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The Chronology of the Pentateuch (Part 2)

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(We are discussing the meaning of the phrase "cutting off of days" in Genesis 4:3, showing that it implies the turn of the year in autumn.)

Two passages use the term "cutting off of years" to refer to the lunar year, beginning in the Spring.

Exodus 12:41 - at the cutting off of the 430 years. This event was on the 15th day of the first month, the seventh month of the solar year. It was "to the very day" that Israel had entered Egyptian dominion, referring back to Abram's entrance into the land in Genesis 12. Thus, Abram entered Canaan, and came under Egyptian hegemony, on the 15th day of the first month.

Gen. 16:3 - at the cutting off of 10 years. **Ishmael** was conceived, and he was born the same year (the eleventh year). If the "cutting off" time had been in the autumn, this would be after literally 9% years of living in the land. Abram was 75 when he left Haran and entered the land (Gen. 12:4) and 86 when **Ishmael** was born (Gen. 16: 16). Abram would have to have been 85 when **Ishmael** was conceived, if this happened in autumn. **He** might have turned 86 by the time of **Ishmael's** birth the following summer, but he would only have just turned 86, for in the spring of that year he would still have been 85. It is thus more likely that the cutting off of 10 years means 10 full years from the spring of 2083, when Abram entered the land. **Ishmael's** birth in the winter of the following year gives us six more months for Abram to turn 86. Moreover, as we shall see later on, Sarah conceived Isaac "at the time of reviving" of the year, in the spring (Gen. 18: 14). We cannot be certain about Genesis 16:3, but the few indications we have point more to the spring than to the fall.

Let us now examine the remaining instances of this phrase:

Gen. 41:1 - at the cutting off of two full years. This was two full years after Pharaoh dealt with his baker and cupbearer. His visions concerned harvests, and might thus

have come at the end of the year, or in the spring. This is, however, the end of a definite period of time.

1 Ki. 17:7 - at the cutting off of days. Elijah's brook dried up. This might indicate the turn of the year, after a summer of heat, but it might not. Unlike Genesis 4:3, where precisely the same phrase is used, there is no indication of a harvest.

2 Chron. 18:2 - at the cutting off of years. **Jehoshaphat** visited Ahab, who put on a feast for him. Giving the royal context, and that the kings measured their rules by the solar year, this phrase hints that it was at the turn of the year, in autumn.

Neh. 13:6 - at the cutting off of days. After his time of service at court, Nehemiah asked to return to Jerusalem. There is no hint that this phrase indicates a set time of the year, but simply that after a time Nehemiah asked to return. Here again, however, the phrase does indicate the end of a definite period of time.

What we have seen is that "at the cutting off of days/years" indicates the end of a definite period of time, usually explicitly defined in the text. We have also seen that it very often refers to the turn of the solar/national year in autumn, especially when associated with harvests. We are on very good ground, therefore, in seeing it referring to the end of the solar year in Genesis 4:3, especially since harvest is in view.

The Day of Atonement and the Feast of **Ingathering** came in the seventh (sabbath) month, at the end of all harvests. Extrapolating backwards from information given at Sinai, and remembering that Moses put Genesis in its final form, we may readily imagine that Cain and Abel brought their sacrifices in the seventh month. According to Exodus 23: 16; 34:22; and Leviticus 25:8-10, the year ended in the seventh month. Thus the first month of the solar year was the seventh month of the lunar year, for the cycle of lunar months began in the spring with the first month (Ex. 12:2). (The Bible speaks of the day as begin-

morning, one day. " Similarly the year begins around the autumnal equinox, as the year darkens.)

Thus, it seems most likely that Cain and Abel offered their sacrifices at the end of the **sixth** or at the beginning of the seventh month, **at** the end of the solar year.

If this is the "cutting off of days, " then the beginning of days would be in autumn, in the seventh month. Thus, we can suppose that the creation of the world, recorded in Genesis 1, took place in autumn.

The first month was determined by the vernal equinox. The new moon nearest the equinox began the first month. Thus, the seventh month came near the autumnal equinox. The creation of the world probably took place near or at the autumnal equinox. This would be the first month of the solar year.

4. The Chronology of Genesis 4 & 5

Elsewhere I have shown that there are not and cannot be any gaps in the chronology of Genesis 5. The sons born may not be the firstborn, as Seth was not Adam's firstborn, and though Shem is mentioned first in Gen. **5:32**, he was not the oldest. The son whose name is given, and to whom the chronology is attached, is the "patriarchy -bearer."

There are seven generations from Adam to **Lamech** on Cain's side, and seven from Adam to **Enoch** on Seth's side. If we assume that the births of relevant generations correspond, which may not be the case, we can assume that **Enoch's** prophecies were directed in part against **Lamech's** behavior. The chronology is as follows:

- 1st O - Adam created
125? - Cain kills Abel
- 2d 130- Seth born
- 3d 140? - **Enoch** ben Cain born. (I have given Cain 15 years to move and settle down before having children, and thus I am spacing his line in each case ten years after those in preceding generation of Seth's. Of course, Cain might have given birth to **Enoch** long before he slew Abel, and the **Cainitic** line might be much more compact than that of Seth. There is no hard evidence for my suppositions here.)
235- Enosh born
- 4th 245? - Irad born
325- Kenan born
- 5th 335? - **Mehujael** born
396- **Mahalalel** born
- 6th 406? - **Methushael** born
460- **Jared** born
- 7th 470? - **Lamech** ben **Methushael** born
622- Enoch ben **Jared** born
- 8th 632? - **Jabel, Jubal, Tubal -cain** born
687- Methuselah born
- 9th 874- **Lamech** ben Methuselah born
930- Adam died
987- **Enoch** translated
1042- Seth died
- 10th 1056- Noah born
1140- Enosh died
1235- Kenan died

1422- **Jared** died

1536- Beginning of 120 years of grace (**Gen.6:3**)

1556- **Japheth** born (**5:32;10:21**)

1558- Shem born (**7:6;11:10**)

1560? - Ham born (9:24). We do **not** know when Ham was born, only that he was the youngest.

1651 - **Lamech** ben Methuselah died

1656- The Flood; Methuselah died

1657- End of Flood (1657 is 33 jubilees of 50 years each plus 7 years, for a total of **40** periods of time.)

5. The Chronology of the Flood Year

The first difficulty to address here is that some have posited a 360 day year before the Flood. Supposedly this is proved by the fact that 5 months (**Gen. 7:11 + 8:4**) equals 150 days (**Gen. 8:3**). The following stand against this:

1. The 150 might be a round number for 147 actual lunar days.

2. Noah might have been unable to see the new moon **while** in the Ark, and thus would have measured out 30-day months until he was again able to take measurements, at which time he would have adjusted the calendar.

3. Noah entered the ark on the 17th day of the 2d month, and exited on the 27th day of the 2d month. This gives 12 lunar months, for 354 days, plus 11 days, to **equal** a solar year. **Gen. 7:11&8:14**.

4. The number 365 occurs in the numerology of the early chapters of Genesis in two ways:

a. It is the number of years Enoch lived (**Gen. 5:23**).

b. Genesis 5 tells us the age of each patriarch when the patriarchy-bearing son was born. If take **each** of these figures from Adam to **Lamech**, and divide each one by 60, and then. add together **all** the remainders, we get 156. Genesis 5 also explicitly tells us how long each patriarch lived after the patriarchy-bearing son was born - seemingly unnecessary information since we are also told his total years. If we take each of these figures from Adam to **Lamech**, and divide each one by 60, and then add together **all** the remainders, we get 209. Add these two remainders together and we get 365. Although this **kind** of numerical computation seems bizarre to modern rationalistic people, it was not strange in the ancient world, and the fact is that this kind of computation does indeed work in various places in the Bible, such as here. The full significance of what God means by this certainly eludes me! but it is **clear** that the number 365 is indeed "hidden" in the text (Prov. 25:2). (M. Barnouin, "Recherches numériques sur la généalogie de Gen 5," *Revue Biblique* 77 [1970]: 347-75; summarized in Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*. Word Biblical Commentary 1 [Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987], p. 134.)

We conclude that **there** is no evidence to substantiate the notion that the length of the year before the Flood was 360 days.

As regards the Flood year itself, it **began** in the

a good guess as to the various days of the year by taking note of the number of seven-day sequences that show up in connection with it. This indicates a sabbath pattern. We start off with the assumption, grounded in Biblical theology, that God's announcement of the Flood came on a sabbath, the **day** of judgment. This was AM 1656, month 2, day 10 (hereafter 2/10/1656), according to Genesis 7:1-4.

The actual judgment commenced on the following sabbath, 2/17/1656 (**Gen. 7:10-11**). After 40 days the rain stopped (**Gen. 7:12, 17**). If we assume a 30-day second month, we come to 3/27/1656, a Thursday. On Thursday, the fourth day, the fishes and birds were made. On this Thursday of the Flood year, only fishes and birds (surviving by lighting on floating debris) would exist on the earth. The only animals and men were in the Ark.

The waters receded and after 150 days the Ark rested (invisibly) on Mount Ararat, on 7/17/1656, which is a Tuesday, the day the dry land began to appear in Genesis 1.

The tops of the mountains became visible on 10/1/1656 (**Gen. 8:5**). Let us provisionally assume this to be a Tuesday, corresponding to the third day of creation week, when the dry land appeared. This would mean that if the tenth month was 29 days, the raven and dove sent out 40 days later (1 1/1 1/1656) were sent out on a sabbath (**Gen. 8:6-12**). The doves sent out seven and fourteen days later were also sent out on sabbaths (1 1/18/1656; 11/25/1656).

Following from this, if the eleventh month was 29 days and the twelfth was 30 days, or vice versa, then the drying of the surface of the earth and uncovering of the Ark on 1/1/1657 (**Gen. 8:13**) was on a Sunday, the first day of a new creation. Similarly, if the first month of 1657 was 30 days, then the emergence from the Ark on 2/27/1657 (**Gen. 8:14**) was also a Sunday, the eighth Sunday of the year.

We provisionally assumed above that 10/1/1656 was a Tuesday, and this is the case if we assume 29-day months for the seventh, eighth, and ninth months.

Now let us cross-check the scheme. We found reason to believe that months 2,3,4,5,6,11/12 **were** 30 days, and that 7,8,9,10, 11/12 were 29-days, with the first month of 1657 a 30-day month. This gives us a roughly 50-50 spread, which is what is required for lunar months.

6. The Rebellion of Ham

Genesis 9:20-27 records the fall of Ham. Noah, acting as a second Adam with more God-like responsibilities than the first, actually plants his own garden, in this case a vineyard. It takes several years for a vineyard to produce enough grapes to produce wine. We are told that on one occasion Noah took a sabbatical rest, drank wine, and fell asleep in his tent. This is parallel to God's withdrawal from His garden in Genesis 2:25, to **allow** Adam and Eve to get to know each other intimate] y, and to test them by His absence (cp. Gen. 3:8, where we see God's return).

Ham rebels against Noah as Adam rebelled against the fruit of the Tree

which had to do with rule and judicial authority. Ham stole Noah's robe, which had to do with the same thing. When Ham tried to enlist his brothers in his conspiracy, however, they refused to go along, and upheld their father's authority (symbolized by upholding his robe on their shoulders).

When Noah "returned" to the scene, he, like God in His garden, passed judgment. Ham was Noah's youngest son, and so Noah placed a judgment on Ham's youngest son, Canaan. Like all such judgments, this one was double-edged: Canaan would be "cursed" to be a servant of servants, but a servant of God's servants would find blessing.

In terms of chronological information, this shows us that Canaan had already been born by this time. He was Ham's fourth son (**Gen. 10:6**). We read in Genesis 11:10 that Shem's firstborn, Arpachshad, was born two years after the Flood. If we assume a child every two years, beginning two years after the Flood, then Canaan was born in the eighth year after the Flood, in 1664. (Leah's sons were born at two-year intervals; **Gen. 29:3-35**.)

7. The Date of the Tower of Babel

In the days of Peleg the earth was divided (**Gen. 10:25**, referring to the tower of Babel). Perhaps the tower of Babel incident happened about the time of Peleg's birth, but that is unlikely. We are told that the clan of Joktan, Peleg's brother, moved to the east (**Gen. 10:30**). Four verses later we read that "as they journeyed east" they came to Shinar and built the tower of Babel. In context, it seems clear that it was the Joktanites who headed up the Babelic project. This is no surprise, since the Joktanites were in the priestly line of Shem (**Gen. 9:26-27; 10:22 ff.**). Those who were supposed to lead in true worship became leaders of apostasy. Moreover, Genesis 10:6-8 may mean that Nimrod, founder of Babel, was the fourth generation from Ham, while Joktan was the fourth generation from Shem, making them contemporaries:

Ham	Shem
Cush	Arpachshad
Raamah	Shelah
Sheba or Dedan	Eber
Nimrod	Joktan

Alternatively, Nimrod might have been a late son of the long-lived Cush, and thus a contemporary of Joktan. (If Cush were the same age as Arpachshad, he would have been 101 when Joktan was born, with probably 300+ years to go; thus if Cush begat Nimrod at the age of 101, Nimrod **would** have been the same age as Joktan.)

In terms of the theology of Genesis, the call of Abram occurs in the aftermath of the judgment on the nations at the tower of Babel. Israel becomes the microcosm of a new creation, with her seventy elders a microcosm of the seventy nations of the world in Genesis 10. Thus, it is possible that the scattering at Babel happened not too long before the call of Abram. On the other hand, since the Biblical principle is that people fall into sin immediately after they are a kind "be that the

Joktanites led the nations of the world into sin sometime around the middle of **Peleg's** life. According to Biblical chronology, **Peleg** was born in AM 1757 and lived 239 years, to the year 1996. Abram was born in 2008.

The meaning of Genesis 10:25, then, is that sometime during **Peleg's** life the world was divided at Babel. Since **Peleg's** brother **Joktan** was involved in the apostasy at Babel, and it seems that his involvement came after he had begotten many sons, it is likely that the Babel incident happened in the middle or later part of **Peleg's** life. For aesthetic reasons I shall arbitrarily put the division of the nations in AM 1871 (midway between the Flood and Abram's exodus from Egypt, on which see below).

If Nimrod was born around 1759, as I have suggested, then he had plenty of time to grow up, gather men around him as a "mighty hunter," and found a city, Babel. If the fall of Babel came in 1871, then **after** this Nimrod went forth to found Assyria (**Gen.** 10:8-12).

8. The Chronology of Genesis 11

There can be no gaps in this chronology either. The following are the dates:

- 1558- Shem born. Shem died when Abraham was 150.
He outlived Sarah by 13 years. Isaac and **Rebekah** had been married **10** years.
- 1658 - Arpachshad born to **Shem**, 2 years after Flood (**Gen.** 11: 10). Abram was 86 when **Arpachshad** died, and **Ishmael** was 2 years old.
- 1693- **Shelah** born. **Shelah** died when Abraham was 118.
- 1723 - Eber born. Eber outlived "Abram the Hebrew [**Eberite**]" 4 yrs. Jacob and Esau were 19 when Eber died.
- 1757- **Peleg** born
- 1787- Reu born
- 1819- **Serug** born
- 1849- **Nahor** born
- 187 1? - Tower of Babel
- 1878- Terah born
- 1948- **Birth** either of Haran or **Nahor** hen Terah (see below)
 - 1996- **Peleg** died
 - 1997- **Nahor** died
 - 2006- Noah died
- 2008- Abram born (see below)
 - 2026- Reu died
 - 2049- **Serug** died
 - 2083- **Terah** died

Genesis 11:26 says that Terah lived 70 years and begat Abram, **Nahor**, and Haran. Compare to **Genesis 5:32**, which says that Noah begat Shem, Ham, and Japh-

eth. We know from Genesis 11:10 that Shem was 100 years old 2 years after the Flood, which came in Noah's 600th year, so that Shem was obviously not the firstborn. He was born when Noah was 602, even though as patriarchy-bearer he is listed first. According to Genesis 10:21, **Japheth** was the eldest. That makes Ham the youngest.

By means of parallelism, we can suggest that of **Terah's** sons, Haran was the eldest, born when **Terah** was 70 years old, and **Nahor** the youngest. **Nahor** married one of Haran's daughters (**Gen.** 12:29), and Haran died well before the other two sons did (**Gen.** 12:28).

Acts 7:4 tells us that Abram did not leave the city of Haran until Terah had died. Genesis 12:4 says that Abram was 75 at that time. Genesis 11:32 says that Terah died at 205. Thus, Abram was born when Terah was 130. This solution was first noted by Ussher, and so commentaries preceding his work do not take it up. Amazingly, many modern commentators also do not follow **Ussher** on this point, although the arithmetic is simple and frankly inescapable. We can only assume that many modern commentators do not read very widely when they write their commentaries, and also cannot do arithmetic.

Problem: In Genesis 17:17, Abraham laughed and said, "Shall a child be born to a man who is 100 years old?" If Abraham had been born when **Terah** was 130, why would he have a problem believing in a **birth** at 100? On the basis of this, some have suggested that **Terah** was not dead when Abram left Haran, and that Acts 7:4 should be taken spiritually: **Terah** was **dead** to Abram.

This won't hold up, however. Years later, Abraham married **Keturah** and had more sons. Clearly Abram's laughter in Gen. 17:17 is not related to any feeling of impotence, but to the humor in the situation: a childless man finally having a son at the age of 100. More to the point is the second phrase of 17:17, "And shall Sarah, who is 90 years old, bear a son?" Sarah was past the age of childbearing (**Gen.** 18:11). At any rate, Abraham's marriage to **Keturah** shows that he had no problem with the idea of having children in his old age.

A second "problem" is that if we assume Abram was born when **Terah** was 70, then the arrival of Abram in Canaan at 75 happens 365 years after the birth of **Arpachshad**. Neat. But, of course, we wind up destroying the literary parallel between the sons of Terah and the sons of Noah. So, the purely aesthetic considerations cancel each other out. In terms of Biblical calculation based on an inerrant text, we should **allow** Acts 7:4 to carry the day.

It is, thus, far better to go with **Ussher** and other chronologists, and assume that Abram was born when Terah was 130. This is the simplest and most satisfactory explanation.