

BIBLICAL CHRONOLOGY

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The Chronology of the Pentateuch (Part 5)

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14. Joseph and Judah

Genesis 38 tells us about Judah's sons and grandsons, and if we try to get these events into the time before the descent of the Hebrews into Goshen, it is very difficult to do so.

But this passage is almost certainly **dischronologized**. Thematically Genesis 38 is linked with the story of Joseph. Judah falls into the sin that Joseph resisted (adultery). Both married foreign women, Joseph rightly and Judah wrongly. **Both had two sons, whose birth-statutes were reversed.**

Given the structure of Genesis, there is no good place to stick this story if it happened later than the descent into Goshen. We have every reason to believe that after they relocated their headquarters to Goshen, the Hebrews continued to pasture up in Canaan (1 Chronicles 7:21-22, 23-24). We are told in Genesis 38 that Judah married at about the time Joseph was sold to Potiphar. Judah and Joseph were about the same age, so Judah was about 18. **We then read that after a long time Judah's wife died (Gen. 38:12). This comes after Tamar's first two disastrous marriages.** Almost certainly this projects the rest of the story into the period after the relocation of the Hebrew encampment to Goshen. Though dischronologized, Genesis 38 fits exactly with the theological order of presentation in Genesis, showing the kinds of sins the Hebrews were prone to fall into if they remained in Canaan, and explaining why God sent them into a sanctuary in Goshen.

Genesis 46:12, though, says that Judah's sons by Tamar, born at the end of Genesis 38, went down into Egypt with Jacob. At first glance, this indicates that they were born before the descent into Goshen. The **last** clause in the verse, however, mentions the two sons of Perez, who are included in the count in verse 15. Nobody can believe that these sons were born before the descent into Egypt. Thus, the list of names in Genesis 46 has to be taken as a genealogical summary, and not as a list of those

who, head for head, made the trek. (And note 46:21, which lists 10 descendants, including grandchildren, of Benjamin; obviously these had not been born before the descent into Egypt!). We have fitted the grandsons and great-grandsons of Jacob into the chronology.

Thus, in the chronology we are assuming standard 30-year distances between generations, and two-year intervals in **births unless** the text indicates otherwise (which it does in Genesis 38:11, where Judah's third son **Shelah** is clearly several years younger than his next oldest brother).

2297? - Job hen **Issachar** born; Elon hen **Zebulun** born (**Gen. 46:13-14**).

2298- After two visits by his sons to Egypt, Jacob moves his household to Goshen (**Gen. 45:6**). This is exactly 215 years after **Abram** moved into the land of promise (in 2083), and is the mid-point of the 430 years of dwelling "in Egypt." **Ezbon ben** Gad born; Ishvi hen Asher born? (**Gen. 46:16**).

2299? - Shimron **ben Issachar** born; **Jahleel** hen **Zebulun** born (**Gen. 46:13-14**).

2300? - Eri hen Gad born; **Beriah** ben Asher born (**Gen. 46:16-17**).

2302? - Arodi **ben** Gad born; Serah bath Asher born (**Gen. 46:16-17**).

2304? - **Areli** hen Gad born (**Gen. 46: 16**).

2307? - Er marries Tamar and God kills him (**Gen. 38:6-7**). Onan refuses seed to his dead brother and God kills him (**Gen. 38:9**). Tamar is told to wait for **Shelah** to grow up.

2312? - Bela ben Benjamin born (**Gen. 46:21**).

2313- Jacob dies at 147 (**Gen. 47:28**). **Shelah** is 20 years old?, but is not given to **Tamar**. Judah's wife dies (**Gen. 38: 12**). **Tamar** seduces Judah (**Gen. 38**).

2314? - Perez and **Zerah** ben Judah are born (Gen. 38:27-30); **Becher** ben Benjamin born (Gen. 46:21).

2316? - **Ashbel** ben Benjamin born (Gen. 46:21).

2317? - Libni ben Gershon born (Ex. 6: 17).

2318? - Gera ben Benjamin born (Gen. 46:21).

2319? - Shimei ben Gershon born (Ex. 6: 17).

2320? - Naaman **ben** Benjamin born (Gen. 46:21).

2321? - **Mahli** ben **Merari** born (Ex. 6: 19).

2322? - Ehi **ben** Benjamin born (Gen. 46:21).

2323? - Mushi ben **Merari** born (Ex. 6: 19).

2324? - Rosh **ben** Benjamin born (Gen. 46:21).

2326? - **[Muppm]** ben Benjamin born (Gen. 46:21).

2328? - **[Huppm]** ben Benjamin born (Gen. 46:21).

2330? - **Heber ben Beriah** born (Gen. 46: 17); Ard **ben** Benjamin born (Gen. 46:21).

2332? - **Malchiel** ben **Beriah** born (Gen. 46: 17).

2344? - **Hezron** ben Perez born (Gen. 46: 12).

2346? - **Hamul** ben Perez born (Gen. 46: 12).

2350? - Births of Amram (**Kohath** is 61) and **Jochebed** (Levi is 93).

2369- Joseph dies at 110 (Gen. 50:26).

15. Moses

Exodus 2:1 states that “a man from the house of Levi went and took a daughter of Levi,” and from their marriage came Aaron, Miriam, and Moses. There is an important contrast within this verse: the man was from the house of Levi, while the woman was a daughter of Levi, not a daughter of the house of Levi. The verse clearly implies that Moses mother was an actual daughter of Levi himself.

This supposition is confirmed by the statement of Numbers 26:58 & 59. Verse 58 states that Moses’ father, Amram, was a grandson of Levi, while verse 59 makes it clear that Moses’ mother was an actual daughter of Levi: “And the name of Amram’s wife was **Jochebed**, the daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt.”

These passages force us to conclude that the “430 years of Egyptian bondage” referred to in Exodus 12:40 cannot possibly begin with the descent of the Hebrews into the land of Goshen under Joseph. Rather, the 430 years must begin with Abram’s arrival in the land of promise, which was under Egyptian hegemony at the time. (For a full discussion, see *Biblical Chronology* 2:7: “The Moses Connection.”) If we can figure this out, it is no surprise that Paul also could (Gal. 3: 17).

Exodus 6 adds further confirmation, telling us that Am ram was the son of Kohath, Levi’s son, and that

“Amram took to him to wife his father’s sister Jochebed,” again affirming that **Jochebed** was Levi’s actual daughter (Ex. 6: 18-20).

Exodus 6 also provides us a relative chronology for the sojourn in Goshen. We are not told when **Kohath** was born to Levi, but we are told that Levi **lived** 137 years. We are not told when Amram was born to Kohath, but we are told that **Kohath** lived 133 years. We are not told when Moses was born to **Amram**, but we are told that Amram lived 137 years (Ex. 6: 16-20). Thus, we can put down a relative chronology as follows:

2257? - Levi born (see Chapter 13 above).

2289? - Kohath hen Levi (see Chapter 13 above).

2350? - Amram **ben Kohath** born (Ex. 6: 18) (**Kohath** is 61); **Jochebed** bath Levi born (Levi is 93).

2352? - **Izhar** ben **Kohath** born (Ex. 6: 18).

2354? - Hebron **ben Kohath** born (Ex. 6: 18).

2356? - **Uzziel** ben Kohath born (Ex. 6: 18).

2382? - **Korah** ben **Izhar** born (Ex. 6:21).

2384? - Nepheg ben **Izhar** born (Ex. 6:21).

2386? - Zichri **ben Izhar** born; **Mishael ben Uzziel** born (Ex. 6:21, 22).

2388? - **Elzaphan** ben **Uzziel** born (Ex. 6:22).

2390? - Sithri **ben Uzziel** born (Ex. 6:22).

2394? - Levi dies at 137 (Ex. 6:16).

2412? - Assir ben **Korah** born (Ex. 6:24).

2414? - **Elkanah ben Korah** born (Ex. 6:24).

2416? - Abiasaph ben Korah born (Ex. 6:24).

2422? - **Kohath** dies at 133 (Ex. 6: 18).

2430- Aaron ben Amram born (Ex. 7:7).

2433- Moses ben Amram born (**Amram** and **Jochebed** are 83). According to Exodus 7:7, Moses was 80 when he returned to Egypt to lead the people out. Thus, he was born 80 years before the Exodus.

2460? - Nadab ben Aaron born (Num. 3:2; Ex. 6:23).

2462? - Abihu ben Aaron born (Ex. 6:23).

2464? - **Eleazar** ben Aaron born (Ex. 6:23).

2466? - **Ithamar** ben Aaron born (Ex. 6:23).

2473- exile of Moses from Egypt, according to Acts 7:23.

2487? - Amram dies at 137 (Ex. 6:20).

2494? - Phineas ben **Eleazar** born (Ex. 6:25).

2513- Exodus.

What time of the year was Moses born? In Deuteronomy 31:2 Moses says, "I am 120 years old today." Evidently this was the same day as Deuteronomy 1:3- "the 40th year, on the 1st day of the 11th month," or shortly thereafter. Was this Moses' birthday? We cannot be certain, but we can be certain that it was close to his birthday, because Moses was already 80, when he initiated the 10 plagues. This means that the first eight plagues **happened** during the last two months of the lunar year. Evidently Moses had just turned 80 when he stood before Pharaoh.

16. Chronology of the Plagues & Exodus

Exodus 12:41 says, "And it came about at the end of 430 years, to the very day, that all the hosts of Yahweh went out from the land of Egypt." Some have suggested that "to the very day" refers back to Abram's entrance into the land of promise, so that we can date his entrance as the 15th day of the 1st month. Exodus 12:41, however, does not demand this interpretation, and it seems better to translate it: "And it came about at the end of 430 years that it happened on this very day" The stress is on the date of the Exodus, as the following verse indicates.

The plagues took place during the (solar) year 2513, as did the Exodus. We can construct an approximate chronology as follows:

11th Month (January-February 2513) (assume 29 days)

Day 1: Moses stands before Pharaoh and Aaron's staff swallows the staffs of the Egyptian magicians (Ex. 7:8-13).

Day 2: The Nile and all Egyptian water turned to blood for seven days (Ex. 7: 14-25). I shall assume that the plagues came 9 days apart.

Day 11: The Plague of Frogs (Ex. 8: 1-7)

Day 20: The Plague of Gnats (Ex. 8: 16-19)

Day 29: The Plague of Insects (Ex. **8:20-32**).

12th Month (February-March 2513) (assume 30 days)

Day 8: The Plague on Cattle (Ex. 9:1-7). Assume a 29-day month.

Day 17: The Plague of Boils (Ex. **9:8-12**)

Day 26: The Plague of Hail (Ex. 9: 13-35)

1st Month (March-April 2513) (assume 29 days)

Day 1: The new moon. YHWH speaks to Moses and Aaron (12: 1-20). Moses tells the elders (**12:21** -28)

Days 2-9: The Plague of Locusts (10: 1-20)

Day 10: Passover lambs/kids set aside (3d day of 2d week)

Days 11-13: The Plague of Darkness (**10:21-23**)

Day 14: Moses' last interview with Pharaoh (10:24-29; 11 :4-8). At evening: Passover

Day 15: The exodus from Egypt (beginning of 3d week)

Day 16: Pharaoh's pursuit

Day 17: Red Sea passage (counting backwards from

Month 3, this may have been a sabbath; it is also the 3d day after the Exodus.)

Day 18: If the previous day was the first sabbath after Passover, this day would be the equivalent of the Day of First Fruits (**Lev. 23: 11**). My guess is that the Song of the Red Sea was sung on this day, **15:1-21**.

Day 19: Marah incident, **15:22** (note: a crisis after 3 days)

Day 23: **Elim** encampment, **15:27**

Day 24: Sabbath

2d Month (April-May 2513) (assume 30 days)

Day 2: Sabbath

Day 9: Sabbath

Day 15: Wilderness of Sin, 16:1- "on the 15th day of the second month."

Day 16: Manna begins, 16:13. Seems to last at least a week **before** they move on. Sabbath

Day 23: Move to Rephidim, 17:1 (Sabbath)

Day 24: **Meribah** incident, 17:1-7

Day 25: **Amalek** arrives, **17:8**

Day 26: Battle with **Amalek**, **17:9**

Day 27: **Jethro** arrives, 18:1

Day 28: **Jethro's** advice, 18:13

Day 30: Sabbath

3d Month (May-June 2513) (assume 29 days)

Day 1: Leave Rephidim, arrive at Sinai, 19:1 - "On the 3d new moon . . . on this very day."

Day 2: Moses ascends and hears (kingdom of priests), **19:3-6**

Day 3: People accept, **19:7-8a**

Day 4: Moses ascends and reports, hears (God in the cloud), 19: **8b-9a**

Day 5: People accept, **19:9b**

Day 6: Moses ascends and reports, hears (consecrate and prepare for 3d day), **19:9b- 13**

Day 7: 2d day (Sabbath)

Day 8: 3d day: Sinai **Theophany** (Pentecost; **Lev. 23:15-16**)

Day 9: Ex. 24:4-11

Day 14: Sabbath: Moses ascends into Cloud, 24:16

4th Month (June-July 2513) (assume 30 days)

Day 24: Aaron makes the calf, **32:5-6**

Day 25: Sacraments with the calf, 32:5-6- "a feast to Yahweh." Moses returns, **24:18**

Day 26: Moses intercedes, **32:30**

5th Month (July-August 2513) (assume 29 days)

Day 1: Moses returns for another 40 days (Ex. **32:28**).

6th Month (August-September 2513) (assume 30 days)

Day 11: Moses comes back

Let us now the of this ,
chronology.

Month 1, 2513

Exodus 12:3 says that the Passover lamb was to be chosen and set aside on the 10th day of the month. As regards the month itself, this was the 3d day of the 2d week, and points to the pervasive “3d X” theme in the Bible: Significant events occur on the 3d day, in the 3d week, in the 3d month, in the 3d year, and in the 3d hour. For reasons that will become clearer as we proceed, this was probably the sabbath day of the week in this particular year (since the 17th was most likely a sabbath).

Now, God’s speech in Exodus 12:1-20 came on the 1st day of the month, and thus precede Moses’ final audience with Pharaoh, which happened at the end of the plague of darkness, and which came the day before the Passover plague (Ex. 10:28-29; 11:4). Thus, the 3-&y Plague of Darkness (Ex. 10:23) happened between the time the lambs were set aside on the 10th and the Passover on the 14th. According] y, we can be certain that the Plague of Darkness happened on the 11-13th days of the month. I have suggested that the Plague of Locusts happened Days 2-9 of this month.

We can now make a comparison with the creation week of Genesis 1, as follows:

Day 10: Sabbath; lambs set aside.

Day 11: 1st Day: Light created; Sun darkened over Egypt.

Day 12: 2d Day: Firmament established; Sun in firmament darkened.

Day 13: 3d Day: Land revealed; darkness in all the land of Egypt (10:22).

Day 14: 4th Day: Sun, moon, and stars created; firstborn of Egypt die, and in terms of Biblical symbolism, this is the fall of the astral bodies of Egypt.

of God leaves Egypt.

Day 16: 6th Day: Man created; Pharaoh pursues.

Day 17: 7th Day: Sabbath; Israel granted sabbath as they pass through the Red Sea.

The 17th day is not only a sabbath, but is the 3d day after the Exodus, and thus a day of transition for Israel. Now, the text does not say this the passage through the Red Sea happened on this date, or on the 3d day after the Exodus. This interpretation is **only** my educated guess, based on the chronological and **calendrical** “logic” of the text.

In Leviticus 23, God **later** tells Israel to observe the day after the sabbath in Passover week as the Feast of First Fruits (Lev. 23: 11). According to our reconstruction, this would be the **day** after Israel passed through the Red Sea, the day of celebration as they sang the Song in Exodus 15.

The 3d day theme returns in Exodus 15:22, where we read that 3 days after they passed through the Red Sea the people found only bitter water to drink. God delivered them in this crisis.

My suggestion of Day 23 for the arrival and encampment at **Elim** is only a suggestion.

Month 2, 2513

Exodus 16:1 says that Israel arrived at the Wilderness of Sin, approaching **Sin-ai**, on the 15th day of the 2d month. Evidently they began their complaining about food on that day as well. The next day, then, would be the beginning of the manna. The remaining suggested chronology for this month is designed to show how the progression of incidents recorded in Exodus 16-18 might have occurred. The sabbaths are, again, based on counting back from Month 3.

(Chapter 16 will be concluded next month)