

# The Chronology of The Pentateuch



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## Reference points

During Old Testament times, dates are generally given in reference to a king or a significant event. For example:

- *In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened. (Gen. 7:11)*
- *Now the time that the sons of Israel lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. And at the end of four hundred and thirty years, to the very day, all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. (Exod. 12:40-41)*
- *Thus the LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying, (Num. 9:1)*
- *Now it came about in the four hundred and eightieth year after the sons of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD (1 Ki. 6:1)*

## Genesis Chapters 1 & 2

- Genesis 1:1-5 describe the first day
  - Creation of heaven and earth
  - Light
  - Separation of light and dark
  - Definition of what a day means – evening and morning. In other words, a normal 24-hour day
- Genesis 1:6-8 describe the second day
  - An expanse is created between the earth and heaven
- Genesis 1:9-13 describe the third day
  - Dry land appears
  - The dry land is called earth and the water is called seas
  - Vegetation is created

- Genesis 1:14-19 describe the fourth day
  - Lights were made to be a sign for the seasons, days and years. (the reason for not specifying sun and moon is likely because they were worshipped by other people)
  - Stars are also made
- Genesis 1:20-23 describe the fifth day
  - Swimming creatures are made
  - Flying creatures are made
- Genesis 1:24-31 describe the sixth day
  - Land animals are made
  - Adam & Eve are made in the image of God
  - Man is given dominion over all the living creatures
  - Animals and mankind were given plants for food
- God states that everything that he made was “very good”
- Genesis 2:2-3 describe the seventh day
  - By the seventh day, God had completed his work, rested and blessed the seventh day.
- In the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment regarding the Sabbath, Exodus 20:11 affirms that God made the heavens and the earth and all that is in them in 6 ordinary, 24 hour days.

## Genesis chapter 5, 7 & 9

In this chapter we have the “book of the generations of Adam”. We will use the Masoretic text numbers as they are represented in our Bibles. Later we will show the comparison of the Masoretic text and Septuagint numbers as the latter is more likely the correct version.

Considering the formula given for this list, it is quite obvious that God wanted us to be able to calculate the overall timeline, with the reference point being creation. For example, we read that when Adam was 130, he became the father of Seth. He lived another 800 years and the total years that he lived was 930.

Name	Age at birth of Son	Lived after birth of son	Total Lifespan
Adam	130	800	930
Seth	105	807	912
Enosh	90	815	905
Kenan	70	840	910
Mahalalel	65	830	895
Jared	162	800	962
Enoch	65	300	365
Methuselah	187	782	969
Lamech	182	595	777
Noah	502	448	950

For Noah, we need to look at a few verses.

- Genesis 5:32 tells us that Noah was 500 years old when he became the father of Shem, Ham and Japheth
- Genesis 7:6 tells us that Noah was 600 years old when the flood came
- Genesis 9:28 tells us that Noah lived 350 years after the flood
- Genesis 9:29 tells us that Noah lived a total of 950 years.
- Genesis 11:10 tells us that Shem was 100 years old 2 years after the flood
- From this information, we can tell that Shem was not the first-born, but was born 2 years after either Japheth or Ham or both were born.

## Genesis chapter 11

In this chapter we have the record of the generations of Shem. We have a similar formula in this list. The age of the patriarch is provided at the birth of the son and then lived another number of years.

Name	Age at birth of Son	Lived after birth of son	Total Lifespan
Shem	100	500	600
Arpachshad	35	403	438
Shelah	30	403	433
Eber	34	430	464
Peleg	30	209	239
Reu	32	207	239
Serug	30	200	230
Nahor	29	119	148
Terah	130	75	205

For Terah we need to look at the following verses since his first son was not Abraham.

- Genesis 11:32 gives the total lifespan for Terah as 205
- Genesis 12:4 gives the age of Abraham as 75 when he left Haran right after Terah died there
- This makes Terah 130 when Abraham was born. (It also makes him 140 when Sarah was born to him by another woman)

## Abraham to Joseph

To get the numbers from Abraham to Joseph we go into a more detailed part of the text and find the references to compile this list.

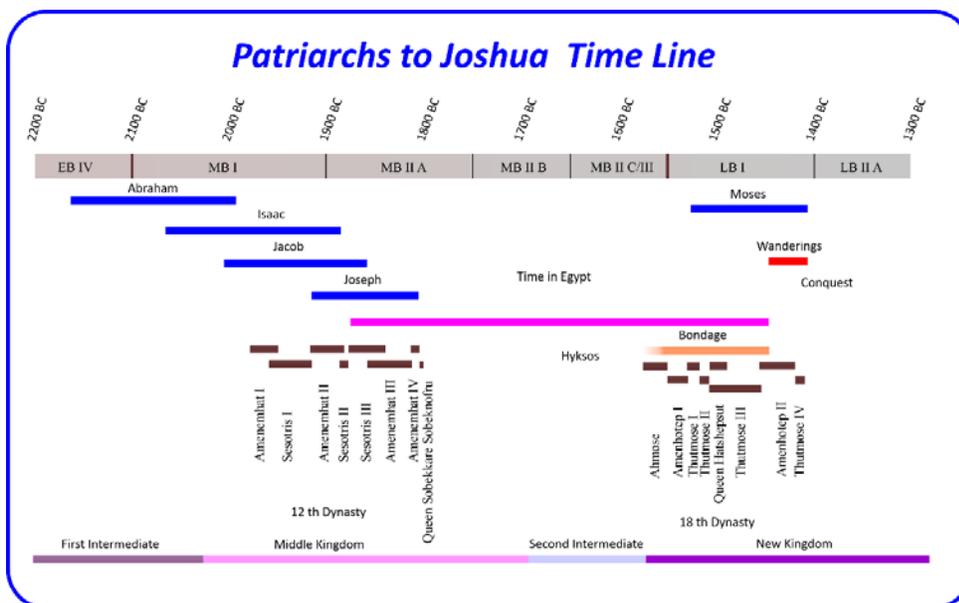
- Abraham was 100 years old at the birth of Isaac
  - Genesis 17 records Abraham being 99 years old when he was given the promise of a child through Sarah his wife the following year.
  - Genesis 21:5 records Abraham's age as 100 years old when Isaac was born.
- Abraham lived to be 175 years old (Genesis 25:7)

- Isaac was 60 years old when Jacob was born (Genesis 25:26)
- Isaac was 180 years old when he died (Genesis 35:28)
- Jacob was 147 years old when he died (Genesis 47:28)
- Joseph's numbers need to be calculated a bit differently.
  - Jacob was in Egypt 17 years
  - Jacob entered Egypt when there were 5 years left in the famine (Genesis 45:6, 11)
  - Joseph was 30 years old when he came before Pharaoh (Genesis 41:46). At this point the 7 years of plenty were just beginning.
  - Joseph died at 110 years of age (Genesis 50:26)
  - So, to get Jacob's age at Joseph's birth we need to start from the time that Jacob entered Egypt. He was 130 Years old when he came to Egypt (Genesis 47:9). From that, we subtract the 2 years of famine that have already occurred, so that makes him 128 at the start of the famine. From there we subtract the 7 years of plenty, making him 121 at the time of the start of the 7 years of plenty which is when Joseph was 30 years old, making Jacob 91 years old when Joseph was born. Joseph's sons were born prior to the years of famine. (Genesis 41:50)

Name	Age at birth of Son	Lived after birth of son	Total Lifespan
Abraham	100	75	175
Isaac	60	120	180
Jacob	91	56	147
Joseph	31-36	74-79	110

## Time in Egypt

Exodus 12:40-41 provide the total time in Egypt – 430 years to the day.



## Time from the Exodus to the start of the Temple

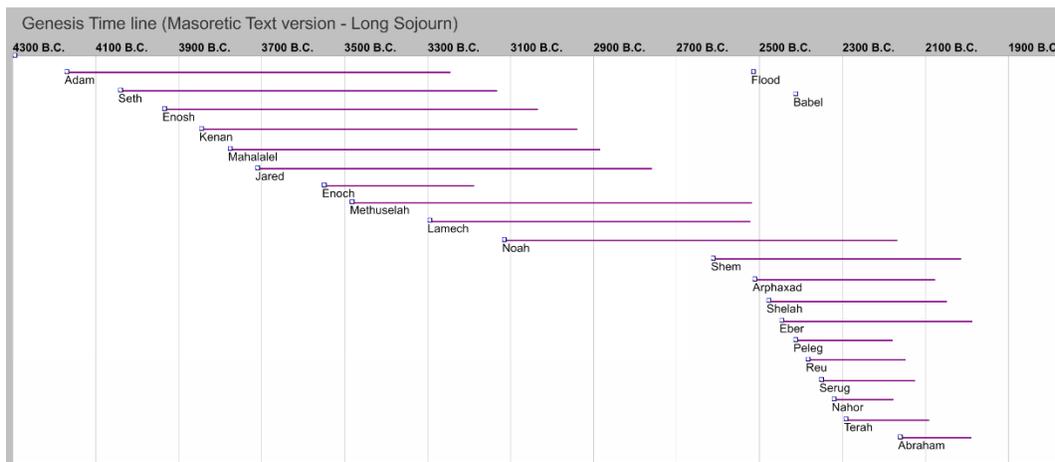
In 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 6:1 we are told that in the 480<sup>th</sup> year after Israel came out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon, he began to build the temple. So here we have another reference point.

The fourth year of Solomon's reign has been quite firmly established to be 967 BC (Steinmann 2011, Pg 37). This puts the Exodus at 1446 BC.

Putting all this together now we have

- The Exodus in 1446 BC
- Jacob (Israel) into Egypt in 1876 BC
- Jacobs birth is 2006 BC
- Isaac's birth is 2066 BC
- Abraham's birth is 2166 BC

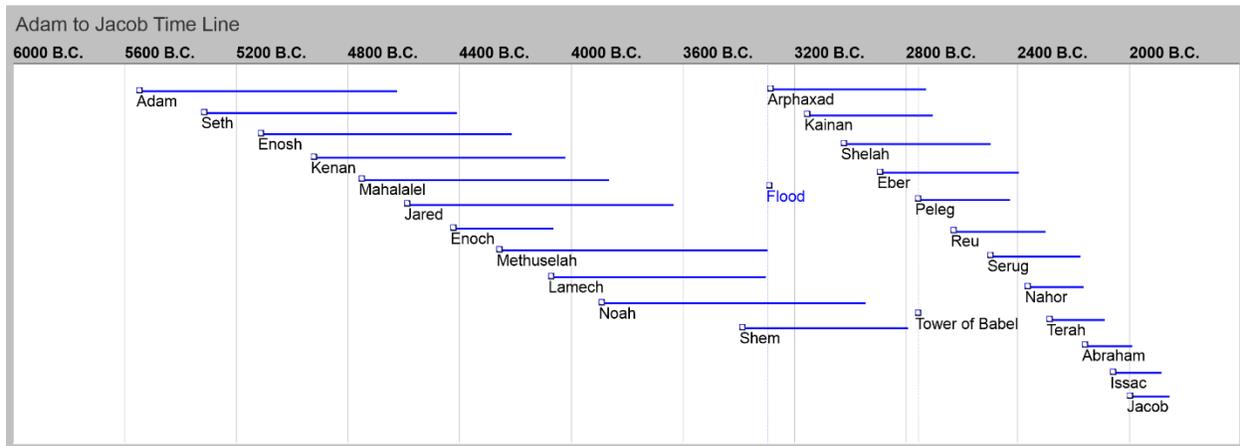
From there it is a fairly simple matter of charting all of this.



There is one more issue to deal with and that is the textual evidence of the Patriarchal numbers.

There has been an obvious changing of some of the numbers of the pre-flood and post flood patriarchs. A number of the ages when sons were born have been changed. There were also some copying mistakes. By looking at the textual and extra-Biblical evidence, the original numbers can be reconstructed fairly well. The following chart represents the most likely original numbers. With the Masoretic text, we come up with a creation date of about 4174 BC and with the most probable reconstruction, we come up with 5554 BC. This provides us with the outside bounds of the date of creation, i.e. no farther back than 5554 BC and no less than 4174 BC.

For a discussion on the textual evidence, please go to <https://biblearchaeology.org/abr-projects-main/genesis-5-11-project>



The other lifespan we are told about is that of Moses.

- Moses was about 40 years old when he killed the Egyptian (Acts 7:23)
- Moses was 80 years old at the time of the Exodus. (Exodus 7:7)
- Moses was 120 years old when he died. (Deuteronomy 34:7)

Since the Exodus was in 1446 BC, Moses would have been born in 1526 BC and died in 1406 BC.

## Dating from Creation or our current calendar

When God started to provide a timeline for us, He started with creation not with the calendar that we currently use. This could be compared to using degrees Celsius or degrees Kelvin. The Kelvin scale starts at absolute 0 (-273.15 C), which could be compared to dating from creation, since that is the starting point of time. Degrees Celsius could be compared to our current dating system of BC and AD with Jesus Christ being the reference point. From this reference point, whether it be the freezing point of water at 0 degrees or the birth of Jesus, you can go forward or backward. Just as you can convert from Celsius to Kelvin, so you can convert from absolute dates from creation to our present calendar.

## Bibliography

Steinmann, Andrew. *From Abraham to Paul*. St Louis, MO: Concordia, 2011.