXX/Josephus. The SP has been deliberately and severely deflated down to 1307 years, matching the artificial chronology of *Jubilees* (Appendix, n. 3; Smith, Jr. 2018). The MT's chronology has been deflated by the rabbis by exactly 600 years (2256 to 1656). The epochal summation figure of 2256 years is affirmed by *Antiquities* 1.82 and the manual addition of *LAB*'s *ba* figures.

#### 3. Unanimously Attested, Original Numbers

Noah's age at the Flood (600, 601), *ba* (500), *ry* (350) and lifespan (950) are unanimously attested in LXX/MT/SP. Josephus notes Noah's 600<sup>th</sup> year when the Flood began, and his lifespan (*Ant.* 1:80, 87). *LAB* 5:8 records his lifespan (*Jub.* 10:16) and years after the Flood (350). Shem's *ba* (100), *ry* (500), the phrase “two

**Table 4.** The Proposed Original Numbers in Genesis 5 and 11 (See Appendix for notes).

Patriarch	Genesis Citations	Begetting Age	Remaining Years	Lifespan
Adam	4:25; 5:3-5	230	700	930
Seth	4:26; 5:6-8	205	707	912
Enosh	5:9-11	190	715	905
Kenan	5:12-14	170	740	910
Mahalalel	5:15-17	165	730	895
Jared	5:18-20	162	800	962
Enoch	5:21-23	165	200	365
Methuselah	5:25-27	187	782	969
Lamech	5:28-31	182	595	777
Noah	5:32; 7:6,11; 8:13-14; 9:24; 9:28-29; 10:21	500/(502)	After the Flood 350	950
Shem	11:10-11	100/2 Years After the Flood	500	
Arpachshad	11:12-13	135	430 <sup>5</sup>	
Kainan	11:13b-14b	130	330 <sup>11</sup>	
Shelah	11:14-15	130	403 <sup>6</sup>	
Eber	11:16-17	134	370 <sup>7</sup>	
Peleg	11:18-19	130	209	
Reu	11:20-21	132	207	
Serug	11:22-23	130	200	
Nahor	11:24-25	79	129	
Terah	11:26, 32 12:1-4; Acts 7:2-4	70/(130)	(75)	205

years after the Flood” (Gen. 11:10), and Terah's *ba* of 70 (*Ant.* 1.149; *LAB* 4:17) are all attested in the LXX/MT/SP. Like the Gen 5 lifespans, these numbers strongly anchor all three textual witnesses back to one original source. These numbers (and those for Methuselah and Lamech) were left unaltered by the rabbis in the proto-MT because of the chronological problems that would have resulted from deflating them.

#### 4. The Matching Begetting Ages in the LXX—SP—Josephus of Genesis 11

Apart from Kainan (Appendix, n. 11), the *ba* in the LXX/SP match each other exactly from Arpachshad to Terah (Table 1). They are affirmed in detail and in summary by a third, independent external witness: Josephus' Hebrew text of Genesis. The primeval chronologies of Eupolemus (Greek/Hebrew) and Demetrius (Greek) must necessarily include the higher *ba* as well. The rabbis deflated the post-Flood chronology in the proto-MT by exactly 650 years.

#### 5. The Dual Witness of the Remaining Years in Gen 11 LXX/MT

When the rabbis deflated selected *ba* in Gen 5, they had to inflate each corresponding *ry* by 100 years to keep the original lifespans intact (Table 1). However, there were no lifespans in the original,



inspired text of Gen 11. Although the rabbis deflated the *ba* by 100 years each (and Nahor by 50 years), they did not need to inflate the *ry* because there were no lifespans to serve as a checksum. They had no reason to amend the *ry*, so they left them intact in Gen 11.

After accounting for accidental scribal errors, I propose that each *ry* in Gen 11 MT reflects the original numbers, and MSS of the LXX also preserve the original *ry*. When reconstructed text-critically, each *ry* in LXX/MT Gen 11 can be shown to have originally matched (Appendix, nn. 4–8). These agreements provide corroborating evidence for the longer chronology in Gen 11, and powerfully support the claim that the rabbis deflated the MT's primeval chronology.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have proposed a theory of textual reconstruction for the numbers in Genesis 5 and 11 based on text critical and internal evidences, Septuagint studies, ancient testimonies, and external witnesses. The LXX's primeval chronology, with a Creation date of *ca.* 5554 BC and a Flood date of *ca.* 3298 BC, has the strongest evidence favoring its originality.

Based on the totality of the evidence, I respectfully encourage conservative evangelicals to immediately abandon three prevailing dogmas:

### 1. Any LXX inflation hypothesis.

**2. Inflexible adherence to Ussher's Creation date of 4004 BC or similar dates based on the MT's primeval chronology.** *The MT's numbers can no longer be treated as if they are the only possible original texts of Scripture in Genesis 5 and 11.* At minimum, the longer chronology needs to be welcomed back into the discussion, as it had been for 2000 years. The LXX should receive a fair and judicious hearing, not dogmatic and superficial dismissals.

**3. Apologetic arguments which advocate the radical revision of non-carbon-14 based archaeological dates in the Ancient Near East in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> millennia BC to reconcile them with a *ca.* 2400 BC Flood date.** (Re)dating the Flood to *ca.* 3298 BC (based on a 2166 BC birth date for Abraham) provides a biblically grounded pre-Abrahamic chronological framework for assessing archaeological evidence. I propose that the prospective redating of pre-Abrahamic archaeological periods should be done within the context of the LXX's post-Flood chronology, not the MT's.

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## APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL NOTES AND DATA

1. The “begetting age” refers to the precisely designated year that the patriarch fathered the named descendent, that is, the year of his birth (Sexton 2015; 2018a, 2018b). a. The MT's total of 2008 years consists of 1656 years from Adam to the Flood (including 182 for Lamech's begetting age), and 352 years from the Flood to Abraham. The birth of Abraham occurs in the 130<sup>th</sup> year of Terah's life, based on a matrix of texts. b. The SP's antediluvian epoch is 1307 years, mimicking the *Book of Jubilees* (n. 3; Smith Jr. 2018). The SP's post-Flood calculation of 942 years mirrors the LXX, except for the omission of Kainan (130 years) and the SP's deliberate reduction of Terah's lifespan to 145 (n. 9). c. The LXX's total of 3394 years entails 2262 years from Adam to the Flood, and 1132 years from the Flood to Abraham's birth in Terah's 130<sup>th</sup> year. It includes Kainan, and 188 for Lamech's begetting age. Wevers' textual reconstruction of the LXX will be followed, unless otherwise indicated. [Codex Vaticanus is not considered, as Gen 1–46:27 was added in the 15<sup>th</sup> century AD in miniscule

form (Wevers, 1974a, p. 33)]. d. Ussher's BC dates entail the MT's 2008-year figure, the “short” Egyptian Sojourn of 215 years, 480 years from the Exodus to the Temple, and 390 years for the divided kingdom period. e. The BC Creation and Flood dates derived from the LXX Gen 5/11 assume a 2166 BC birth date for Abraham.

2. An explanation for the discrepancies between the MT (182, 595, 777) and LXX (188, 565, 753) for Lamech is complex. Lamech's LXX numbers likely arose in the original Greek translation from an inadvertent error while the translator was reading the Hebrew text, immediately followed by a two-stage and deliberate emendation to correct the chronological matrix. The MT's readings are original and are externally affirmed by *LAB* and Josephus.

3. The SP begetting ages for Jared (62), Methuselah (67) and Lamech (53) have been deliberately changed to conform with *Jubilees* (ca. 160–140 BC origin). The antediluvian chronology of the SP mirrors *Jubilees*, which imposes an artificial chronological framework onto the biblical text to create a schematic history spanning 50 cycles of jubilees (49 years each), totaling 2450 years from Adam to the Conquest (*Jub.* 50:4). Segal writes:

The chronological framework of jubilees and weeks is common to other works of the Second Temple period that divide world history into eras of pre-determined length. Underlying all of them is the idea of periodization: at the end of a pre-defined length of time, the world returns to its primordial state... It is possible to demonstrate that the chronological framework [of *Jubilees*] was *superimposed* upon the already existing stories (p. 84, emphasis added).

The jubilean scheme forced the author to also alter the *ry* and lifespans of Jared (785, 847), Methuselah (653, 720) and Lamech (600, 653) to prevent them from living through the Flood. Jerome's SP MSS with the correct numbers for Methuselah (MT/LXX: 187, 782, 969) and Lamech (MT/*LAB*: 182) are proof that the now extant SP was deliberately reduced to mimic *Jubilees*, and not vice-versa. There is no other logical explanation for the SP's numbers in Genesis 5. *Jubilees*' artificial chronological structure verifies that its begetting ages did not originate from a Hebrew, biblical text of Gen 5/11. By its very nature, *Jubilees* discredits the *ba* in the SP (and MT) of Gen 5 which match it (Smith Jr., 2018).

4. Gen 11 MT retains the original *ry* figures except for scribal errors (see below). The lifespan figures in Gen 11 SP from Shem to Nahor are secondary harmonizations and were not part of the original, inspired text. Therefore, they cannot serve as a basis for textual reconstruction of Genesis 11 [contra Cosner and Carter (p. 103–104) and Shaw (p. 68)]. The *ry* figures from Arpachshad to Nahor in Gen 11 SP have been deliberately deflated (Smith Jr., 2018), and have no external attestation prior to Eusebius (ca. AD 310). Since the *ry* figures in Gen 11 SP are incorrect, the lifespans in Gen 11 SP, except for Shem, are also incorrect.

5. Almost all LXX MSS read 430 or 330 for Arpachshad's *ry* (Wevers 1974b, p. 144). The LXX translators most likely had a Hebrew *Vorlage* with 430. The proto-MT could easily have lost the suffix ׁ at the end of “30” in “430,” accidentally making it into 403. 330 comes from a simple scribal gloss from 430 in Greek (Shaw, p. 68). The SP was deflated to 303.

6. Several potential reconstructions exist for the *ry* for Shelah. A few LXX MSS read 403, matching the MT. I slightly favor 403, but 430 is also possible. If 430 is original, the accidental loss of  $\sigma$  could easily account for the MT's present reading (Shaw, p. 68). 430 does not appear in LXX MSS (one reads 450). 330 appears in several LXX MSS (Wevers 1974b, p. 144), and could have easily arisen from an original 430 in Greek (Shaw, p. 68). Getting from an original 330 in Hebrew to the 403 in the present MT is possible, but more difficult than these other scenarios. Any of these resolutions to Shelah's *ry* can illustrate agreement between the MT/LXX. The SP has been deflated to 303.

7. Eber's 430 is a scribal error in the MT and was originally 370, preserved in some LXX MSS (Hendel, p. 73), and detected in the SP's 100-year deflation to 270. It is also possible 430 was accidentally picked up from Arpachshad's original *ry*, or from Shelah's (possible) 430 that was in the MT prior to its accidental change to 403 (nn. 5–6 above).

8. The *ry* for Nahor in the MT (119) or LXX (129) could be explained in either direction as a minor scribal error. I slightly favor 129.

9. The SP amended Terah's lifespan to 145 to "fix" the chronological matrix involving Abraham's birth, his call to and departure for Canaan, and the end of Terah's life. The reading is (almost) universally considered secondary (Hendel, p. 74).

10. No textual reconstruction can make *LAB* compatible with the lower *ba* or higher *ry* in the MT/SP. (1) Seth's *ba* is presently 105, but is explained by a scribal error: CCV (205) in Latin to CV (105). This is affirmed by Seth's *ry*, 707. Seth's lifespan (707+205) would then equal 912 years, extant in the MT/LXX/SP. (2) Enosh's *ba* changed from 190 to 180 in the Latin text. His *ry* (715) matches the LXX. (3) Kenan's *ry* changed from 740 to 730. His *ba* reads 520 in Latin (DXX), an obvious scribal error from CLXX (170). (4) Jared's *ba* slightly changed from 162 (CLXII) to 172 (CLXXII). (5) Lamech's *ry* slightly changed from 595 to 585. (6) Noah's *ba* is 300, obviously a scribal error. The original reading was 500, supported by all other witnesses. (Hughes, p. 251; Jacobson, pp. 286–288; Harrington 1983, pp. 304–307).

11. Kainan's (Gen 11:13b–14b; cf. Luke 3:36) absence in the MT/SP is often used to discredit the LXX's entire primeval chronology. This is a *non-sequitur*. Josephus and numerous church fathers (Julius Africanus, Theophilus of Antioch, and Eusebius) accepted the longer chronology, but did not include Kainan (Tanner 2015, p. 33–35).

a. Kainan's originality in LXX Genesis 11 is virtually indisputable, appearing in nearly all LXX MSS, including the earliest and most significant witnesses:

Papyri 911 – late 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD

Codex Alexandrinus (A) – 5<sup>th</sup> century AD

Codex Cottonianus (D) – 5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> century AD

Codex Coislinianus (M) – 7<sup>th</sup> century AD

Papyri 833 – an uncial palimpsest, 8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> century AD (Wevers 1974b, p. 144; 23, 24, 26)

b. Kainan's alleged "addition" to LXX Gen 11 by the Alexandrian translators is usually bound to the now discredited LXX inflation

hypotheses (Shaw, pp. 86–88).

c. Kainan's *ba* of 130 is necessary for Demetrius' post-Flood chronology (Shaw pp. 90–91), indicating Kainan was in Demetrius' LXX Gen 11 MS, less than 70 years from the original translation.

d. The story of Kainan appears between Arpachshad and Shelah in *Jubilees* (8:1–6). Steinmann claims Kainan was added to *Jubilees* by Christian scribes after the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD (2017, p. 711), over four centuries after its date of origin. However, Kainan must be original to *Jubilees* for its jubilean based chronology to work. Kainan's 57-year begetting age is integral to the Adam–Conquest chronology of 2450 years (*Jub* 50:4). Establishing this exact date was a central goal of the author. The alleged addition centuries later would have disrupted the entire timeline, and there is not one shred of manuscript evidence for it. Kainan was therefore in the Genesis text being used by the author of *Jubilees* in ca. 160 BC.

e. Kainan's independent witness in *Jubilees* and Demetrius (necessarily implied) disproves the theory that Kainan originated as a scribal error in a single MS of Luke 3:36 (Sarfati 2004). Steinmann (p. 711) claims that Kainan was then universally interpolated by Christian scribes back into Syriac and Ethiopic MSS of *Jubilees*, and also into every known manuscript of LXX Gen 11 and Luke 3:36 across the entire Mediterranean world. Kainan's appearance in LXX papyrus 911 (late 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD; Wevers 1974b, p. 23) alone repudiates this theory.

f. While Kainan *might* be absent in MS  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$  of Luke 3:36 ( $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$  is very fragmentary and in poor condition for Luke 3:36), its only corroborating witness is Codex Bezae. Kainan appears in 40-plus NT manuscripts of Luke 3:36. While  $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$  needs to be examined more closely, its age alone is insufficient to reject Kainan.

g. Since Kainan was in LXX Gen 11 originally, it was in the Hebrew *Vorlage* being used by the Alexandrian translators. Thus, Kainan must have dropped out of another main stream of the Hebrew textual tradition by accident, likely during the Babylonian Exile. With one slip of the eye and by writing from memory for a small section of text, Kainan could have completely been dropped out of the Hebrew text inadvertently. The vocabulary and numbers are very repetitive in Gen 11, increasing the possibility of this kind of error. Once the omission took root, Hebrew scribes removed Kainan from Gen 10:24 and I Chronicles 1:18, 24 to harmonize them with Gen 11.

h. Kainan is absent in Josephus and *LAB*, further affirming both works used a Hebrew text of Genesis and not the LXX. These omissions indicate that Kainan fell out of a major Hebrew archetype (at minimum) prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, since he does not appear in MT/SP Gen 11 either. I propose Kainan was preserved in an archetypal Hebrew text that eventually led independently to both Gen 11 LXX (then Demetrius) and *Jubilees*.

i. Kainan's witness in both LXX Gen 10:22, 24 and I Chronicles 1:18, 24 is best described as messy (Ray, pp. 35–36, n. 1). It is probably impossible to reconstruct exactly what happened in the transmissional history. Scribes and translators would have compared their LXX MSS to Hebrew text(s) and other known LXX MSS, then added or removed Kainan depending upon whether they thought his name was original. The LXX was (re)copied and

occasionally re-translated over several centuries, increasing the complexity of the problem. The knotty textual situation is exactly what one might expect because of Kainan's accidental omission from an early Hebrew archetypal MS. Instead of being definitive evidence against Kainan's originality, the textual mess serves to support a larger argument in favor of his inclusion.

For now, my working theory is that Kainan is original to Genesis 10:24, 11:13-14, and Luke 3:36, unless evidence and analysis moves the research into a different direction. While the question of Kainan is significant, *it must be reiterated that the originality of the longer chronology is not dependent on Kainan's inclusion in Gen 10, 11 or Luke 3:36.*