

BIBLICAL CHRONOLOGY

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The Chronology of the Pentateuch (Part 4)

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11. The **Life** of Abraham

2006- Noah dies (**Gen. 9:29**).

2008- Abram is born of Terah in Ur (**Gen. 11:26-32; 12:4; Acts 7:4**).

2026- Reu **ben Peleg** dies (**Gen. 11:20-21**).

2042? - Abram and Terah move to Haran (**Gen. 11:31-32**).

2049- Serug ben Reu dies (**Gen. 11:22-23**).

2083 - Terah ben **Nahor** dies. Abram leaves Haran and enters promised land, settling in **Shechem** (**Gen. 12:1-7**). This is the beginning of the 430 years of living under Egyptian dominion. See the discussion of Exodus **12:50** in chapter 15 below.

2084? - Abram moves to Bethel (**Gen. 12:8**).

2085? - Abram moves to the Negev; famine sends him to Egypt (**Gen. 12:9-10**).

- 2086? - ~~Pharaoh attacks Sarai, is plagued, and sends~~ Abram out with much spoil (**Gen. 12:11-20**). Abram leaves Egypt and settles in Bethel. There is strife between Lot's men and Abram's, and Lot separates from Abram (**Gen. 13:1-17**).

2087? - Abram moves to Hebron, converts Mamre, **Eshcol**, and Aner. The War of the Kings ensues. Lot is captured and rescued. Abram is afraid the kings will return. God appears to him and promises him the **land** (**Gen. 13:18; Gen. 14-15**).

2093- Sarai offers Abram forbidden fruit: Hagar. Abram accepts. Once Hagar is pregnant, she makes it clear that she will not let Sarai adopt her child. Sarai punishes Hagar, who flees. God meets her and blesses her (**Gen. 16:1-14**).

2094- **Ishmael** born (**Gen. 16: 15-16**).

2096- **Arpachshad** ben Shem dies (**Gen. 11:12-13**).

2107- In the spring God appears to Abram, changes his name to Abraham, and tells **him** to circumcise his household. God also changes Sarai to Sarah, and tells Abraham that she will have a child in twelve months "at this time next year" (**Gen. 17**).

A few days after **this**, God appears to Abram again, tells him that Sarah will bear him a child in the spring ("when the time revives"; **Gen. 18:10 & 14; cp. 2 Ki. 4:16-17**), and **announces** the destruction of the cities of the Jordan Circle. Abraham pleads for Lot's life, and is given it (**Gen. 18**). God's two angels proceed to Sodom and rescue Lot; then the cities are destroyed (**Gen. 19**). (The circumcision of the righteous is parallel to the destruction of the wicked.) **Lot** chooses not to rejoin Abraham, and his life is ruined.

The fouling of the land causes Abraham to leave it and move south toward Egypt, and then later into **Philistine** (Egyptian) territory (**Gen. 20:1**). By now it is summer.

These events have taken probably three months, which means Sarah must become pregnant immediately in order to have a son in the spring. Satan attacks by causing **Abimelech** to take her into his harem. God shuts up the wombs of **Abimelech's** household, appears to **Abimelech** and threatens him, and Sarah is returned to Abraham. Abraham settles **in Gerar** (**Gen. 20**).

2108- In the spring Sarah gives birth to Isaac in Philistine territory (**Gen. 21: 1-7**).

2113- Isaac is weaned. At the feast, Sarah sees **Ishmael** laughing. She perceives that his laughter will war against Isaac, whose name means Laughter. This event is the beginning point of the **400-years** during which the seed will live in a land not theirs (**Gen. 21:8-10; Gal. 4:30; Gen. 15:13; Acts 7:6**). In terms of the theme of Egyptian dominion over the Hebrews, note that **Ishmael** is the son of an Egyptian woman.

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and the 13-

year old **Ishmael** out. God appears to **Hagar** and tells her that He will be with **Ishmael** and bless him (**Gen. 21:11-21**).

Also during this year **Abimelech** covenants with Abraham at **Beersheba** (**Gen. 21:22-34**), and Abraham settles in Philistine territory for a long time.

2124- **Ishmael** is 30 years old. Let us assume that his firstborn son is born in this year, and his others at two year intervals. Thus, this would be the year of **Nebaioth's** birth (**Gen. 25:13**).

2126- **Shelah** hen Arpachshad dies (**Gen. 11:14-15**). **Kedar** ben **Ishmael** is born (?).

2128? - **Adbeel** hen **Ishmael** born.

2130? - God tells Abraham to take Isaac into the land, to Mount **Moriah** near **Jerusalem**, and offer him as a sacrifice. Isaac is a "youth" not a "child," so perhaps 17 or so (thus the year 2130). After sparing Isaac, God tells Abraham that he will have a vast multitude of **seed** (**Gen. 22:1-19**). This might also be the year of the **birth** of Mibsam hen **Ishmael**.

2131? - Abraham hears that his brother Nahor has had 12 sons (**Gen. 22:20-24**).

2132? - **Mishma** hen **Ishmael** born.

2134? - **Duman** hen **Ishmael** born.

2136? - **Massa** ben **Ishmael** born.

2138? - **Ha&d** hen **Ishmael** born.

2140? - **Tema** hen **Ishmael** born.

2142? - **Jetur** ben **Ishmael** born.

2144? - **Naphish** hen **Ishmael** born.

2145- Sarah dies at the age of 127 in **Hebron**, which means that Abraham had moved back into the land of promise by this time. Abraham buries her in the field at **Machpelah** in the promised land (**Gen. 23**).

2146? - **Kedemah** hen **Ishmael** born.

2148 - Abraham sends his servant to obtain a wife for Isaac, who marries **Rebekah** and takes her into Sarah's tent (**Gen. 24**). Isaac is 40 at this time (**Gen. 25:20**).

12. The Continuation of Abraham's Line

2149? - Abraham marries **Keturah** and begins to have six sons (**Gen. 25:1-6**). I shall put these children two years apart from each other, as we have done before, and the next generation will be put after 30 years, in order to get an approximate chronology.

2151? - **Zimran** ben Abraham born.

2153? - **Jokshan** ben Abraham born.

2155? - **Medan** hen Abraham born.

2157? - **Midian** ben Abraham born, the ancestor of the

Midianites.

2158- Shem ben Noah dies (**Gen. 11:10-11**).

2159? - **Ishbak** hen Abraham born.

2161? - **Shuah** ben Abraham born.

2168- Esau and Jacob born (**Gen. 25:25-26**).

2183 - Abraham dies at 175 (**Gen. 25:7**). **Sheba** hen **Jokshan** born (?).

2185? - **Dedan** hen **Jokshan** born.

2187- Eber hen **Shelah** dies (**Gen. 11:16-17**). Ephah ben Midian born (?).

2189? - Ephraim hen Midian born.

2191? - Hanoch ben Midian born.

2193? - **Abida** ben Midian born.

2195? - **Eldaah** ben Midian born.

2198- Jacob and **Esau** are 30 years old. Let us assume that around this time **Esau** despises his birthright and signs it over to Jacob (**Gen. 25:27-34**). This means that the famine and Isaac's sojourn in Philistine territory take about 10 years, at the end of which we are told of **Esau's** marriage in 2208.

2200? - A famine causes Isaac to move to Philistine territory (**Gen. 26:1-11**).

2201? - Isaac reaps a bountiful harvest (**Gen. 26:12**).

2202? - The envious Philistines drive Isaac away (**Gen. 26:13-17**).

2203? - Isaac digs wells and finally finds a place to live for a few years (**Gen. 26:18-22**).

2205? - Isaac moves to **Beersheba** (**Gen. 26:23-25**).

2207? - **Abimelech** makes a covenant with Isaac at **Beersheba** (**Gen. 26:26-33**).

2208- **Esau** marries two pagan wives, Judith bath [daughter of] **Beer** the Hittite and **Basemath** bath **Elon** the Hittite (**Gen. 26:34**). In Genesis 36:2 these two women are named Adah bath **Elon** the Hittite and **Oholibamah** bath Anah bath **Zibeon** the Hivite. So, Judith (**Praise**) is also named Adah (Pleasure), and Basemath (Fragrant) is also named **Oholibamah** (High Place Tent). **Basemath-Oholibamah** was the daughter of **Elon** the Hittite and Anah, who was the daughter of **Zibeon** the Hivite. We shall have **Esau** bear his first two sons a year later. **Esau** married a third wife in 2245.

2209? - **Eliphaz** ben Esau and **Jeush** hen **Esau** born (**Gen. 36:4-5**).

2211? - **Jalam** hen **Esau** born.

2213? - **Korah** ben Esau born.

2215? - **[Asshurim]** ben **Dedan** born.

221 7? - [**Letushim**] hen **Dedan** born.

2219? - [**Leummim**] **ben Dedan** horn.

2231- **Ishmael** dies (**Gen.** 25:17).

13. Jacob and **Esau**

The first chronological problem encountered in the story of Jacob is to figure out his age when he went to **Padan-Aram** to get a wife. He was 77 years old (and thus by no means a youth). We know this from the following data:

a. Joseph stood before Pharaoh at age 30 (**Gen.** 41:46).

b. At the end of 7 years of plenty, Joseph was 37 (**Gen.** 41:29-30).

c. At the end of 2 years of famine, when Jacob came to Egypt, Joseph was 39 (**Gen.** 45:6) and Jacob was 130 (**Gen.** 47:9).

d. -Therefore, **Jacob was 91 when** Joseph was born (130-39=91).

e. Jacob had served **Laban** 14 years when Joseph was born (**Gen.** 30:25).

f. Therefore, Jacob was 77 when he came to **Padan-Aram** (91-14=77).

The other problem for the Jacob narrative is to figure out the ages of his sons. After Joseph was born, Jacob sought to leave Haran and was persuaded to stay another 6 years (**Gen.** 30:25ff.; **31:38**, 41). Thus, Joseph was born at the end of the first 7 years of Jacob's marriage. If Joseph is the youngest son born in **Padan-Aram**, then all 7 of **Leah's** children were born during those 7 years, which is pretty much impossible. Even if we say that Dinah was born later on, which seems to have been the case from **Genesis 32:22**, we still have 6 sons born in 7 years.

There are two answers to this problem. The first is that it is, of course, barely possible, if **Leah** was passing the children on a wet nurse instead of nursing them herself (since women tend not to conceive while nursing). When we consider that **Leah** stopped bearing after the birth of **Judah**, and apparently did not conceive her last two sons until after her maid **Ziplah** had born two children, then we must have at least 8 children born in seven years before Joseph. This strains credulity to the **breaking** point.

The second answer is that this passage is not presented in strictly chronological order. The order is theological. **First** are described the ten "natural" sons, and then is described the birth of Joseph, the "miracle" son, born from a closed womb. Consider: first Abraham has a natural son, and then God opens Sarah's womb and the miracle son is born. The second born is the replacement for the **fallen** firstborn. Consider: **Rebekah** is barren, but God miraculously opens her womb. Her firstborn, **Esau**, is bad, and is **replaced** by the second-born, Jacob ("Supplanter"). Now we come to Jacob. The first ten sons are born without a miracle. They are bad, and sell Joseph into slavery. Joseph is the **second-born**, replacement son, born after the miracle. This is the **structure** of the passage.

So then, what is the **chronology**? **Leah** has four sons and stops bearing (**Gen.** 29:31-35). This easily takes up seven years, and these four sons (Reuben, **Simeon**, Levi, Judah) are older than Joseph. Early in the seven years, Rachel gives **Bilhah** to Jacob, and two sons are born (Dan & **Naphtali**; **Gen.** 30:1-8). **These** are also probably older than Joseph. After she stops bearing, **Leah** gives **Zilpah** to Jacob, and she bears two sons (Gad & Asher; **30:9-13**). These are probably younger than Joseph, born during the final six years in Haran. At some point, **Leah** begins to have children again and bears **Issachar** and **Zebulun** (30: 14-20), again during the last six years. We are told that afterward she bore Dinah.

2239? - Teman **ben Eliphaz** born (**Gen.** 36:11).

2241? - Omar hen **Eliphaz** born (**Gen.** 36:11).

2243? - **Zepho ben Eliphaz** born (**Gen.** 36:11).

~~2245 - Rekebah and Jacob trick Isaac into obeying God~~ and giving the blessing to Jacob. Jacob leaves home at age 77 to get a wife in Padan-Aram. God **appears** to him at the top of a ladder to heaven (**Gen.** 27-28). **Esau**, seeing his parents loath his first two wives, marries **Mahalath** bath **Ishmael**. Since **Ishmael** died in 2231, this was probably a child of his old age. In **Genesis 36:3**, **Mahalath** (Mild) is called **Basemath (Fragrant)**, the same as the original name of **Esau's** first wife. Possibly in this year also **Gatam ben Eliphaz** was born (**Gen.** 36: 11).

2247? - **Kenaz ben Eliphaz** born (**Gen.** 36:11).

2249? - **Amalek** hen **Eliphaz** born (**Gen.** 36:12).

2252- Jacob marries both **Leah** and Rachel.

2253? - Reuben **ben** Jacob born.

2254? - Dan hen Jacob born.

2255? - Simeon **ben** Jacob born.

2256? - **Naphtali ben** Jacob born; **Reuel** hen **Esau** born (**Gen.** 36:4).

2257? - Levi **ben** Jacob born.

2259- Judah hen Jacob born? Joseph hen Jacob born. Judah was older than Joseph.

2262? - Gad ben Jacob born.

2263? - **Issachar ben** Jacob **born**.

2264? - Asher **ben** Jacob born.

2265- **Jacob** returns to Canaan at age 99. Before leaving, **Zebulun** hen Jacob is born (?). **Laban** pursues Jacob, but is turned back by God. God **meets** Jacob and wrestles with him at **Jabbok**. Jacob meets Esau and parts from him, settling in Succoth (**Gen.** 33:17).

2266? - **Dinah** is born.

2276- Joseph, age 17, brings back a bad report on his six older brothers, has dreams, and is sold into slavery (**Gen.**

37). Judah **leaves** his brothers and marries Shua (Gen. 38:2).

2277? - Er **ben** Judah born (Gen. 38:3).

2279? - Onan ben Judah born (Gen. 38:4).

2281? - **Dinah**, age 15?, is **ravished** by the Hamor of **Shechem** when Jacob moves to **Shechem**. The city of Shechem is razed by Levi and Simeon, who are cursed by Jacob (Gen. 33:18-20; Gen. 34). Jacob moves to Bethel (Gen. 35:1-15).

2282? - Jacob moves from Bethel to **Eder**; on the way Rachel dies giving birth to Benjamin (Gen. 35:16-21).

2283? - **Hanoch ben** Reuben born (Gen. 46:9).

2284? - Reuben lies with Jacob's unendowed wife **Bilhah** (Gen. 35:22); **[Hushim]** ben Dan born (Gen. 46:23).

2285? - **Pallu** hen Reuben born (Gen. 46:9); **Jemuel** hen Simeon born (Gen. 46:10).

2286? - **Nahath** ben **Reuel** born (Gen. 36:13); **Jahzeel** ben **Naphtali** born (Gen. 46:24).

2287- Joseph, age 28, interprets the dreams of Pharaoh's baker and cupbearer, two years before he stands before Pharaoh (Gen. 40; 41:1). **Hezron** ben Reuben born; **Jamin** ben Simeon born; Gershon ben Levi born? (Gen. 46:9-11).

2288- Isaac dies at 180 (Gen. 35:28). **Zerah** hen **Reuel** born? (Gen. 36:13); Guni hen **Naphtali** born? (Gen. 46:24).

2289 - Joseph, age 30, stands before Pharaoh at the beginning of the 7 years of plenty (Gen. 41:46). **Carmi** ben Reuben born; Ohad hen **Simeon** born; **Kohath** ben Levi born (Gen. 46:9-11).

2290? - **Shammah** ben **Reuel** born (Gen. 36:13); **Manasseh** hen Joseph born (Gen. 41:50-51); **Jezer** ben **Naphtali** born (Gen. 46:24).

2291? - **Jachin** ben Simeon born; Merari ben Levi born (Gen. 46:10-11).

2292? - **Mizzah** ben **Reuel** born (Gen. 35:13); **Ziphion** ben Gad born (Gen. 46:16); **Ephraim** ben Joseph born (Gen. 41:52); **Shillem** hen **Naphtali** born (Gen. 46:24).

2293? - **Zohar** ben Simeon born; **Tola ben Issachar** born (Gen. 46:10, 13). **Shelah** hen Judah born (Gen. 38:5, 11). If Er married at 30, and was killed by God, then Onan would have been, say, 28 when he also was killed. **Shelah** at that time was underage, below 20. Tamar was asked to wait for him to grow up. We are here making **Shelah** 14 years younger than **Onan**, or 14 years old when Onan was killed. See discussion below in section 14 (next issue).

2294? - Haggi hen Gad born; **Imnah** hen Asher born (Gen. 46:16-17).

2295? - **Shaul** hen Simeon born; **Puvvah** ben **Issachar** born; Sered ben **Zebulun** born (Gen. 46:10, 13, 14).

2296- End of the 7 years of plenty. **Shuni** hen Gad born; **Ishvah** ben Asher born? (Gen. 46:16-17).