

The Biblical Chronologist

WHAT HAS BEEN IS REMOTE AND EXCEEDINGLY MYSTERIOUS. WHO CAN DISCOVER IT?
(Ecclesiastes 7:24)

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Psalm 90 Is About Loss of Human Longevity Following Noah's Flood

Psalm 90, according to its title, is “a prayer of Moses, the man of God.”

It is somewhat extraordinary that a prayer of Moses should be found in Psalms. The psalms are commonly associated with roughly the first half of the first millennium B.C., beginning with King David, who authored many of them. Moses lived one and a half thousand years earlier.¹

It is also somewhat extraordinary, given the fact that this prayer of Moses *is* found in Psalms, that *only one* prayer of Moses should be found there. Moses prayed a lot. We find him in frequent dialogue with God in the first five books of the Bible.

Why is this one prayer singled out, to be showcased in the Psalms in this way? It seems it must be somehow special.

Psalm 90 Is Much Misunderstood

In A.D. 1708, Isaac Watts paraphrased Psalm 90 in poetic verse. His paraphrase would eventually become the much-loved hymn “O God, Our Help in Ages Past.”

The paraphrase shows unequivocally that Isaac Watts—in common with the rest of Christendom, judging from the commentaries—understood neither the intent of Psalm 90 nor why this prayer is so special.

Watts' paraphrase is faithful to Psalm 90's inescapable contrast between our brief life spans and God's eternity, but when it comes to communicating what Moses' prayer is really all about, Watts' paraphrase fails entirely. It makes a petition for God's continued protection to be the point

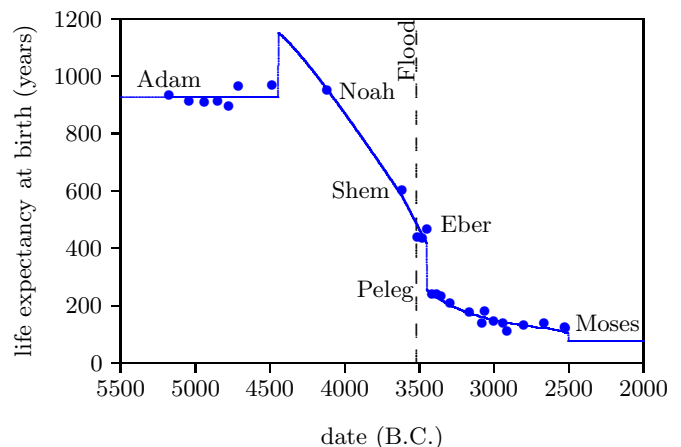


Figure 1: Life span data from the Bible (blue dots) and mathematically modeled human life expectancies versus time which they imply (blue line). The rapid drop in life expectancy during the lifetime of Moses, near 2500 B.C., (approximated as instantaneous by the model) is the major point of interest in this issue.

of the psalm. The final two lines of the closing stanza put it this way:

Be Thou our guard while troubles last,
And our eternal home.

Context Determines Meaning

To understand correctly what the author of any literary work was saying to his audience, it is generally helpful to get the historical context of the composition right. The all-important historical context of Psalm 90 is shown in Figure 1. This figure, taken from the recently-released second edition of *Aging: Cause and Cure*², reveals that the world was in the throes of a crisis of declining human life spans when Psalm 90 was written.

There is a natural limit to how low human life spans may go before extinction of the human race becomes inevitable. It is necessary for life spans to

¹Gerald E. Aardsma, “Chronology of the Bible: 3000–1000 B.C.,” *The Biblical Chronologist* 1.3 (May/June 1995): 1–3. www.BiblicalChronologist.org.

²Gerald E. Aardsma and Matthew P. Aardsma, *Aging: Cause and Cure*, 2nd ed. (Loda, IL: Aardsma Research and Publishing, 2021). www.BiblicalChronologist.org/products/Aging_book.php.

exceed the age of sexual maturity, of course, or reproduction absolutely ceases, and extinction most certainly results. But extinction will result significantly before life spans have dwindled to this low point. Human babies can neither gestate themselves, nor raise themselves. There needs to be sufficient time not only for couples to achieve sexual maturity, but also for gestation to come to completion, not just once but more than twice per couple for the population to be sustained. And there must be sufficient time for the children to be raised to self-sufficiency.

In present U.S. culture, children are regarded as self-sufficient adults at age eighteen. Sexual maturity is generally attained around 15 years of age. Natural child spacing tends to yield one pregnancy every three years. Putting this all together yields a ballpark estimate of the minimum life span for survival of the human species of $(15 + 1 + 3 + 3 + 18 =) 40$ years.

As Figure 1 shows, life spans had begun to plummet following Noah's Flood. They had started out near 925 years prior to the Flood. By the time Moses was born, life spans had dwindled to 120 years. During Moses' lifetime, they dropped precipitously to just 70 years, as the well-known "threescore years and ten" of verse 10 of Psalm 90 informs us. That is, some 50 years were stripped from the human life span during Moses' lifetime. It would have been apparent to everyone at that time that should this precipitous drop in life spans continue much longer, the human race would cease to exist. At 925 years, the minimum life span of 40 years needed for preservation of humanity had seemed to be nothing to worry about. At 70 years, it was knocking at the door. This is what surely had to be on everyone's minds when Psalm 90 was written, and this is the historical context which must be grasped if Psalm 90 is to be properly understood.

Moses at Prayer

Watts' paraphrase gets right the fact that Psalm 90 is a prayer. But Moses' intent in this prayer was neither to worshipfully admire God's eternality nor to find there a solace for the brutal reality of the brevity of human life on earth. His intent in this prayer was to petition God to let up on His judgment. When the poetic elegance of this psalm is distilled down to get at the psalm's fundamen-

tal essence, one finds Moses imploring God to stop the dramatic reduction in human life spans which had been going on since the time of Noah's Flood and asking God to restore proper longevity to the human race once again.

Such a prayer is in keeping with the nature of Moses' walk with God. We see the same sort of thing in another prayer by Moses. In this instance, the nation was in the process of sinning against God, as they were camped in the desert after their exodus from Egypt, by worshiping an idol—a golden calf which they had made. The historical record of this incident can be found in Exodus 32:1–14. There we learn that God, in anger, said to Moses to let Him alone to destroy the entire nation and raise up a new nation from Moses' descendants. And there we learn how Moses intervened for the wayward nation in prayer. He petitioned God to spare the nation. He reasoned with God. He pointed out that the Egyptians would get the wrong idea about God—that they would conclude that God had had only evil intentions against the Israelites from the outset, and that He had brought the Egyptians' Israelite slaves out of Egypt and into the desert just to destroy them there. He implored God to "Turn from Thy burning anger and change Thy mind about doing harm to Thy people."³ He pleaded with God to remember the promises He had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob of how *their* descendants would become innumerable and possess the promised land. (If this argument seems weak to you, recall that Moses' children were by a Midianite woman, not an Israelite.) And we read (in a verse which confounds all efforts to fit the infinite God into a comfortable theological box) "So the Lord changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people."⁴ Moses' prayer changed history.

Psalm 90 is another prayer of Moses of this same sort. But this time—and it is important to get this right—Moses is intervening, *not* on behalf of *just* the Israelites, but on behalf of *all* of humanity. It is the "children of men"⁵ for whom Moses is petitioning throughout this prayer. In complete harmony with the nature of Moses' petition in Exodus 32, Moses is once again pleading with God to

³Exodus 32:12b (NASB, 1995).

⁴Exodus 32:14 (NASB, 1995).

⁵Psalm 90:3 (NASB, 1995).

stay His hand of judgment. Moses sees the loss of human longevity which had been happening since the Flood as a direct result of God's wrath against mankind. The NASB (1995) translation of verse 9 brings this out most clearly:

For all our days have declined in Thy
fury; . . .

God had sent the Flood in judgment of mankind's evil behavior, and not only had most of humanity perished because of that judgment, but human life spans had been declining ever since so that it appeared, in Moses day, that the end of the human race lay just beyond the next generation's horizon.

Moses was well aware of this loss of human longevity. He is the author of the books of Genesis and Exodus, the very books which the life span data shown on the graph of Figure 1 are from. Said another way, the blue dots on the graph are Moses' data.

Moses lived roughly one thousand years after the Flood. He would eventually die at the age of 120 years. But during his lifetime he watched others, born after him, die of aging at increasingly younger ages—eventually at just 70 to 80 years of age. This is why he says, in the previously-mentioned verse 10 (in more modern English):

As for the days of our life, they contain
seventy years,
Or if due to strength, eighty years, . . .

We tend, today, to reverse the intended meaning of this verse. Our generation takes the modern life span either as God's providence or as evolution's bequest. Either way, to us modern humans, this life span is as given as the sky is blue. So, while Moses was saying that lifespans had *dwindled away* to a mere 70 to 80 years, we tend to read this verse as saying that God made the human life span to be immutable—unchangeably *fixed* at 70 to 80 years.

Moses would have laughed us out of the desert.

There is simply no way that Moses was saying that *his* life span was 70 to 80 years. Again, he lived to be 120 years old. And his brother Aaron and his sister Miriam were similarly long lived. While these facts alone are sufficient to falsify the modern, immutable-life-span misinterpretation of this verse, they do not stand alone. The Bible shows plainly that it was *normal* for people, up until the lifetime of Moses, to enjoy life spans certainly in *excess* of 100 years, not a mere 70 to 80

years. And the Bible shows plainly that it had been that way for *thousands* of years, from remotest historical antiquity. To get the meaning of this psalm right, it is necessary to keep it in its proper historical context. The idea that God had fixed the human life span at 70 to 80 years would have been laughably *ludicrous* to Moses.

Moses was not saying that God had ordained 70 to 80 years to be the proper life span for humans. Back at that point in history, the human life span was dwindling, not fixed. Rather, Moses was arguing to God that, while His fury was understandable and justifiable, human life spans had, nonetheless, reached a point so low as to be unbearably, perilously short.

Modern human aging is a deficiency disease of a previously unknown vitamin duo, methylphosphonic acid (MePA) and methylphosphinic acid (MePiA). As is true of any vitamin, chronic failure to get enough of either of these vitamins in one's diet results in sickness and death. Noah's Flood broke the natural supply of these vitamins, resulting in their gradual loss from the environment. As a result, after Noah's Flood, people began dying at ever younger ages. The complete absence of vitamin MePiA in modern human diets is the dominant cause of death today. It causes about eight out of ten deaths. The complete absence of vitamin MePA contributes another one in ten.

Moses and his brother and sister significantly outlived people who were born only a few decades after them because MePiA has a very long biological half-life (135 years). This long biological half-life means that people who were born earlier, when the natural environmental level of MePiA was higher, would retain for many decades higher levels of this vitamin in their bodies than contemporaries born later when environmental levels were lower. This higher vitamin level would then result in these earlier-born individuals outliving their later-born contemporaries.

Moses had observed the human life span continuously shortening in his lifetime, ultimately by some 50 years. He had seen with his own eyes people chronologically younger than himself dying of aging. Eventually, presumably near the end of his own life, he witnessed death due to aging at a mere 70 to 80 years. He knew, as surely as we would know were we standing in his shoes, that, were

this trend to continue, the extinction of mankind would be the inevitable result. And he intervened with God on mankind's behalf.

Moses starts his prayer (verses 1–2) by observing that God has always been and will always be the only One to go to when we are up against things which are too big for us.

He then (verses 3–4) establishes that God has ultimate and rightful authority over the destiny of humans, including their life spans.

And then (verses 5–10) he states the problem—life spans had recently dwindled to a mere 70 to 80 years.

And then (verses 11–13) he shakes his head in wonder at just how serious and dreadful the wrath of God is and how we humans habitually underestimate it. He requests that mankind might learn from the shortening of life spans to take the wrath of God seriously so as to avoid the further outpouring of God's wrath. And he implores God to stop being angry with mankind and to take pity on the human race. The essence of these verses is succinctly summarized by the words of the prophet Habakkuk, in a prayer to God written many years later, "In wrath remember mercy."⁶

Finally (verses 14–17), Moses closes his prayer with a request that the reduction in longevity might be halted and longer life spans restored once again. While neither the words "life span" nor "longevity" are found in these verses, Moses' intent is made clear by a conspicuous contrast. After having plaintively observed back in verse 10 that a life span of 70 or even 80 years left no time for anything "but labor and sorrow," what he is here requesting yields the opposite result: "That we may sing for joy and be glad all our days."

Moses' closing "stanza" contrasts starkly with Watts':⁷

Let Thy work appear to Thy servants,
And Thy majesty to their children.
And let the favor of the Lord our God be
upon us;
And do confirm for us the work of our
hands;
Yes, confirm the work of our hands.

A petition for God's protection from the storms of life is simply not to be found here. Relief from

God's just wrath is what is being sought. In modern terms, Moses is simply imploring, "Spare humanity from extinction." That is why he requests that God's work/majesty might be seen not only by "Thy servants" but also by "their children." And that is why he implores, "...do confirm for us the work of our hands." From an earthly perspective, at the point of human extinction, the collective works of all of humanity's hands down through the ages comes to *nothing*.

Conclusion

Significantly, God's hand of judgment meted out to mankind through the agency of aging was stayed following Moses' prayer. From the time of Moses to the present time—nearly 4,500 years—human life spans have held fast at 70 to 80 years.

And now—in our lifetime—God has, at long last, answered the remaining petition of Moses' prayer, to restore human longevity. The cure for the disease of human aging is now in hand and readily available (see DrAardsmasVitamins.com). The expectation is that this cure will result in human longevity substantially surpassing even the longevity which was enjoyed by humans before Noah's Flood.

Psalm 90 records a special prayer uttered by a man of God nearly 4,500 years ago, a prayer which God has now finished answering in our lifetime. ◇

The Biblical Chronologist is written and edited by Gerald E. Aardsma, a Ph.D. scientist (nuclear physics) with special background in radioisotopic dating methods such as radiocarbon. *The Biblical Chronologist* has a fourfold purpose:

1. to encourage, enrich, and strengthen the faith of conservative Christians through instruction in biblical chronology and its many implications,
2. to foster informed, up-to-date, scholarly research in this vital field,
3. to communicate current developments and discoveries stemming from biblical chronology in an easily understood manner, and
4. to advance the growth of knowledge via a proper integration of ancient biblical and modern scientific data and ideas.

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⁶Habakkuk 3:2.

⁷Psalm 90:16–17 (NASB, 1995).