

1. The ages in Gen. 5 add up to 8575 ($= 25 \times 7 \times 7 \times 7$)
2. The 7 ages in the third column add up to 1029 ($= 3 \times 7 \times 7 \times 7$)

If we combine these two columns together, thus making a "list" of 17 ages:

3. These 17 ages add up to 9604 ($= 4 \times 7 \times 7 \times 7 \times 7$);
4. The middle age is that of Lamech (777);
5. Remarkably, the 7 ages on either side of Lamech add up to a total of 7777. The fact that this is intentional can be seen in the way this figure of 7777 is itself divided up:
6. The ages either side of Lamech (i.e. Methuselah and Noah) add up to 1919 (19×101);
7. The 6 ages preceding Methuselah (i.e. Seth to Enoch) add up to 4949 ($7 \times 7 \times 101$), of which the first three (Seth/Enosh/Kenan) add up to 2727 ($3 \times 3 \times 3 \times 101$);
8. The 6 ages after Noah (Abraham to Amran) add up to 909 ($3 \times 3 \times 101$)

There are clearly other patterns which have also been incorporated into the system; for example, one which has been long recognized is the following, for the major patriarchs:

Abraham	175 ($= 7 \times 5 \times 5$)
Isaac	180 ($= 5 \times 6 \times 6$)
Jacob	147 ($= 3 \times 7 \times 7$)

James Williams (in his article "Number Symbolism and Joseph as Symbol of Completion," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 98 [1979]: 86-7) suggests that Joseph (whose age of 110 is $[5 \times 5] + [6 \times 6] + [7 \times 7]$) completes this sequence: "Joseph is the *successor* in the pattern ($7 \rightarrow 5 \rightarrow 3 \rightarrow 1$) and the *sum* of his predecessors ($5^2 + 6^2 + 7^2$)."

It would not be possible to demonstrate other patterns in this letter, but if I may conclude with several brief observations:

1. Given the knowledge of mathematics in the ancient Mesopotamian world it would not be difficult for a mathematician to have devised this pattern; in my dissertation I reconstruct a possible path that might have been followed;
2. If only one age was different by even 1 year, the entire system would collapse. This gives good grounds for assuming the reliability of the MT figures. The LXX and the SP have both "adjusted" the MT figures, but in doing so have created chaos; in the LXX Methuselah actually dies 14 years *after* the flood!
3. The key theological points that the system demonstrates are:
 - (a) The period from Adam to Moses was regarded as in some ways a "complete" period of time, characterized by the number seven;
 - (b) *None* of the ages reach 1000, which, in the ancient world, would have symbolized some degree of divinity;
 - (c) *None* of the characters achieved immortality on earth (as again occurs in the legends of the cultures surrounding Israel). As Paul says: "Death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses" (Rom. 5:14).

I trust that these observations will further reinforce Carol Hill's conclusion that "the symbolic ... view is sacred because that is how the original biblical author(s) intended for it to be" (p. 250).

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Interpreting Numbers in Genesis

Thank you for publishing Carol A. Hill's article, "Making Sense of the Numbers of Genesis" (*PSCF* 55, no. 4 [December 2003]: 239-51). Carol has done a magnificent job in showing us how the early scribes of Israel were beholden to the Mesopotamian culture in their different use of "numbers." This is just another example of how much of the early biblical books of Genesis and Exodus are a product of a "post-exilic period" in which Israeli scribes, being newly released from captivity in Babylon, set about putting a jumbled collection of local ancient legends and myths into some sort of coherent order. Carol's conclusion is right on: "Ironically, by interpreting the numbers of Genesis "literally" Christians have created a mythological world that does not fit with the historical or scientific record."

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"Genesis Age Gaps?"

Carol Hill's articles on Genesis topics make interesting reading, but her most recent one contains arguments that I challenge. In "Making Sense of the Numbers in Genesis" (*PSCF* 55, no. 4 [Dec. 2003]: 239-51), she tries to show (p. 248) that certain biblical genealogies are condensed by omitting names and thus creating gaps of time in the lineage. She then asks: "How far back in time can biblical genealogies be stretched, assuming that legitimate gaps exist" (p. 249). The gaps she mentions amount to 370 years, but she stretches that by saying: "The known gaps can push biblical chronology back at least several hundred years and up to one thousand years or so at most" (p. 249).

Hill's "most notable example" of a gap is in Matt. 1:8, where Uzziah is listed as the son of Joram (Jehoram), omitting the names of three kings of Judah in between them, for a possible gap of 70 years. However, Matthew was simply repeating the condensation of Joram to Uzziah found in 2 Kings 15:32. This has no effect on biblical chronology because scholars like Bishop Ussher (1650) or Reece (1977) have recourse to detailed information about the omitted kings earlier in 2 Kings (8:25; 12:1; and 14:1).

Hill's other example involves Exod. 6:16-20, which indicates that Moses was a grandson of Kohath, who was "born before the descent into Egypt" (p. 248). Hill believes there must be names omitted from that line because the