

# BIBLICAL CHRONOLOGY

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## Genesis 5 & 11: Chronological-Theological Reflections (Part 2)

by James B. Jordan

### Further Numerical Items of Interest

Umberto Cassuto points out some other numerical factors in Genesis 5. [Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, Part 1: From Adam to Noah*, trans. Israel Abraham (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, Hebrew University, [1944] 1961 .), pp. 258ff.] For one thing, he observes that every number in Genesis 5 is a multiple of 5, sometimes with the addition of 7. We have, in essence, made this point already. He also points out that in the totals of the years lived by the patriarchs, there are five 7s, so that we have another occurrence of the number 5:

Seth	912 [(181 x 5) + 7]
Jared	962 [(191 x 5) + 7]
Methuselah	969 [(191 x 5) + 7 + 7]
Lamech	777 [(154 x 5) + 7]

Interestingly, and this is not from Cassuto, if we add up all the total years of these patriarchs, including Noah's 950, we come to 8575 years, which is  $5 \times 5 \times 7 \times 7 \times 7$ .

Some of Cassuto's numerical computations are, however, in error. On p. 261 he states that 1643 solar years of 365 days each makes 600,000 days, and if we add two 7s (= 14) to this 1643 we come up to 1657, the year the Flood ended. Thus, he says, we see here the sexagesimal number 600,000 augmented by two 7s.

The problem is that  $1643 \times 365 = 599,695$ , and in fact a closer number would be obtained by multiplying 365 by 1644, which is 600,060. In neither case, however, does Cassuto's assertion stand up. Nor can we repair his assertion by adding in extra days for leap years. Over the course of 1643 years we would have 410 extra

days, minus the compensatory 365-day non-leap years that come three out of every four century years (in this case, 12).  $410 - 12 = 398.599,695 + 398 = 600,093$  days.

Again, he argues on p. 262 that if we add up the lives of the pre-Flood patriarchs, and then add Noah's life to the year after the Flood (601 years), we come up with 8226 years. That is correct. Then he says that 8219 years is 3,000,000 days, to which we then add 7 years. Once again, then, we have a sexagesimal number (% of 6,000,000) + 7. In this case also, however, Cassuto's computations do not stand up.  $8219 \times 365 = 2,999,935$  days.

Moreover, Cassuto maintains that the 5 years is 60 months, and thus that a sexagesimal system underlies the use of the number 5 in this passage. This is not correct. There are 62 lunar months in 5 solar years.

Thus, contrary to Cassuto, there does not seem to be a sexagesimal number system underlying or woven through these numbers. Rather, the basic numbers are 5 & 7, which compose the numbers 10 and 12, all basic to Biblical revelation.

### A Jubiliary Number?

The Flood ended in the year A.M. 1657. According to Cassuto (as best I recall), in a place I cannot find (and which may be in a book I read in seminary and do not possess), this number consists of 33 jubilees of 50 years each, plus 7 more years. Now,  $33 + 7 = 40$ , and of course, 40 is a significant number in the Bible. The problem with this scheme is two-fold. First, the Year of Jubilee is not introduced until Mount Sinai, in Leviticus 25. This problem can be overcome if we posit that God

was foreshadowing the **jubiliary** principle in this earlier age.

The major problem is that jubilees come every 49 years, not every 50 years. The 50th year, the Year of Jubilee, is the first year of the new cycle, as we have seen in previous issues of this newsletter. (Reprinted as “The Jubilee & Biblical Chronology,” available from Biblical Horizons, Box 1096, **Niceville**, FL 32588, for \$3.00.)

The **jubiliary** principle may, however, still be foreshadowed in the antediluvian history. 33 jubilees of 49 years comes to the year 1617, which is 40 years before the end of the Flood in A.M. 1657. At the jubilee in Leviticus 25, the accused sinner could leave the city of refuge (in this case, the ark), and return to his land unmolested by any accuser (in this case, return to the world). The 40 years that ended with the end of the Flood, thus, might be intended to foreshadow Israel’s time in the wilderness-refuge that issued into the conquest of Canaan-land.

### Astral Numbers

**Gordon J. Wenham**, in his commentary on *Genesis 1-15* (Waco: Word, 1987), p. 133-4, summarizes some work **M. Barnouin** has done on the numbers in Genesis 5. I shall simply quote Wenham’s summary, and then add to the discussion.

“**Barnouin** (*Revue Biblique* 77 [1970] 347-65) has made the bravest attempt to confront this issue. He believes that the ages of the antediluvian can be related to various astronomical periods such as the number of days or weeks in the year or the synodic periods of the planets (i.e., the time it takes for a planet to return to the same point in the sky). These astronomical periods were known to the Babylonians, and a **sexagesimal** arithmetic, he maintains, would have made the calculations quite easy.

“**Barnouin** notes the obvious point that **Enoch lived** 365 years, which he supposes represents the perfect span on life.

“Furthermore, if the [ages of the patriarchs when their son was born, Adam to **Lamech**] and the [remaining years of the patriarchs, Adam to **Lamech**] are each divided by 60, and the remainders added together, the sum of the remainders is 365! As for the patriarchs’ ages at death, these can be related to synodic periods: e.g., **Lamech’s** 777 = synodic period of Jupiter + synodic period of Saturn; Jared’s 962 = synodic period of Venus + synodic period of Saturn. He shows how other patriarchal ages can be generated similarly.”

Now, I do not read French, so this is as far as I can go with summarizing **Barnouin’s** 1970 article. In

*Vetus Testamentum* 27 (1977), **Barnouin** published a second article on the census figures in the book of Numbers, which is available in translation. In fact, I commissioned this translation, and it is sold through Biblical Horizons (Box 1096, **Niceville**, FL 32588) for \$6.00, postpaid. In this technical study, **Barnouin** shows that the census figures in the book of Numbers relate, over and over again, to various astral cycles, establishing that Israel is being portrayed as a heavenly host. In this course of his discussion, he makes repeated reference to Genesis 5.

I am not well enough informed to try and extend **Barnouin’s** thesis, but he certainly strikes me as being on to something. Kenan’s total of 910 years is ten times 91, and 91 is  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a solar year of 365 days.

Enoch’s 365 years corresponds to a solar year. I’m not sure **Barnouin** is right that this is the ideal lifespan. I think that Genesis 5 implies that the ideal lifespan is a millennium, which none of these attained.

Jared’s 962 years corresponds to the synodic period of Venus (584 days) plus the synodic period of Saturn (378 days).

Methuselah’s 969 years are added to Kenan’s 910 years to come up with a total of 1879. **This** number is the total of four synodic periods:

Mercury	116 days
Venus	584 days
Mars	780 days
Jupiter	399 days

Finally, **Lamech’s** 777 years, in addition to being a triple repetition of the number seven, corresponds to Jupiter (399) plus Saturn (378).

What significance does all this have? Well, in Genesis 15:5, God told Abram to “tell” the stars, and that “so shall your seed be.” If we are right in positing that the patriarchal lives carried astral symbolic weight, then Abram’s observation of the stars would, at least in part, remind him of the great patriarchs of old. Such would his seed be, and indeed, the census figures of the book of Numbers bear this out. Abram’s seed were numbered in the same astral fashion, planets moving in the firmament of heaven.

The firmament is the chamber between earth and heaven. It is the original Holy Place between the Altar Mountain on earth and the Holy of **Holies** of Heaven. It is, thus, the place where man, as **priest/ruler** of creation under God, is positioned. Thus, God’s people are restored “to the **heavenlies**,” and are pictured as moving about in the firmament.

An additional dimension of this revelation may be seen in another aspect of the numbers of Genesis 5. The

total number of days from creation to the end of the Flood Year (A.M. 1657), using even years of 365 days each, and drawing this hint from Enoch's 365-year lifespan, comes to 604,805 days. This is not completely correct, however, since the Flood ended during the 1657th year.

Years are solar, and months are lunar. The water is said to have dried up from the earth on the first day of the **lunar** year, which is six months into the solar year. Thus, this is about 177 days ( $\frac{1}{2}$  a lunar year of 354 days) into year 1657. Noah exited the ark on month 2, day 27, or about 234 days into the year.

Now we can come up with a more accurate figure. 1656 years of 365 days is 604,440 days. If we add 402 **leapyears** we come to 604,842 days. To this we add 177 days to the first day of spring, for 605,019 days; or we can add 234 days to the day Noah left the Ark of Refuge, for 605,076 days.

All of these numbers are approximate. I only wish to call attention to the census figures in Numbers, and how closely they match up. The total of the first census was 603,550 (**Num.** 1:46), while the total of the second census was 601,730 (**Num.** 26:51). In both cases, the root number is 600,000, with a significant additional number added (**Barnouin** discusses 3550 and 1730 in the paper mentioned for sale above). At any rate, we can see that just as there is a correspondence between the census figures and the **lifespans** in years of the antediluvian patriarchs, so there is also a rough correspondence between the total census figures and the total period of the first patriarchal age measured in days.

### Sabbath Themes

**The sabbath is the** time of enthronement; it means that one's priestly service has been counted as successful by God, and He now bestows kingship. (See James B. Jordan, *Sabbath-Breaking and the Death Penalty*, available for \$12.00 from Biblical Horizons, Box 1096, Niceville, FL 32588). When God finished His "service" or labor of making the world in six days, He entered into enthroned sabbath rest on the seventh. The image of God, humanity, is to move through the same historical programme.

The life of Noah shows the initial fulfillment of God's programme for humanity. At his birth, Noah's father Lamech prophesied: "This one will give us comfort **from** our work and from the toil of our hands in connection with the ground, which Yahweh has cursed" (**Gen.** 5:29). This was a prophecy that Noah would complete human it y's first week, and enter into enthroned sabbath rest.

This is exactly what happened. After the Flood,

God made a covenant of kingship with Noah, transforming the **preceding** covenant of priesthood made with Adam. Noah would be enthroned and allowed to pass judgments as a king. The kingly duty of punishing the wicked with the death penalty was entrusted to him. Noah planted a vineyard and drank of the wine, which is everywhere in the Bible a symbol of enthroned kingly rest. (Note the various cupbearers that serve kings in the Bible; the fact that **Ahasuerus** drinks wine each time he makes a pronouncement in Esther; the fact that Jesus, entering into His priestly work, rejected wine until the Kingdom had come; etc.) When his sons **sinned**, Noah passed judgment on them. Note the parallel: God planted a garden; Noah planted a vineyard. Adam tried to seize God's prerogatives; Ham tried to seize Noah's. God passed judgment; Noah, now enthroned in sabbath kingship, passes judgment.

Thus, we are prepared to see some analogies between Noah's life and God's actions in Genesis 1, and that is what we find. Genesis 5:32 says that "**Noah** was 500 years old, and Noah begat Shem, Ham, and **Japheth**." These sons are not listed in order; **Japheth** was oldest, and Ham youngest (**Gen.** 8:24; 10:21). What is important about Genesis 5:32 is that Noah's first son was born at the beginning of his 6th century of life, paralleling God's creation of a son on the 6th day.

The Flood came in Noah's 600th year (**Gen.** 7:6). This was the beginning of his 7th century of life, his sabbath century. After God executed His judgment on sinful humanity, His "**last**" judgment so to speak, He turned the kingly sabbatical responsibility of passing judgment and restraining evil over to Noah and his true descendants (the Godly; the church). Those who would not identify with the Godly would lose the right to pass judgments, and instead of being kings would be slaves (**Gen.** 9:25-27). *This has been true ever since, despite appearances.* Even when the Godly do not **wield** the sword of justice in society, they still rule the world, for they and they alone have the ear of the Father.

It may well be significant that Noah's life as a second Adam begins in the second millennium of humanity. He was born in the year 1056, which is 8x7 years into the second millennium. The eighth day signifies a new beginning, for it is the first day of man's week after the completion of God's. Thus, the number 56 may be intended to have a prophetic character to it, and may lie behind Lamech's prophecy.

Additionally, if we look only at the second millennium, as a **millennium** of man, then the idea presents itself of a man's actually fulfilling Adam's **fallen** week and coming to sabbath rest. The Flood came in the year 1656, or 656 years into this human millennium. It

comes, as we saw, in the seventh or sabbath century. After a **jubilary** period of 49 years, the Flood comes in the 7th year (i.e., 56), a year of exclusively Divine judgment. The next year becomes the year of man's enthronement as God's junior partner, the first year of a new week of years.

Part of the importance of this chronological information is that it affirms to us the historical concreteness of the development of the kingdom of God in human history. "Priest" and "king" are not just abstract, timeless theological ideas, though they are usually considered this way, sad to say. They are stages in maturation, both for us personally (we serve God before we rule men), and historically.

To round out this discussion of sabbath themes, let me point out that there is also a sabbath motif in the chronology after the Flood. The seventh from Noah is

Reu, whose father **Peleg** is one of the two sons of **Eber**. Peleg's brother, Joktan, had thirteen sons who joined with him in the wicked Babel project (**Gen. 10:25-30; 11: 1**). Thus, in the seventh generation from Noah we have the apostasy of the 13 grandsons of Eber through Joktan, which must contrast with the implied faithfulness of the one grandson of Eber through **Peleg**. Compare the seventh from Adam: the godly Enoch and the ungodly Lamech.

The fall of the false Hebrews came toward the end of the second millennium; **Peleg** died in 1996, and "in his days the world [not the "soil"] was divided" (**Gen. 10:25**). Abram starts a new world, and he was born in 2008. This is eight years into the third millennium, the beginning of the second week of years of that **millennium**. Thus, the birth of Abram, considered chronologically, points to a new beginning.