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CHRONOLOGY OF GENESIS 5, 7, & 11 (SEPTUAGINT VS. MASORETIC TEXT) AND THE AGE OF THE UNIVERSE

by Dr. Seraphim Steger

As mentioned in our last article, the age of the Universe is a major point of dispute between the relatively few *Bible* believing, creationist astronomers and the great number of naturalistic evolutionary astronomers. The latter, based on various cosmological models, following both known and unknown laws of physics, and incorporating redshift data from distant galaxies by using Hubble's law, calculate the age of the Universe to be some 14 billion years old. Creationist physicists and astronomers such as Dr. John G. Hartnett, Dr. Jason Lisle, and Dr. Danny Faulkner postulate a young earth and Universe of around 6,000 years old from their biblical point of view. They base this age on Rev. Archbishop James Ussher's monumental *The Annals of the World*, originally published in 1658, in which Ussher proclaims, "the beginning of time, according to our chronology, happened at the start of the evening preceding the 23rd day of October (on the Julian calendar), 4004 BC."¹ Ussher's dating derives from the chronologies/genealogies of the patriarchs recorded in Genesis chapters 5 and 11, from historical details found throughout the *Holy Scriptures*, and from all other historical sources known up to his time combined with many assumptions. However, Ussher's *Old Testament* dating system is based on the 10th century AD Hebrew *Masoretic Text (MT)*.²

In contrast, we Orthodox consider our Greek *Septuagint Text (Lxx)* translated from the Hebrew in the 3rd century BC, to be a better representation of the

original *Old Testament* text than the extant anti-Christian biased and theologically redacted 10th century AD Masoretic texts of Rabbinic Judaism.

Early into the 3rd century BC the close relationship between Judea and the large Greek-speaking community of Jews in Alexandria, who had progressively lost their native Hebrew tongue, necessitated the translation of the ancient Jewish Hebrew Bible into Greek as the *Septuagint* starting with the *Torah*, the *Pentateuch* (the 5 Books of Moses). This translation of the ancient Jewish Scriptures preserved the Jewish history and theology for this pre-Christian Greek-speaking Jewish Diaspora community. It further safeguarded their Jewish identity and culture, all of which was continuously reinvigorated through their 3 annual pilgrim festivals to Jerusalem.

However, if we are honest with ourselves, what is called the *Septuagint* is not one text, but a family of manuscripts with variant readings, copyist errors, as well as mainstream authoritative texts that the Orthodox Church has preserved throughout the centuries.³ Moreover, some *Old Testament* books have had more than one recension in Greek, both of which have been used at different points in the history in the Church. The book of *Tobit* is a good example in having both a long and a short Greek recension. *Daniel's* case is a bit different:

"For the prophet-book of Daniel, it was not the *LXX* but the other pre-Christian Greek version, the one preserved later by Theodotion [that was translated earlier from superior Semitic sources now lost and redacted by Theodotion into their present Greek form], that was authoritative for pre-Christian Jews and remains authoritative for Christians Indeed the very existence of *Theodotion-Daniel* is for Christians an indication of the action of the Holy Spirit in preparing for the ministry, prophecy, and passion of Jesus ...

"Significantly, it is *Theodotion-Daniel* and not *Septuagint-Daniel* that is quoted in the *New Testament*. The numerous *Son of Man* passages, alluding to Daniel's first vision (*Daniel 7*), are reported in the Gospels as uttered with the authority of Jesus himself. In this way the visions of the prophet Daniel are affirmed and clarified by the Messiah, according to Christian understanding."⁴

As we examine the genealogies from *Septuagint*

1. Ussher, James, *The Annals of the World*, Master Books, Green Forest, AK, 2004, p. 1 (of 960), www.masterbooks.com

2. The oldest Masoretic codex, the *Allepo Codex*, dates from AD 925 to 935. The consonantal text of this codex was written by Shelomoh ben Buya and the vocalization, accentuation and Masorah added by the famous Masorete Ahron ben Asher. Unfortunately parts of the codex were lost in 1947 and thereafter. Source: Sanders P, *The Ashker-Bilson Manuscript Remnant of the Proto-Masoretic Model Scroll of the Torah*, *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*, Vol. 14, 2014, p. 12, at <https://docplayer.net/1216719-The-ashkar-gilson-manuscript-remnant-of-a-proto-masoretic-model-scroll-of-the-torah.html>

3. Würthwein, Ernst, *The Septuagint, The Text of the Old Testament*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids MI, pp. 49-72.

4. Tkacz, Catherine Brown, 'Ἀλήθεια Ἑλληνική *The Authority of the Greek Old Testament*, Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, Etna, CA, 2011, pp. 45-47.

versions and the *MT* between creation and the birth of Abraham and compare the **Year of Birth** column in Tables 1 and 2, we find that the genealogy listed in the *Lxx* is 3312-1946 = 1366 years longer than that in the current *MT*.⁵ Indeed, the Biblical earth's age is over 1,500 years older in the *Lxx* than in Ussher's chronology.⁶

Table 1: Genealogy from the Septuagint (*Lxx*), *Genesis 5*

Patriarch	Begetting Age	Remaining Years	Lifespan	Year of Birth
Adam	230 ^J	700 ^{JLAB}	930 ^J	0
Seth	205 ^{JLAB}	707 ^{LAB}	912 ^J	230
Enos	190 ^{JLAB}	715 ^{LAB}	905 ^J	435
Cainan	170 ^{JLAB}	740 ^{LAB}	910 ^J	625
Maleleel	165 ^{JLAB}	730 ^{LAB}	895 ^J	795
Jared	162 ^{JLAB}	800 ^{LAB}	962 ^J	960
Enoch	165 ^{JLAB}	200 ^{LAB}	365 ^J	1122
Methusala	167 ^{BAPDRN/} [187 ^T]	802 ^{BAPDRN/} [782 ^T]	969 ^J	1287
Lamech	188 ^{TBAPDRN}	565 ^{TBAPDRN}	753	1354
Noe	500 ^{LAB}	450 ^{LAB}	950	1642
Shem	100	500	(600)	2142
Arpachshad	135	400 ^{TBAPDR} [430 ^N /330]	(535) (565)	2242
Kainan	130 ^{TBAPDRN}	330 ^{TBAPDRN}	(460)	2377
Shelah	130	330 ^{TBAPDRN/} [403]	(460)	2507
Eber	134	270 ^{TBAPD/} [370 ^{RN}]	(404) (504)	2637
Peleg	130	209	(339)	2771
Reu	132/130	207	(339)	2901
Serug	130/132	200	(350)	3033
Nahor	79	129/[125 ^T]	(208)	3163
Terah	70	75	205 ^J	3242
Abraham	100			3312

GREEK BASED VERSION KEY: T (THOMSON), B (BRENTON), N (NETS TRANSLATION), APD (APOSTOLIKA DIAKONIA), R (RAHLFS).

For English speakers, we note that the commonly used 1851 English Septuagint translation of Sir Lancelot Brenton, the 2007 *New English Translation of the Septuagint (NETS)*, the New Calendar Greek Orthodox Church's Old Testament *Apostolic Ministry* version (*Αποστολική Διακονία της Εκκλησίας της Ελλάδος*)⁷, and Rahlfs' Greek *Septuaginta*⁸ texts

5. *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart, Germany, 1984.

6. The Greek Septuagint *Lxx* chronology adds an additional 1364 years from Adam to Abraham plus an additional 215 years for the Egyptian sojourn, minus 40 years for the dating of Solomon's Temple compared to the *MT* -- thus placing Biblical creation about 1541 years earlier, thus approximately 7567 years ago.

7. http://www.apostoliki-diakonia.gr/bible/bible.asp?contents=old_testament/contents_Genesis.asp&main=OldTes

8. Rahlfs, Alfred, *Septuaginta*, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart, Germany, 1979,

mirror one another quite closely, with most variants easily dismissed as scribal errors in transmission.

THE EYE-CATCHING CASE OF METHUSALA

Interestingly, however, among the *Lxx* versions, the older Charles Thomson English translation⁹ has a

Table 2: Genealogy from the Masoretic Text (*MT*)

Patriarch	Begetting Age	Remaining Years	Lifespan	Year of Birth
Adam	130	800	930 ^{JMT}	0
Seth	105	807	912 ^{JMT}	130
Enos	90	815	905 ^{JMT}	235
Cainan	70	840	910 ^{JMT}	325
Mahalaleel	65	830	895 ^{JMT}	395
Jared	162 ^{JLABMT}	800 ^{JLABMT}	962 ^{JMT}	460
Enoch	65	300	365 ^{JMT}	622
Methuselah	187 ^{JLABMT}	782 ^{JLABMT}	969 ^{JMT}	687
Lamech	182 ^{JLABMT}	595 ^{JLABMT}	777 ^{MT}	874
Noah	500 ^{JLABMT}	450 ^{LABMT}	950	1056
Shem	100	500	(600)	1556
Arphaxad	35	430	(565)	1656
[Kainan]				
Salah	30	403	(433)	1691
Eber	34	370	(404)	1721
Peleg	30	209	(239)	1755
Reu	32	207	(239)	1785
Serug	30	200	(230)	1817
Nahor	29	129	(158)	1847
Terah	70 ^{JLABMT}	75	(145)	1876
Abraham	100			1946

HEBREW BASED VERSION KEY: *MT* (MASORETIC TEXT), *J* (JOSEPHUS' HEBREW TEXT), *LAB* (LIBER ANTIQUITATUM BIBLICARUM -- A 1ST CENTURY AD LATIN TRANSLATION OF A HEBREW PRE-MASORETIC TEXT)

striking difference from the others in the genealogy of Methusala. Thomson's reads the *begetting age* of Methusala as 187 years in contrast to the 167 years of all the others. Normally, we would think the outlier would be the incorrect one, i.e., the one with the scribal error. But not in this case -- rather, it is the majority! If we look at the genealogies for Methusala, Lamech, and Noe in Table 3 below, and look at their years of birth and death, we find a very disturbing internal discrepancy in the majority. Focusing on the year of death, we note that the pre-flood patriarch Methusala died in the year 2256, i.e., 14 years after Noe's Flood

9. Thomson, Charles, *The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Covenant commonly called the Old and New Testament; Translated from the Greek* Jane Aitken, Philadelphia, PA, 1808, https://thetentcommandmentsministry.us/ministry/charles_thomson/



Table 3: Tabulation of Ages from the *LXX*^{B,ApDRN}

Patriarch	Begetting Age	Remaining Years	Year of Birth	Year of Death
Methusala	167 ^{B,ApDRN}	802 ^{B,ApDRN}	1287	2256
Lamech	188 ^{B,ApDRN}	565 ^{B,ApDRN}	1354	2207
Noe	500	450	1642	2592
Year of the Flood				2242

(which occurred in Noe's 600th year, the year 2242 in this chronology) -- an impossibility! Only Noe and his wife, their sons and daughters-in-law survived the flood. All others alive at the time of the flood perished in the waters. So the chronology in all these texts is in error. This error is the result of these texts showing an incorrect begetting age of 167 for Methusala and 802 remaining years until his death. Thus, the majority of *LXX* versions (as well as the Old Latin translations made from the *LXX*) are wrong in regard to Methusala! [Note: Jerome's Latin Vulgate translation follows the *MT*.]

However, if we use the Thomson *LXX* genealogy/chronology in Table 4 below, and substitute 187 and 782 years respectively for the begetting age and remaining subsequent years of life we note that Methusala died in 2256¹⁰, which would be 6 years before the calculated year of the flood in Thompson's text -- quite reasonable! Indeed, it is the only *begetting age* among all the *LXX* texts that works! If the *MT*'s 182 years for Lamech's begetting age is used, Noe would have been born in 1650, 6 years earlier, the flood would have occurred in 2256, and Methusala would then have died in the year of the flood.

Table 4: Tabulation of Ages from the *LXX* THOMPSON (T)

Patriarch	Begetting Age	Remaining Years	Year of Birth	Year of Death
Methusala	187 ^{T, JL, ABMT}	782 ^{T, JL, ABMT}	1287	2256
Lamech	188 ^{T, BRN}	565 ^{T, BRN}	1474	2251
Noe	500	450	1662	2606
Year of the Flood				2262

Notably, in Sir Lancelot Brenton's *LXX*, he provides a footnote to Methusala's *begetting age* of 167 years. That footnote shows that Brenton himself recognized the Alexandrian version [A] of the *LXX* reads "Alex. 187 years" in the Greek. A second footnote for the *remaining years* reads "Alex 782", just as in Thomson's *LXX* translation.¹¹ So Brenton was aware of this

10. Note: Lamech's begetting age is 182 instead of 188 in the *MT*.

11. Sir Lancelot C. L. Brenton, *The Septuagint Version: Greek and English*, Samuel Bagston & Sons, London, England, 1851, p. 7.

Alexandrian variant text, but chose not to use it. In contrast, Charles Thomson, the former Secretary to the U.S. Continental Congress from 1774 to 1789 (i.e., through the entire presidency of his close friend George Washington), most likely used an Alexandrian source text for his genealogy. Unfortunately, Thomson published his translation without a preface, so we don't know for sure which specific source text(s) he used.

So when and where did this discrepancy arise?

The *Biblical Antiquities* of Pseudo-Philo, usually referred to under the Latin title *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (LAB), is an imaginative retelling of the history of Israel from Adam to David, the oldest extant copies of which date from the 11th century AD. It is believed by some to be a 1st century AD Latin translation of a Greek intermediary text of a Hebrew original, whose earliest possible date could have been around 135 BC. Thus, its importance lies in it being witness to a pre-Masoretic and pre-Christian Hebrew text. Indeed, for most of the pre-flood genealogies, it uses the *begetting ages* of the patriarchs found in the *LXX*. However, in the case of Methuselah it reads 187 following A. In the case of Lamech, as in all *MT*-based Hebrew texts, it reads 182 instead of 188 (Table 2):

"1:18 And **Methuselah lived 187 years** and became the father of Lamech. And after he became the father of Lamech, Methuselah lived 782 years and became the father of two sons and two daughters: Aluma and Amuga. 19 And **Lamech lived 182 years** and became the father of a son and called him after his birth 'Noah', saying, 'This one will give rest to us and to the earth from those who dwell on it -- on account of the wickedness of whose evil (deeds) the earth will be visited.'"¹²

We should also take note of the fact that Lamech's *begetting age* is found to be 188 years in all the Greek-based *LXX* texts including Thomson's.

Another set of important historical works from the 1st century AD are those of the Jewish historian Yosef ben Matityahu, better known as Flavius Josephus. Two of his works, the monumental *Antiquities of the Jews* (c. AD 93-94) and his defense of Judaism, *Against Apion*, reflect on the *Biblical chronologies* albeit in quite different ways. In the latter, Josephus relates that he worked from the Hebrew Scriptures and personally translated them into Greek:

"1. ... Those *Antiquities* contain the history of five thousand years, and **are taken out of our sacred books; but are translated by me into the Greek tongue** ...

12. Harrington, D.J., *Pseudo-Philo (First Century A.D.), A New Translation and Introduction*, in Charlesworth, James H., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Vol. 2, Expansions of the Old Testament and Legends, Wisdom and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works*, Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, §§ 1:1-22, 4:12-15. [Note: Some later genealogies are missing or inaccurate in the LAB].



“8. For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another (as the Greeks have), but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine; and of them five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death. This interval was a little more than three thousand years, but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life. It is true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time; and how firmly we have given credit to those books of our own nation, is evident by what we do; for during so many ages as have already passed, **no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them, to take anything from them, or to make any change in them.**

“10. ... **I have translated the Antiquities out of our sacred books; which I easily could do, since I was a priest by my birth, and have studied that philosophy which is contained in those writings:** and for the History of the War, I wrote it as having been an actor myself in many of its transactions, an eye-witness in the greatest part of the rest, and was not unacquainted with any thing whatsoever that was either said or done in it.”¹³

But it is in the *Antiquities of the Jews* that Josephus gives us the patriarchal genealogy:

“I.iii.3. This calamity happened in the six hundredth year of Noah’s government ... Now he says that this **flood began** on the twenty-seventh day of the forementioned month; and this was **two thousand six hundred and fifty-six years from Adam**, the first man; and the tie is written down in our sacred books, those who then lived having noted down with great accuracy, both the births and deaths of illustrious men.

“I.iii.4. For indeed Seth was born when Adam was in his two hundred and thirtieth year, who lived nine hundred and thirty years. Seth begat Enos in his two hundred and fifth year; who, when he had lived nine hundred and twelve years, delivered the government to Cainan his son, whom he had in his hundred and ninetieth year. He lived nine hundred and five years. Cainan, when he had lived nine hundred and ten years, had his son Malaleel, who was born in his hundred and seventieth year. This Malaleel, having lived eight hundred and ninety-five years, died, leaving his son Jared, whom he begat when he was in his hundred and sixty-fifth year. He lived nine hundred and sixty-two years; and then his son Enoch succeeded him, who was born when his father was one hundred and sixty-two years old. Now he, when he had lived three hundred and sixty-five years, departed and went to God; whence it is that they have not written down his death. Now **Methusala**, the son of Enoch, who was born to him when he was one hundred and sixty-five years old, **had Lamech for his son when he was one hundred and eighty-seven years of age; to whom he delivered the government, when he**

13. Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion*, Bk. I, ¶1.8, 10 in Whiston, William (trans.), *The Works of Flavius Josephus*, Vol. IV, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1972, pp. 152, 158, 160.

had retained it nine hundred and sixty-nine years. Now Lamech, when he had governed seven hundred and seventy-seven years, appointed **Noah, his son, to be ruler of the people, who was born to Lamech when he was one hundred and eighty-two years old** and retained the government nine hundred and fifty years. These years collected together make up the sum [previous] set down. But let no one inquire into the deaths of these men; for they extended their lives along together with their children and grandchildren; but let him have regard to their births only.¹⁴

It should be noted that Josephus, a descendant of Aaron by birth and consequently a Priest by birth, undoubtedly used the official priests’ Hebrew biblical texts of his time for making his Greek translation. Therein he notes that Methusala was 187 years old when he gave birth to Lamech, who, in turn, begat his son Noah/Noe, when he was 182 years old. The primary English translation of Josephus’ works by Whiston, however, appears to have a mathematical mistake in the translation. Whiston’s translation states that the flood began in the 2656th year from Adam. However, Josephus’ chronology, when summed in Whiston’s edition, yields the 2256th year. So Whiston has mistakenly added 400 more years to Josephus’ listed genealogy. Henry B. Smith, in his article on this topic, has totaled the year of the flood from his sources for Josephus to 2256 or 2262 years depending on whether Lamech’s begetting age is 182¹⁵ or 188 years.¹⁶

So again, there are textual variants in Josephus which complicate these calculations. However, Smith adroitly addresses the begetting age of Lamech:

“An explanation for the discrepancies between the MT (182, 595, 777) and LXX (188, 565, 753) [*begetting age, remaining years, and lifespan*] 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 for Methusala and Lamech are original and are externally affirmed by *LAB* and Josephus.”¹⁷

Having seen the ancient pre-Masoretic Jewish witnesses to the chronology/genealogy of Methusala, let us now proceed to our Orthodox Patristic witnesses.

PATRISTIC WITNESSES TO THE CHRONOLOGY OF METHUSALA

14. Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, I, in Whiston, William (trans.), *The Works of Flavius Josephus*, Vol. II, I.iii.3-4, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1972, pp. 74-75.

15. For Lamech’s begetting age of 182, we find that Methusala still died in 2256, which, in this case, would be the date of the Great Flood according to Josephus.

16. Smith, Henry B., Jr., *The case for the Septuagint’s Chronology in Genesis 5 and 11*, *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference on Creationism*, Pittsburgh, PA, 2018, pp. 126, <https://biblearchaeology.org/images/Genesis-5-and-11/Smith-Henry-The-Case-for-the-Septuagint-Chronology-in-Gen-5-and-11-ICC.pdf>

17. Smith, 2018, 130. [I.e., they are correct for Methusala and Lamech.]



“JULIUS AFRICANUS”¹⁸

“Julius Africanus (AD 170–240) wrote his *Chronographiae* while living in Israel, and was an advocate of the *LXX* chronology. Fragment 16a details the Septuagint’s antediluvian *begetting ages*, listing Methuselah’s as 187 years old. [‘And Enoch, when 165 years old, begets Methusala; and having pleased God, after a life of *another* 200 years, he was not found. Methusala, when 187 years old, begat Lamech.’¹⁹]

“In 16b, Africanus provides a pre-Flood summation of 2262 years, which places Methuselah’s death six years before the Flood, consistent with the 187 figure (Wallraff, Roberto, and Pinggera 2007, 27–29, 35).”²⁰

EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA²¹ (CA. AD 260–340)

“Eusebius is an early witness to the 187/167 discrepancy between *LXX* manuscripts. In his *Chronicle*, he writes,

“‘Methuselah fathered Lamech when he was 167 years of age. He lived an additional 802 years.’ Thus, he would have survived the flood by 22 [14] years. However, in other versions he died before the flood having lived an additional 782 years [after Lamech’s birth] (*Chronicle* 24:8).

“Eusebius’ record places multiple extant manuscripts of the *LXX* with the 187/782 figures in the early fourth century AD. The manuscript evidence now available to modern biblical scholarship fully supports his statements. Codices Alexandrinus (A), Cottonianus (D), and Coislinianus (M), and over a dozen minuscules contain Methuselah’s correct begetting age of 187 (Ray 1985, 28, 31; Wevers 1974a, 106). Several prominent scholars have agreed that 187 is the Septuagint’s original reading for Methuselah. Swete, though he was primarily using Codex Vaticanus for his work, notes that the correction from 167 to 187 made in Codex A may have been written in the margin by the original scribe (and not later), and he accepts 187 as the original reading in the *LXX* proper (1930, 8). Brooke and McLean surmise that 167 was corrected in Codex A by the first successive scribe, but they note their uncertainty with a question mark (1906, 12).

18. **Sextus Julius Africanus**, was the first Christian historian known to produce a universal chronology. He traveled considerably in Asia, Egypt, and Italy and later lived chiefly at Emmaus, in Palestine, where he served as prefect. He was named regional ambassador to Rome about 222, when he became a protégé of the emperor Severus Alexander. Africanus’ greatest work was *Chronographiai*, a five-volume treatise on sacred and profane history from the Creation, which he placed at 5499 BC, to AD 221. Relying on the *Bible* as the basis of his calculations, he incorporated and synchronized Egyptian and Chaldaean chronologies, Greek mythology, and Judaic history with Christianity. His work placed early Christianity in a historical context.

19. Julius Africanus, III. -- *The Extant Fragments of the Five Books of the Chronography of Julius Africanus*, iii, in *ANF*, Vol 6, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1994, p 131.

20. Smith, Henry B. Jr., *Methuselah’s Begetting Age in Genesis 5:25 and the Primeval Chronology of the Septuagint: A Closer Look at the Textual and Historical Evidence*, *Answers Research Journal*, 2017, 10:169–179. www.answersingenesis.org/arj/v10/methuselah-primeval-chronology-septuagint.pdf

21. Eusebius of Caesarea, CA. AD 260–340), was Bishop of Caesarea and most famous as the writer of the first history of the Church. He was very learned and attended the 1st Ecumenical Council in Nicea voting to excommunicate Arius. However, he himself was later excommunicated for heresy. As a historian he has preserved quotations and fragments from many important early Church documents.

Brenton, who documents few variants, accepts 167 as original, but has “Alex. 187 years” in the footnotes (1879, 6). More recently, OT scholar Eugene H. Merrill also argued for the originality of the 187 reading (2002, 115). Papyri 911 (late third century AD) and 961 (fourth century AD) both contain the original reading of 187 for Methuselah (Wevers 1974b, 13, 15). These papyri, Eusebius’ statement, and Africanus’ chronology occur prior to the correction found in Codex A (fifth century AD), indicating that its 187 reading was not just an *ad hoc* modification based on the obvious chronological problem with Methuselah’s death, but was supported by other existing (and earlier) *LXX* manuscripts that had retained the 187 figure.”²²

ST. JEROME (CA. AD 340–420)

By St. Jerome’s day the church was keenly aware of the numerical differences between the Hebrew and Greek texts of Genesis 5 and 11. Methuselah’s begetting age had become a celebrated question in all the churches. Living in Israel and closely interacting with the Jewish rabbis of his day, St. Jerome had before him a manuscript of the *LXX* that contained the 167 figure. Concerning this, he writes:

“There is a famous question that has been aired by discussion in all churches: that by a careful reckoning it can be shown that Methuselah lived fourteen years after the flood. It appears that in this case as in many others, in the Septuagint translation of the Bible there is an error in the numbers. Among the Hebrews and the books of the Samaritans, I have found the text written thus:

“Methuselah lived a hundred and eighty-seven years and became the father of Lamech. Methuselah lived after the birth of Lamech seven hundred and eighty-two years and had other sons and daughters. Thus all the days of Methuselah nine hundred and sixty-nine years; and he died. And Lamech lived one hundred and eighty two years and begot Noah.

“... and so it works out that Methuselah died in the nine hundred sixty-ninth year of his life, in the same year when the flood began.”²³

“In Jerome’s copies (plural) of the Samaritan Pentateuch [SP], the figures for Methuselah and Lamech in Genesis 5:25–28 do not match the numbers in any of the SP manuscripts that have survived up until today (table 1 [in Smith’s paper]). Instead, Jerome testifies that his copies of the SP contained for Methuselah the higher begetting age of 187, the remaining years of 782, and the lifespan of 969, matching the *MT*, numerous extant *LXX* manuscripts, Demetrius (*LXX*), Josephus (Hebrew), *LAB* (Hebrew) and Africanus (*LXX*). This powerful evidence from Jerome not only confirms the accuracy of the 187 reading for Methuselah, but it also indicates that *our present day manuscripts of the Samaritan Pentateuch have been deliberately reduced for the lives of both Methuselah and Lamech* (at [a] minimum). Any attempt to reconstruct the textual history of the primeval history must take into account Jerome’s historically weighty testimony as it relates to the

22. Smith, 2017, p. 174.

23. St. Jerome, *Liber quaestionum hebraicarum in Genesim*, 5:25-29, pp. 35-36, as quoted in Louth, Andrew, *Old Testament I, Genesis I-II*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Intervarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, 2001, p. 121.



ST.AUGUSTINE (AD 354-430)

“From this discrepancy between the Hebrew books and our own arises the well-known question as to the age of Methuselah; for it is computed that he lived for fourteen years after the deluge, though Scripture relates that of all who were then upon the earth only the eight souls in the ark escaped destruction by the flood, and of these Methuselah was not one. For, according to our books, Methuselah, before he begat the son whom he called Lamech, lived 167 years; then Lamech himself, before his son Noah was born, lived 188 years, which together make 355 years. Add to these the age of Noah at the date of the deluge, 600 years, and this gives a total of 955 from the birth of Methuselah to the year of the flood. Now all the years of the life of Methuselah are computed to be 969; for when he had lived 167 years, and had begotten his son Lamech, he then lived after this 802 years, which makes a total, as we said, of 969 years. From this, if we deduct 955 years from the birth of Methuselah to the flood, there remains fourteen years, which he is supposed to have lived after the flood ...”²⁵

“But far be it from any prudent man to believe either that the Jews, however malicious and wrong-headed, could have tampered with so many and so widely-dispersed manuscripts; or that those renowned seventy individuals had any common purpose to begrudge the truth to the nations. One must therefore more plausibly maintain, that when first their labors began to be transcribed from the copy in Ptolemy’s library, some such misstatement might find its way into the first copy made, and from it might be disseminated far and wide; and that this might arise from no fraud, but from a mere copyist’s error. This is a sufficiently plausible account of the difficulty regarding Methuselah’s life ...”²⁶

St. Augustine further provides his own eyewitness record of 5 additional ancient manuscripts in his possession that contained a begetting age of 187 years for Methusala:

“For there are three Greek [*LXX*] mss., one [Old] Latin, and one Syriac, which agree with one another, and in all of these Methuselah is said to have died six years before the deluge ...”²⁷

He then concludes:

“But that discrepancy of numbers which is found to exist between our own and the Hebrew text does not touch the longevity of the ancients; and if there is any diversity so great that both versions cannot be true, **we must take our ideas of the real facts from that text out of which our own version has been translated. However, though any one who pleases has it in his power to correct this version, yet it is not unimportant to observe that no one has presumed to emend the Septuagint from the Hebrew text in the many**

24. Smith, 2017, p. 175.

25. St. Augustine, *Chapter 11, Of Methuselah’s Age, Which Seems to Extend Fourteen Years Beyond the Deluge, City of God, Book XV*, in Shaff, Phillip (Ed.) *NPNF, Series 1, Vol. 2*, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1994, pp. 292.

26. *Ibid.*, *Chapter 13, Whether, in Computing Years, We Ought to Follow the Hebrew or the Septuagint*. pp. 293-294.

27. *Ibid.*, *Chapter 14, That the Years in Those Ancient Times Were of the Same Length as Our Own* p. 295.

places where they seem to disagree [Note: The context in this chapter applies to the 100 year differences in the genealogies, not to Methusala’s 167 vs. 187 years]. For this difference has not been reckoned a falsification; and for my own part I am persuaded it ought not to be reckoned so. But where the difference is not a mere copyist’s error, and where the sense is agreeable to truth and illustrative of truth, we must believe that the divine Spirit prompted them to give a varying version, not in their function of translators, but in the liberty of prophesying. And therefore we find that the apostles justly sanction the Septuagint, by quoting it as well as the Hebrew when they adduce proofs from the Scriptures.”²⁸

CORRECTING THE SEPTUAGINT CHRONOLOGY

Consequently, where known copyist errors in the *LXX* exist, we should correct them, in this case for the *begetting age* and *remaining years* of both Methusala and Lamech. Such corrections would appear to be consistent with the best evidence from Flavius Josephus’ *Antiquity of the Jews*, the pre-Masoretic *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, and the witness of early Christian writers Julius Africanus, Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea, St. Jerome, and St. Augustine. The corrections are shown in Table 5, which then places Methusala’s death in the year 2256, the year of the flood.

Table 5: Corrected *begetting ages* for the *LXX*

Patriarch	Begetting Age	Remaining Years	Year of Birth	Year of Death
Methusala	187 ^{JLABMT}	782 ^{JLABMT}	1287	2256
Lamech	182 ^{JLABMT}	595 ^{JLABMT}	1474	2251
Noe	500	350	1656	2606
Year of the Flood				2256

There are a few more differences in some of the post-flood *remaining years* column, but are inconsequential for the chronology (the summation of the *begetting age* column) up to Abram . So if we add 20 years for Methusala and subtract 6 years for Lamech, for these corrected *begetting ages* we arrive at 3326 years for the *corrected Septuagint (LXX*)* chronology from Adam to Isaac (born when Abraham was 100 years old) as shown in Table 6 (next page). The Biblical chronology of the *LXX** from the birth of Adam to the birth of Abraham, which would then yield [3326-1946 =] 1380 additional years over the Biblical chronology for the *Masoretic Text (MT)*.

Thus, it is 1380 years longer than Ussher’s chronology. We can now add 1541 years²⁹ to Ussher’s

28. *Ibid.*

29. See footnote 6 on page 2 of this article for an explanation of the additional 161 years added here to the 1380 years.



date of creation of 4004 BC (or 6026 years ago) based on the *MT* to arrive at an estimated date for *Biblical* creation based on the *LXX** of 5545 BC (or 7567 years ago). Obviously that is still far less than the billions of years championed by naturalistic evolutionary scientists for their calculated age of the earth. Nevertheless, the *Biblical* age of the earth is approximately 23% older by any of the *LXX* texts in comparison to the *MT*. and that difference is important for post-Flood archaeological dating of ancient civilizations, e.g., of Egypt.³⁰

Table 6: Begetting Age Comparisons between Masoretic and Pre-Masoretic Hebrew Texts with the Corrected *LXX**

Patriarch	MT	Lxx*	LAB	Josephus
Adam	130	230	(230)	230
Seth	105	205	205	205
Enos	90	190	190	190
Cainan	70	170	170	170
Mahalaleel	65	165	165	165
Jared	162	162	162	162
Enoch	65	165	165	165
Methuselah	187	187*	187	187
Lamech	182	182*	182	182
Noah	500	500	300	500
Shem	100	100		
Arphaxad	35	135		135
Kainan		130		
Salah	30	130		130
Eber	34	134		134
Peleg	30	130		130
Reu	32	130*	119	130
Serug	30	132*	29	132
Nahor	29	79	34	
Terah	70	70	70	70
Abraham	100	100	100	100
Totals =	1946	3326		

I do find it interesting that the *Scripture* reading for *Genesis* in the *Triodion* for Great Lent of Thursday in the Second Week ends with the genealogy of Enoch. Consequently, they do not include Methusala and Lamech. Later readings do cover Noah, but also skip the genealogies of Shem through Terah in *Genesis II*. So we don't read these miscopied verses for these patriarchs in any of our annual liturgical services suggesting that their Patristic composers knew of these

30. Sexton, Jeremy, and Smith Henry B., Jr., *Primeval Chronology Restored: Revisiting the Genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11*, *Bible and Spade*, (2016), 29(2):42. https://biblearchaeology.org/images/Genesis-5-and-11/29-2-3-BAS_Primeval-Chronology-Restored.pdf

discrepancies and wisely avoided repeating them.

ORIGIN OF THE BEGETTING AGE DIFFERENCES: MASORETIC TEXT VERSUS THE PRE-MASORETIC HEBREW TEXTS AND THE CORRECTED *LXX (AND JOSEPHUS)**

What about those differences between the *MT* and our corrected *LXX** that St. Augustine referred to earlier? Where do they come from? (See Table 6.)

We can see that the *begetting age* of the *MT* Patriarchs in comparison to the *LXX* has been reduced by 100 years for Adam, Seth, Enos, Cainan, Maleleel, Enoch, Arpachshad, Shelah, Eber, Peleg, and Serug; and has been reduced by 50 for Nahor. Kainan is missing altogether. Jared, Noe, Shem, Terah, and Abraham are unaltered.

Although minor differences can be attributed to scribal errors:

“... scholars universally acknowledge that the divergences of 100 (50 for Nahor) in the *ba* [begetting age] signify deliberate alterations of the text. This is further confirmed by six 100 year variations in the *ry* [remaining years] in Genesis 5, which were also deliberately amended so that the original lifespans would remain intact when a mathematical crosscheck 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.”³¹

“7. Septuagint and Old Testament 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* [our *LXX**] testifies to an early 3rd 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 1st century AD and earlier [i.e., Josephus and the LAB].”³²

RABBINIC JEWISH MANIPULATION OF BIBLICAL TEXTS

Thus, rather than putting the blame on *LXX* sources, i.e., that the *LXX* scribes inflated the numbers in their text documents by 50 or 100 years, we need to consider deliberate chronological deflation by the surviving Jewish rabbis following the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70 and beyond.

“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) ...

“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.

31. Smith, Henry B., Jr., *The case for the Septuagint's Chronology in Genesis 5 and 11*, *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference on Creationism*, Pittsburgh, PA, 2018, p. 120. <https://biblearchaeology.org/images/Genesis-5-and-11/Smith-Henry-The-Case-for-the-Septuagint-Chronology-in-Gen-5-and-11-ICC.pdf>
32. *Ibid.*, p. 121.





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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 [Ante-Messianic] 5000–5999), and usher in the kingdom in the 7th millennium (AM 6000). Other schemes held that the Messiah would arrive in/around the year AM 4000, 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), based on the MT, dates Creation to 3761 BC, placing the arrival of the Messiah to around AD 240 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. This reduction was done in conjunction with their reinterpretation of Daniel 9, which they associated with the Temple’s destruction instead of the Messiah. 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 of the *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 [AM 4999], 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.

“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. 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. 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. “In short, after the destruction of Jerusalem it was possible to introduce a corrupted Biblical chronology.”

“The rabbis possessed adequate motive, authoritative means, and unique opportunity to systematically revise the sacred text ... They are the only group who could have made this kind of radical chronological alteration permanent in future manuscripts.”³³ ❖ ❖ ❖

NEXT ISSUE: ST. HIPPOLYTUS OF ROME, TREATISE ON CHRIST AND ANTICHRIST, PART I

33. *Ibid.*, p. 122. [Note: All this information is highly referenced!]