

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

"children of Israel" were in Egypt 430 years, and Moses was 80 when he led the exodus. So Hill states that Moses "must have been born ... 350 years after Kohath, who consequently could not have been his grandfather" (p. 248). Hill counts this as a gap of 300 years in biblical chronology, assuming that Kohath was around 50 when he begat the line of Moses. However, this gap does not exist because Hill's conclusion is based on a faulty premise: that the 430 years began when Jacob and his sons went to Egypt to join Joseph. According to Paul (Gal. 3:16-17), they began more than 200 years earlier when Abram and Sarai went to Egypt. This interpretation by Paul, a student of Gamaliel, was duly followed in "Reece's Chronological Bible" (1977) and by Bishop Ussher (1650), as noted by James Barr in "Archbishop Ussher and Biblical Chronology" (*Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 67: 575-608). Reece, for example, has Jacob and his sons moving to Egypt 135 years before Moses' birth, which presents no problem fitting the male line of Levi → Kohath → Amram → Moses into that time frame. If Levi went to Egypt when he was 46 (approx. 7 years older than Joseph) and his son Kohath was 3, then Kohath could have begotten Amram 66 years later, at age 69, and Amram could have begotten Moses at age 69, and therefore 135 years (66 + 69) after the move to Egypt.

Hill does not mention a different problem associated with Moses' mother. Jochebed was a daughter of Levi (Num. 26:59) and a sister of Kohath (Exod. 6:20), which means her husband Amram was her nephew. Presumably she was younger than Amram's 69 (+ or -) years when Moses was born. That would make Levi an advanced senior citizen when he begat her. For instance, if she was 46 at Moses birth, Levi would have been 135 at her birth, which would have been 135 years after the move to Egypt (135 + or -46). Abraham was at least 137 when he began to beget six sons with Keturah, whom he took as a wife sometime after Sara died at age 127 (Gen. 23:1; 25:1-2), he being 10 years older (Gen. 17:17).

And so Hill's gaps of 70 and 300 years disappear. The next problem she mentions about "begat" (p. 248) also disappears on scrutiny. In arguing that "begat" may not indicate descent from father to son, she cites as an example Kohath's sons: "the third, fourth, and fifth names represent brothers, not sons, as shown by comparing Exod. 6:24 with 1 Chron. 6:36-37" (p. 248). These verses do not relate to Kohath's sons or brothers. Exodus 6:24 lists three sons of Koreth, who was a grandson of Kohath. Kohath's four sons are listed in Exod. 6:18 as Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. This information is repeated in 1 Chron. 6:2 and again in 6:18; it is not contradicted in 1 Chron. 6:36-37, which deals with Kohath's descendants thru Izhar.

Hill uses this mistaken example involving Kohath to support her contention that "When it is said (Gen. 5:9) 'and Enosh lived ninety years, and begat Kenan' ... perhaps Enosh was ninety ... when his grandson or great-grandson Kenan was born ... how do we know that Kenan was the immediate son?" (p. 248). Well, we know because Gen. 5:9 says so, quite clearly by giving Enosh's age when he begat Kenan. But even if there were a gap of a name or two in between Enosh and Kenan, there is still a period of 90 years between them, and not a gap in time that could "push biblical chronology back several hundred years ..." (p. 249).

Hill not only challenges (unsuccessfully) the age at, and sequence of begetting by patriarchs but also their longevities as recorded in Genesis. She cites as evidence against Shem's great longevity that he "would have survived Abraham by 35 years, but where does the Bible indicate ... these men were coeval?" (p. 244). The answer is simple: In Genesis, in the very verses that Hill used to calculate that they were coeval! Perhaps Hill requires a Bible story about Abraham visiting Shem. Maybe a visit did occur. The absence of evidence (of a visit) is not necessarily evidence of absence.

There is an absence of convincing evidence for inconsistencies in the Bible concerning the patriarchal ages and begetting sequence in Hill's article. However, Hill does point out that all of these ages appear to be based on multiples of 60, which underlies the "sacred" sexagesimal system used in Mesopotamia. A major point of her article is that none of these ages end in 1 or 6, a highly significant departure from expectation by chance alone. This is as amazing, statistically, as the ages themselves (compared to nonpatriarchs).

One hypothesis to explain this phenomenon is that somebody slightly modified each age by + or -1 or a few years so that they became sexagesimal multiples, and not ending in 1 or 6. Hill's hypothesis is that much more extensive changes were made, extending the ages by decades or centuries, which is why she devotes much of the article in trying to show inconsistencies in the Bible relative to these names. She puts it this way:

Whatever the ... intent of the biblical writer for each of the patriarchal ages ... the overall purpose ... was to preserve the harmony of numbers ... the patriarchal ages in Genesis are not real numbers ... Were these numbers "assigned" to the patriarchs on the basis of their ... relationship with God?" (p. 244).

The above quote suggests, but passes by an alternative hypothesis, that God assigned the patriarchal ages. Psalm 139:16 puts it this way: "All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be," and I trust that applies to the patriarchs as well.

Those interested in a detailed treatment of biblical numbers may want to examine a recent book not included in "Notes" at the end of Hill's article. *Genesis Numerology* 2d ed. (2003, ISBN 965 90620-0-1), by Meir Bar-Ilan has the title and brief chapter summaries translated into English but it is written in Hebrew.

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Apparent Age

Dick Fischer, in "Young-Earth Creationism: A Literal Mistake" (*PSCF* 55, no. 4 [December 2003]: 222-31), rejects the Young-Earth Creationists (YEC) "appearance of age" argument as "flawed" mainly on the grounds that it makes God a liar. Although I am not a YEC, I propose that Fischer's total rejection of the concept of apparent age may