

On the Lifetimes from Adam to Joseph

by Anthony J. Perry

The lifetimes are reviewed based on the information derived from the book of Genesis. They show a remarkable degree of internal consistency and reflect a series of social structures. These can be divided into three stages: 1. exceedingly long lives where all progenitors of Noah died before the Flood; 2. the lifetime expectancy fell dramatically after the flood (also affecting Arphaxad born pre-flood) with very early procreation of children and increasingly short lifetimes which point to much insecurity; 3. procreation at a somewhat later age but with a progressive shortening of lifetime closely following a natural decay curve over 700 years after the Flood which stabilized only following Abraham

INTRODUCTION

It is not, perhaps, so surprising that a scientist would be attracted to understanding what information can be gleaned from the *tôl^edôt* lists in Genesis. There are many people who appear in the Bible of whom there is then no further mention: they play their part and depart the stage. In the Christian Bible, among the well-known are the “wise men” who visit Jesus and whose departure goes effectively un-sung apart from Christmas presentations. In the Jewish Bible, the family lists in Numbers include so many who lived out their lives and are now just a name on a list. Is there more to be learned about their lives?

The ‘primeval history’¹ as explicated in Genesis is arguably the most difficult segment of the Bible for a Christian who is also a scientist (‘in an earlier life’, to use the usual expression) to deal with. It is thus a personal issue to explore this theology: the Creation, the Flood, and life expectancy in the re-creation after the Flood. But it goes deeper, any Christian who holds to the inspired truth of the Bible has to resolve the issue of understanding at a personal level.

ON THE CREATION PROCESS

The long-running debate between Intelligent Design and the theological approach has recently become particularly heated. It appears to have no solution and care should be taken in interpretation because, if the whole of creation did not conform to a real or apparent plan where everything is coordinated and functions perfectly, then it simply could not exist. This neither proves nor denies either concept. Over recent centuries, many scientists who were convinced Christians have regarded their studies as an attempt to understand God’s handywork², or ‘Thinking God’s thoughts after Him’³ –this applies here also.

Referring back to those very early times, there was little point in Moses (or whomsoever wrote or ‘redacted’ the Pentateuch^{4,5}) trying to explain to the Israelite nation the idea of evolution, or an original energy-plasma ball - whether this was the sequence used by God in creation or not. However, *technical material can be presented validly in a simplified fashion which still contains the general truth*. The objective of the Biblical account of Creation can be regarded (as opposed to a myth or epic⁶) as a simplified but credible sequence which could be portrayed to a people who were by no means uneducated but, having been

brought up in, and surrounded by, religious cultures were content with this account of their ‘roots’ as the Chosen People, descended directly from Adam through Noah and Abraham by a loving pre-existent creator God. Modern academic readings regard Genesis in this light, but in a genre termed poetic parallelism⁷.

A gallant attempt to unify the Biblical account with current scientific understanding was made by Aviezer⁸. Whilst not all his comparisons are convincing, he emphasizes many times over that the creation of an life-supporting Earth is the result of a whole series of unlikely accidental events and thus must have been a directed process.

In direct contrast, Coyne, the Papal Astronomer, was quoted as saying that the universe is an evolutionary product of natural laws and innumerable chances⁹.

Before the Flood: Creation and Fall

‘The God who *created* Israel was the God who *created* the world’¹⁰ *created* the earth and man himself by a series of decrees. Complementary accounts of Man’s (used collectively) creation¹¹ are accompanied by a second act of creation by God: the re-creation after the Flood where the world returned to the conditions similar to creation. God created an environment for companionship out of His love for Man, in which he could live in complete harmony and fellowship with his God. The initial creation was perfection: the Garden of Eden where peace prevailed, marriage was created, personal integrity, and order reigned¹² in the absence of sin, labor, sexual awareness and inequality.

Enter the devil disguised as a snake and all harmony was destroyed, sin entered the world becoming steadily more rampant. Adam and Eve were evicted from the Garden out into an imperfect world - the Bible states that God created the world and pronounced it good (Gen. 1) - but not perfect! God pronounced His curse on the earth which led to natural death, and violent death – murder.

The Flood

Designed to purge the world of evil, God sent the Great Flood to destroy the corruption and violence in mankind, saving in His grace the man Noah together with his wife and family (Gen. 6:5-8).

In contrast to the extensive discussion on Creation, little is written on the Flood where questions on this cataclysmic event include¹³: the origin of the water, its universal or local extent, and the ultimate dispersal of the water. Geological evidence confirms the Biblical record of massive extensive flooding accompanied probably by the loss of a Venus-like cloud canopy¹⁴. The question is not resolved, but it is enough to assume that *the extent was sufficient to wipe out all descendants of Adam other than those housed in the ark* including all the craftsmen descended from Enoch (Gen. 4:17-22) with the concomitant loss of their technical expertise. The ark housed animals of all kinds, and presumably sufficient provisions (no pre-indication had been given to Noah of the duration) and seed for planting first crops afterwards. Specialist skills, farmer (Cain) or shepherd (Abel), were passed on as Noah cultivated, and later on Abraham (and his progeny through Moses) tended sheep.

The Biblical duration of the Flood was about one year: 370¹⁵, 371¹⁶ or 377¹⁷ days. This is enough to damage trees, shrubs and grasses, which regenerate quickly unless the water is saline (the olive leaf brought back by the dove makes this unlikely). Grape-vines (Noah and his wine-making) and fruit tree cuttings produce fruit within a season and after about five years of planting, respectively.

After the Flood

The world after the Flood is key to later Biblical history. God made a covenant never to curse the ground or destroy the Earth by water. This covenant was one-sided: from God to man. God's love for man was to be severely tested over the coming centuries (Israel means "struggles with God").

Entering this cleansed world, Noah sacrificed and made fermented wine with disastrous consequences for Ham's son Canaan. Although a re-creation¹⁸, God's instructions mirrored those given to Adam¹⁹ and, in addition, he was granted all food to eat, now including blood-drained meat. The death-sentence was imposed for first degree murder²⁰. Sin and death were carried over through the Flood and have remained with mankind for ever.

Retaining the viewpoint of Jewish Biblical times, the Israelites would accept the Biblical lifetimes as historical and quantitative (discussed in ref. 21). We can review the very great life expectancy before the Flood, and the massive drop-off after it, of the descendants of the Bearers of the Promise²², to see how it would have appeared to them. For the people of OT times, the very long lifetimes of prehistory²³ would be accepted without question as real (in common with surrounding cultures²⁴).

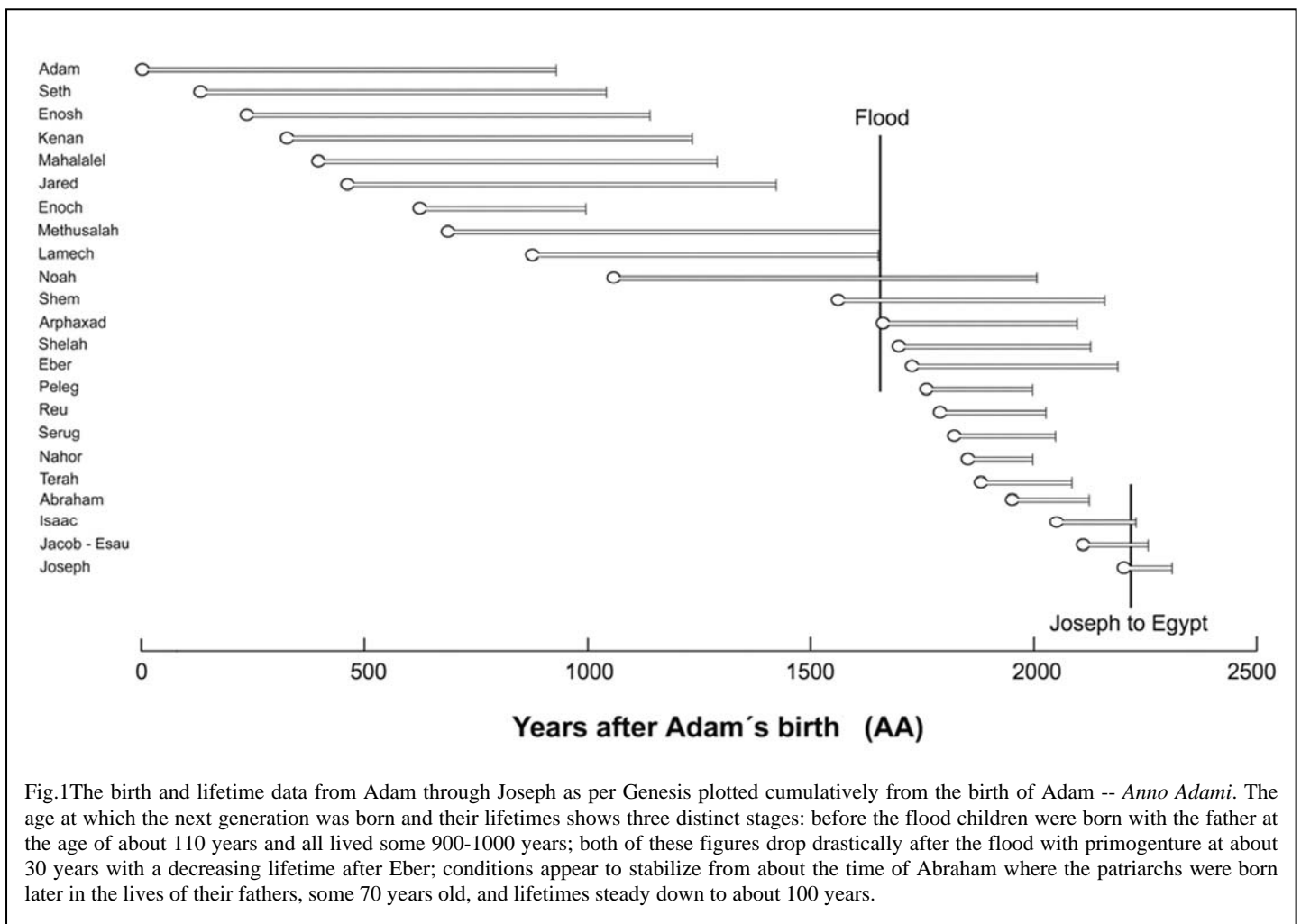


Fig.1 The birth and lifetime data from Adam through Joseph as per Genesis plotted cumulatively from the birth of Adam -- *Anno Adami*. The age at which the next generation was born and their lifetimes shows three distinct stages: before the flood children were born with the father at the age of about 110 years and all lived some 900-1000 years; both of these figures drop drastically after the flood with primogeniture at about 30 years with a decreasing lifetime after Eber; conditions appear to stabilize from about the time of Abraham where the patriarchs were born later in the lives of their fathers, some 70 years old, and lifetimes steady down to about 100 years.

Here, the line from Adam is extended beyond Terah through Joseph. The lifespans of Noah's direct forbears (Gen. 5:3-31) with all dates calculated from Adam's birth (i.e. Anno Adami, AA)) continued through Terah (Gen. 11:10-26) and on through Joseph are given in Table I and shown in Fig. 1.

Table I: Lifeline per the NIV

Name	Born (AA)	Son born at age (AA)	in year (AA)	subsequent lifetime (years)	total lifetime (years) log.	year died (AA)
Adam	0	130	130	800	930 2.9685	930
Seth	130	105	235	807	912 2.9600	1042
Enosh	235	90	325	815	905 2.9566	1140
Kenan	325	70	395	840	910 2.9590	1235
Mahalalel	395	65	460	830	895 2.9518	1290
Jared	460	162	622	800	962 2.9832	1422
Enoch	622	65	687	300	365 2.5623	987
Methuselah	687	187	874	782	969 2.9863	1656
Lamech	874	182	1056	595	777 2.8904	1651
Noah	1056	497/500	1556	350	950 2.9777	2006
Japheth	1556					
[Flood began	1656]					
[Flood ended	1657]					
Shem*	1559	100	1659	500	600 2.7782	2159
Arphaxad	1659	35	1694	403	438 2.6415	2097
Shelah	1694	30	1724	403	433 2.6365	2127
Eber	1724	34	1758	430	464 2.6665	2188
Peleg	1758	30	1788	209	239 2.3784	1997
Reu	1788	32	1820	207	239 2.3784	2027
Serug	1820	30	1850	200	230 2.3617	2050
Nahor	1850	29	1879	119	148** 2.1703	1998
Terah	1879	70/135	2014		205 2.3118	2084
Haran	1949	?			?	?
Abra(ha)m*	2014	86/100	2114		175 2.2430	2189
Ishmael	2100	?			137 2.1367	2237
Isaac*	2114	60/60	2174		180 2.2553	2294
Esau	2174				?	?
Jacob*	2174	7/91	2265		147 2.1673	2321
Reuben	?				?	?
Joseph*	2265	?			110 2.0414	2375

* not the firstborn

** 48 years in the Hebrew Bible

LIFETIMES

In the following the lifetimes of Shem and his descendants through Joseph are reviewed to complete the timeline. These are not cited directly in the Hebrew Bible but can be derived approximately.

The dating of Shem through Joseph

Shem

Noah's three sons are quoted as being born when he was 500 years old (Gen. 5:32): Canaan was one of the four sons (Gen. 10:6) of Ham (Gen. 9:22) who was Noah's youngest son (Gen. 9:24). Japheth was the elder brother of Shem (Gen. 10:21) and therefore presumably was the one born when Noah was 500 years old. The Flood began when

Noah was 600 years old (Gen. 7:6). Summing the data for the duration of the stages of the Flood (Gen. 7 and 8) gives a total of about a year as noted above. Two years after the Flood Shem was 100 years old (Gen. 11:10). Thus he was born in the year 1559 AA, dating from the end of the Flood in 1657 AA.

Abraham

Genesis 11:26 teaches that "Terah had lived 70 years, he became father of Abraham, Nahor and Haran." It can be noted:

-They may not have had the same mother. Sarai (Sarah) was daughter of Terah, but half-sister of Abram (Gen. 20:12).

-It is not clear who was the eldest son born to Terah when he was 70 years old. The Biblical sequence of names does not always correspond to the sequence of birth, but to the importance for the Hebrew nation (e.g. 1 Chron. 1:28, where Isaac is quoted ahead of his older brother Ishmael).

-Haran died in Ur (Gen. 11:28) and after his death Terah left Ur together with Abram (*inter alia*) and started to migrate to Canaan (Gen. 11:31). Terah however died in Haran at the age of 205 years (Gen. 11:32). After the death of Terah, Abram was called {'The Promise'} and set out from Haran and entered Canaan when he was 75 years old (Gen. 12:4); Abram was thus born when Terah was 130 years old at the earliest. Abram took his nephew Lot with him, but Nahor stayed on in Haran.

The question posed is the age of Terah at the birth of Abram. It is possible to reconstruct approximately as follows: The length of time that the Israelites lived in *Egypt* (NIV) {in *Egypt and Canaan* – per the Hebrew Bible} was 430 years (Exod. 12:40), and Abram's seed was to be a stranger in a strange land for 400 years {confirmation of The Promise} (Gen. 15:13). Isaac was born when Abraham {renamed just before the birth of Isaac (Gen. 17:49)} was 100 years old (Gen. 21:5), i.e. 30 years after the Promise. In parentheses, Ishmael, his firstborn, was born after Abram had been living in Canaan for about 10 years when Abram was 86 years old (Gen. 16:16, 17:23-25); Ishmael died at the age of 137 years (Gen. 25:17).

Continuing through the family tree: Jacob was born when Isaac was 60 years old (Gen. 25:26). Jacob moved to Egypt at the age of 130 years (Gen. 47:9), i.e. 690 years after the birth of Abraham. As noted above, Abraham had been promised that his descendants would be strangers in a foreign land for 400 years (Gen. 15:13) at a time *before* both Ishmael and Isaac were born (Gen. 15:3-4). Thus the 400 years must refer to the time following the birth of the Patriarch Isaac in Canaan, a foreign land – thus following the Hebrew Bible – and not to the migration of Jacob and his descendants to Egypt. The tradition that the Law was given to Moses at Sinai 430 years after the Promise is thus confirmed, and the tradition is quoted by St. Paul (Galatians 3:17). Thus, there is confirmation that Abram was 70 years old when the original Promise was made (just after the death of Terah at the age of 205 years). Abram was thus born when Terah was 135 years old, 65 years after Haran's birth, assuming that Haran was the firstborn. Of Nahor we have no timeline indicators other

than his wife was Milcah daughter of (his apparently older and deceased) brother or half-brother Haran.

Abraham the Hebrew, Jacob the Hebrew

Deut. 26:5 cites "My father was a wandering *Aramean*, and he went down into Egypt with a few people and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous." The passage appears to refer to Jacob as is now shown, but leaves open the question: was he Aramean?

Abram was presumably born in Ur where his brother Haran had been born and had died (Gen. 11:28) before the family moved on to the city of Haran where his father Terah died (Gen. 11:32). It is not stated in full detail who was in the party, but it included Lot the son of Haran who later moved to Canaan with Abram (Gen. 12:4), and Nahor (father of Bethuel and grandfather of Laban, both of whom are found later in Paddan Aram (Gen. 25: 20)).

One would like to know if it also included (H)eber who is not mentioned but was still alive at the time of Terah's death. Indeed it is tempting to wonder if the Great Dispersion after Babel had brought Eber to Aramea. Judging from the Table of Nations, the Tower of Babel incident occurred during the lifetime of the sons of Eber, the Semites Peleg and Joktan, where the sons of the latter are listed (Gen. 10:26) but not of the former, i.e. before the birth of Peleg's son Reu (an argument from absence), three generations before Terah. It would thus be conceivable that Eber was still resident in Aramea and that Terah was returning to the land of his fathers where Eber was the current patriarch of the clan. It might also account for the naming of the eldest son – a reflection of the family origin. No note is given of the age of Terah or Abram at the time of the move to Aramea.

Abraham moved on to Hebron in Canaan living near the great trees of Mamre the Amorite (Gen. 13:14; 14:13; 17:8; 18:1) where he is referred to as Abraham the Hebrew, i.e. a descendent of (H)eber (Gen. 14:13). He had left Haran in Aramea for Canaan at the age of 75, five years after the death of Terah, while Eber was still alive, following the call from God (Gen. 12:1). He took Lot with him, the son of his older brother Haran who had been 65 years his elder, so that Lot could indeed have been older than Abram.

After an excursion into Egypt, Abraham spent the rest of his life there in Hebron and was ultimately buried nearby (Gen. 25:9). Long after his marriage to Sarah, Isaac was born there (Gen. 21:2). Isaac moved to Beer Lakai Roi in the Negev (Gen. 24:62; 25:11) where he married Rebecca who later died and was buried near Bethlehem (Gen. 48:7). Jacob was born in Canaan (Gen. 46:31) and died in Egypt (Gen. 49:33). Joseph appears to have been born in Canaan also, but was carried off to Egypt where he married Asenath (Gen. 41:45) and had two sons, Manasseh (Gen. 41:51) and Ephraim (Gen. 41:52) who were later adopted by Jacob into *his* family (Gen. 46:5, 46:27). Thus there were three patriarchs: Abraham (born in *Ur*), Isaac and Jacob (both born in *Canaan*) so that, including both Jacob with Joseph and his two sons, there were 70 people (who are the root of Israel) living in Egypt (Gen. 46:26, Exod. 1:5).

Though born there, Jacob is never referred to as a Canaanite. The concept of nationality as we know it was not

known, rather one of ethnicity. In Egypt Jacob was referred to as a Hebrew (i.e., a descendent of (H)eber) (Gen. 39:14,17; 41:12), as had Abraham been in Canaan – the first such reference in the Bible (Gen. 14:13), and they regarded his descendants as a tribe (e.g. Exod. 5:1) namely: Israel – as Jacob was re-named (Gen. 32:28).

Whether Eber or Terah were originally from Haran in Aramea or from Ur itself is not recorded in the Bible, or whether Eber was still living in Haran in Aramea, but is this a clue to an Aramean origin?

The other son of Terah was Nahor, brother or half-brother of Abram, who had stayed in Haran. His descendants are referred to as Arameans: Bethuel the Aramean (Gen. 25:20) who was the son of Nahor, and Laban the Aramean (Gen. 25:20, 31:20,24), also referred to as Laban son of Bethuel the Aramean (Gen. 28:5) – (H)aramians, i.e. from (H)aran or Aramea?

It appears that Abraham could have been considered to be an (H)Aramean, but chose to regard (H)Eber as *doyen* of his clan, confirming the comment in Deut. 26:5.

Jacob and Joseph

Nothing is known about Jacob's age at the birth of Joseph, there is simply a comment that he was an old man. Indeed there is no information on the ages relating to the births of any of his children, remarkably even of his firstborn Reuben (Gen. 36:23), so there is no timeline.

Jacob was sold into Egypt at the age of 17 (Gen. 37:2,28), became governor at the age of 30 (Gen. 41:46) at the point in time of the prediction the seven years of plenty to be followed by seven years of famine. His brothers returned from Egypt for the last time when there were still five years of famine to go (Gen. 45:6,7) and was followed by Jacob's migration to Egypt at the age of 130 (Gen. 46:9). Adding in the seven plus two years gives Jacob as then being about 39 years old. The age difference gives Jacob as about 91 years old at Joseph's birth: he was indeed in his old age at Joseph's birth. Jacob died at the age of 147 years (Gen. 47:28), and Joseph died at the age of 110 years (Gen. 50:22).

Birth of firstborn

It is interesting to note in view of the importance given to *primogeniture* in historical times that none of the Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were firstborn sons; nor indeed was Shem, progenitor of the Semites. The very first first-born was the murderer Cain.

There is marked change in the age of the father at the birth of his first son. Prior to the Flood, this is in the range 65-187 with an average of 117 years. Immediately after the Flood and starting with the first 'new worlder' Arphaxad, the age drops down dramatically to 29-35, averaging 31 years. After the birth of Terah, the age appears to rise again quite dramatically. Haran was born to Terah at 60 (Gen. 11:26), Ishmael to Abraham at 86 (Gen. 16:16) and the twins Esau and Jacob to Isaac at 60 years (Gen. 25:26).

The birth of Abraham to Terah at the age of 135 is very late in life for those times. As Haran had been born some 65 years earlier, it seems likely that Abraham was a half-brother. The birth of the trio Ham, Shem and Japheth to

Noah at the age of 500 years is truly remarkable; a consequence is that all the forebears of Noah had died before the Flood (including presumably his grandfather Methuselah in the year of the Flood).

LIFETIME DECAY

The logarithmic scale

Logarithms were invented by Napier²⁶ as an aid to calculation by multiplication and division. The property of logarithms which is of interest here is that a natural decay curve or a natural growth curve becomes a straight line when plotted in a logarithmic (property) versus linear time diagram. This is used e.g. in portraying the natural decay of radioactive materials or in indicating the growth of a bank account under a given interest rate. As an aside, logarithms are the basis of the slide rule method of calculation beloved of film makers and featured in all movies depicting scientists and engineers before the coming of pocket calculators and computers.

The consequences of the Flood

The lifetimes are plotted in Fig. 2 *unusually* as a “logarithmic-linear” plot. As each segment is linear this shows that there was a natural decay process both before, and far more rapidly over a period of 800 years, after the Flood.

It should be noted that the figure is not homogenous:

-Enoch is not included in the curve fitting: Enoch had a remarkably short lifetime (for those times) of 365 years (Fig. 1) and “then he was no more, because God took him

away” (Gen. 5:24).

-Cainen (Kainen), listed in the Septuagint and quoted by Luke 3:36, is not included in 1 Chron. 1:24 nor in the Septuagint. Thus, his very existence is suspect.²⁷

-Nahor is not included in the curve fitting. He is quoted variously as having lived to the age of 148 in the NIV (as in Fig. 1) presumably quoted from the Samaritan Pentateuch, but only to 48 years quoted in the Hebrew Bible.

Taken together with the classical linear dates of birth given in Fig. 1, one can make some observations:

-The entire line from Adam to Lamech (except Enoch) died before the Flood. Methuselah, the last to pass away, died in the year of the Flood 1656 AA, presumably before it and not in it: the only persons to enter (Gen. 7:7) and exit (Gen. 8:15) the ark were Noah his sons and their wives and families. The natural deaths of all ancestors before the Flood was made possible by the birth of Shem to Noah at the old age of 500 years, and the birth of Shem’s son after it - their ancestors had children at far younger ages of 65 to 187 years.

-There was an immediate major effect of the Flood on the life expectancy. Shem might reasonably have expected to live about 876 years (extrapolating from the pre-Flood lifetime) but actually lived for 600 years. The lifetime of Noah himself appears to have been unaffected.

-The first child born in the re-created world was Shem’s son Arphaxad. It is an open question whether Shem and his wife would had children whilst still in the ark for the unknown duration of the Flood, so it seems reasonable

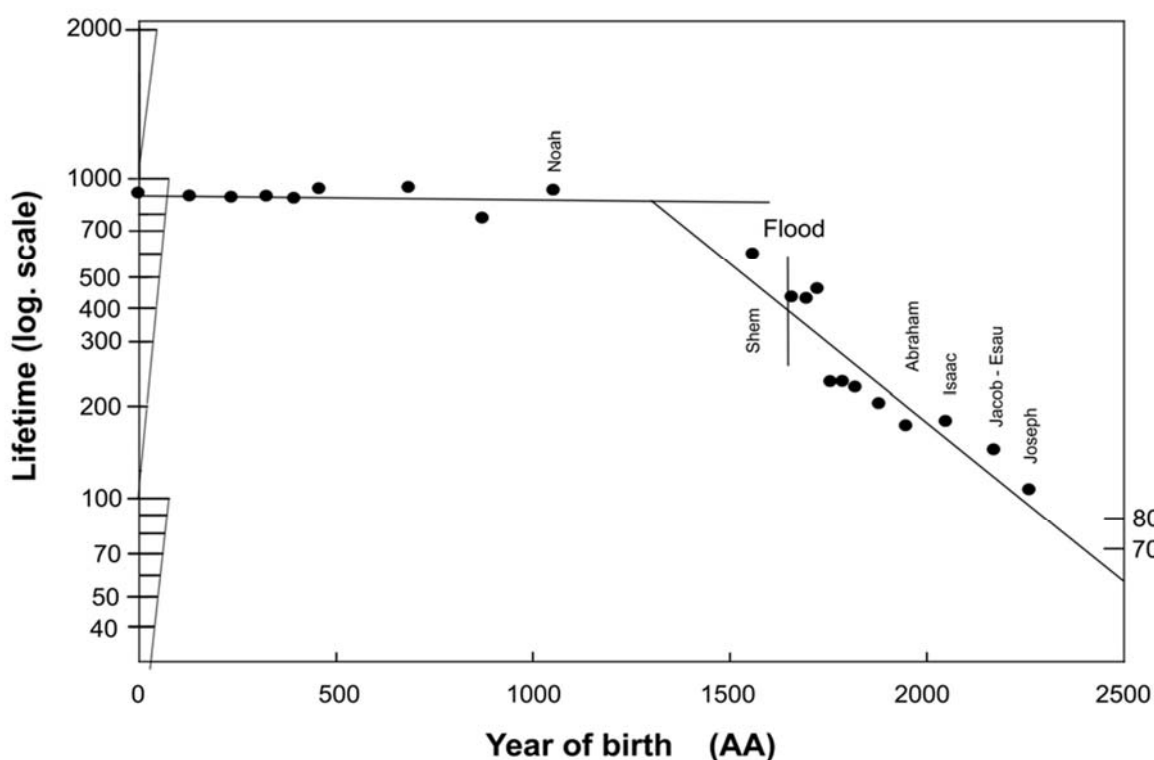


Fig.2.A logarithmic-linear plot of the lifetimes from Adam through Joseph. Method of least squares fits to the lifetimes before and after the Flood, respectively, (with Enoch omitted) show that: Before the Flood there is a slight fall with time; After the Flood the fall is very rapid over a period of some 700 years and corresponds closely to a simple linear decay curve (a straight line on this style of plot). The lifetimes fall towards the ‘three score and ten’ predicted in the Bible

that Arphaxad was born in 1659 AA, as recorded in the Hebrew Bible where “two years after the Flood” (Gen. 11:10) refers dating to the beginning of the Flood. It is worth noting that if he were born in the ark, it seems likely that the Bible would have recorded it, there is no comment on grandchildren exiting with Noah. This is confirmed in the Table of the Nations (Gen. 10:1) where it is recorded that Noah’s sons had sons *after* the Flood.

The reduction of life expectancy must have been horrific to Noah and his descendants, particularly to Eber. From Fig. 2:

- The fifth generation, Peleg, died before Noah
- The first descendent to survive Shem, the last of the pre-flood generations, was Eber, his great grandson.
- The son and grandson of the first ‘new worlder’, Arphaxad, outlived him, but he lived on to see all five subsequent generations pre-decease him, horrific indeed.
- The first to survive the current head of the house, Eber, was Abraham, six generations later, but this by only one year. Indeed it is only from Abraham onwards that succeeding generations started to outlive the preceding one.
- Isaac was alive when Joseph was deported to Egypt but had passed on before Jacob and descendants headed out to Egypt.
- From Terah onwards, conditions in the renewed world seem to have stabilized. Life expectancy settled at about 110 - 180 years but was still falling. God had decreed this future life expectancy of 120 years before the Flood (Gen. 6:3). Later on Moses died at the age of 120 years (Deut. 34:7), Joshua at 110 (Jos. 24:29) and the drop-off is approaching asymptotically the “three score plus ten (or four score if strong)” quoted in Psalm 90:10. Some children were born later in the lives of their fathers. Both Abraham and Jacob regarded themselves as old (100 and about 91, respectively) at the births of their sons: Isaac and Joseph, respectively, and Terah was quite old at 135 years at the birth of Abram. There is parallel to be drawn here with Noah where the ‘key’ son was born late in life.
- How did God carry out his decree to reduce lifespan to 120 years? The standard explanation of this²⁸ is the loss of an atmospheric protective canopy at the time of the Flood - one of water vapor and CO₂ - which then allowed far increased levels of spatial radiation inducing genetic and non-genetic effects, and diseases such as cancer and leukemia. The consequences would be unavoidable as almost all mutations are harmful and there is *no* threshold level to radiation effects.

Before the Flood - revisited

The conditions on earth before the Flood are not easy to reconstruct. If we assume that part of the Flood water came from the collapse of a Venus-type cloud canopy cover, then the seasons will have been totally different beforehand: there would have been extensive protection e.g., from solar UV and cosmic radiations and their debilitating effects. In view of the short length of time that the Flood was effective, it can be assumed that vegetation before the Flood was much the same as afterwards, as commented above, although growth modes (because of different seasons, or the lack of thereof) must have been different. Animal life was

the same and was insured to remain so by the provisions met by Noah. The life expectancy and births occurring relatively late in life was so great that a population explosion could be envisaged.

After the Flood - revisited

What did the Flood achieve? Was it simply an “Act of God”, to use a term beloved of the insurance industry, along with lightning strikes and earthquakes, or what should we learn from it? This interpretation of the reason for the Flood given in the Hebrew Bible must be questioned by Christians and treated with some caution. Stott²⁹ has pointed out that ‘Jesus warned us not to interpret calamities as God’s specific judgements on evil people’ (Luke 13: 1-5).

If the Flood was intended to destroy evil, taken as consequent on free will, then there is no sign that Man had learned from the experience. Comparable catastrophic situations can be reviewed in the Hebrew Bible where the Israelites suffered times of distress – from their experiences with Moses in the wilderness as far as deportation of the two halves of the nation – then returned to their old ways.

Sin remained a major feature of the world. Human nature does not appear to have changed. The mode of operation of Laban action acts out like a parody, a caricature even with Jacob as foil. The behavior of the neighbors of Lot and the subsequent actions of his daughters do not argue for any change in behavioral pattern from before the Flood. One might conclude that man retained free will and continued to utilise that provision to the full.

Regardless of the origin of the Flood, the data shown in the Figures seems to gloss over much human misery caused by the sudden transition from an incredible longevity to early death and a frantic, almost desperate, reactive fall in the age for having children.

The lifetime of the Hebrews only stabilized after Abraham had moved from the Chaldea/Aramea area. It would be interesting to enquire after the subsequent lifetimes of Bethuel and Laban which might indicate a local geographical influence, but these are not cited so remain simple speculation.

Fazit: Even with the reminder that the rainbow offers of His promise that mankind will not be destroyed by flooding, we should never forget that whilst God’s mercy is unlimited, His patience with mankind is not.

CONCLUSIONS

The sequence of cause, mechanism and consequences can be summarized. There is a major contrast between the words of Jesus given in Luke 13: 1-5 and the thoughts of God cited in Gen. 6:5-8 which cause the idea of the Flood being an ‘Act of God’ to be questioned. It is noted that later predictions and attributions in the Hebrew Bible came from mouths of prophets, but here God was speaking. This apparent disparity leaves a feeling of deep discomfort.

As a mechanism, sub-terrestrial water retained from creation (possibly as ice) and released concomitantly or consequently on a collapse of a Venus-like cloud canopy can

be posited. The relatively short duration of the Flood would result in no significant change in the flora and their inherent ability to regenerate, and the fauna as carried by Noah, although major topographical effects might be anticipated from water erosion. It is clear, however, that there was no difference in human nature - free will - before/after the Flood. The assumption made is that the water of the Flood was sweet. Salt water inundations have far longer-lasting effects. The very rapid reversion to sinful practices underscore the retention and usage of free will

On the effects of the Flood: this was a massive transition, a re-creation of the earth, and a new beginning between God and man.

From man's viewpoint, there was a rapid, indeed almost instantaneous, decay in life expectancy after the Flood which is clear from the Biblical account, a decay which extended over a period of about 1,000 years.

-Shem's lifetime was about two-thirds of what he might reasonably have expected. One senses a feeling of desperation amongst the Semites (and presumably everyone else in the world but for whom we have no records) as shown by the very early births of the generations succeeding the Flood, exacerbated by the early deaths. It is an old phenomenon that people seek a kind of immortality through their children, viz., the increase in birth rate in wartime.

-There are three stages in the age at which then next generation was begotten, before the flood, immediately after the flood, and as of the birth of Abraham.

-Real people can be seen behind the names in the Biblical account. One wonders how Eber must have felt as his descendants died off so young, predeceasing him: what was wrong with this new world which God had created as a reaction to the sin extant before the Flood, why was retribution continuing?

-A sort of stability is sensed from Abraham onwards, this occurred about some 360 years after the Flood had subsided. Children were begotten at a later stage in life. Lifetimes stabilized, but still fell slowly towards the "three score years and ten". It is thus less than surprising that Abraham should seek out Melchizedek who worshipped the "God Most High", He who had given the Promise to Abraham (Gen. 14:18-20) and after the visit confirmed it (Gen. 15:1-7).

The lesson to be drawn from the Flood is clear: there is a limit to the sin in the world that God can and indeed will tolerate. As Christians we are so thankful to know that our sin is forgiven through the Blood of Christ.

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Some 12 to 15 years ago the late Dr. Perry Alexander (Captain, USN retired), an elder of the Community Bible Church in San Diego CA, showed the Sunday School Bible study group a chart indicating the clear drop-off in life expectancy after the Flood (similar to that in ref. 25). A few years later, as part of an OT course at the Southern California Bible College led by Pastor David Tscherne, I drew up the sequential lifespan chart (Fig. 2) which showed, as a Conclusion, that all the direct line from Adam to Lamech (the father of Noah) had died before the Flood.

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