

The Biblical Chronologist

WHAT HAS BEEN IS REMOTE AND EXCEEDINGLY MYSTERIOUS. WHO CAN DISCOVER IT?

(Ecclesiastes 7:24)

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The Chronology of Palestine in Relation to the Bible: 3000 - 1000 B.C.

The following article shows how I synchronize Biblical chronology with secular chronology in Palestine from 3000 to 1000 B.C. It is a technical article, designed to act as a reference item for future discussions involving any aspect of the chronology of Palestine in these two millennia. A time chart showing the relevant time periods in Palestine and my synchronization of them with Biblical chronology can be found on page 5. You will find it helpful to refer to this chart frequently as you study the following article. Indeed, the chart is the important thing; the discussion serves only to explain it.

A brief overview of the history of Palestine in relation to the Bible during the second and third millennia B.C. is woven throughout the article. When the course of history is examined with such a wide field of view the natural harmony which exists between the Biblical and secular histories is readily apparent. While the discussion is necessarily technical and dry at many points, the resulting synchronization is quite remarkable, and the final synthesis of secular and sacred histories greatly enriches comprehension of both.

The historical/archaeological time periods in Palestine during the second and third millennia B.C. have been named Early Bronze Age, Middle Bronze Age, Late Bronze Age, and Iron Age.¹

¹These names can be misleading. They seem to have their origin in evolutionary notions of mankind's progress from a rude stone, bone and wood worker through the discovery and exploitation of various metals – first copper, then alloys of copper to make bronze, then iron – and on into modernity as mankind got smarter and smarter. In fact, such theoretical/ideological schemes hold up poorly when compared to factual archaeological data. Iron, for example,

These periods are generally subdivided – for example, Late Bronze I (LBI) and Late Bronze II (LBII) – and it is possible for these subdivisions to be further divided – for example, LBIIa and LBIIb.

Unfortunately, there is no single, uniform system for the application of these labels among the archaeologists and historians of Palestine. A single, characteristic time period can be labeled totally differently by different archaeologists. The most common confusion of this sort arises over the Early Bronze IV (EBIV) and Middle Bronze I (MBI) definitions. It is generally necessary to determine precisely which period of time the archaeologist is referring to from the context.

As an added inconvenience to the layperson, the absolute dates assigned to these periods also vary from author to author, even when they are using the same naming convention. This is especially true in the Early Bronze. This, of course, reflects the fact that the absolute starting and ending dates of these periods are not known precisely.²

was known and used well before the Iron Age, and even before the Bronze Age, and bronze “was not used widely in Palestine until . . . about a thousand years after the beginning of the so-called Early Bronze Age.” [Amnon Ben-Tor, “The Early Bronze Age,” *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel*, ed. Amnon Ben-Tor (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 81.] In no sense can it be supposed that all stone implements automatically belong to the Neolithic (“new stone age”), copper ones to the Chalcolithic (“copper-stone age”), bronze ones to the Bronze Age, or iron ones to the Iron Age. These names should be viewed by the reader simply as conventional labels for the various time periods in Palestine – they have little intrinsic significance.

²It would be nice if scholars would make it a practice to explain how they have arrived at the set of dates they are using for their period boundaries, and how large they regard the uncertainty in those dates to be, but, in practice, they seldom do so. I have found, as a helpful rule of thumb, that one can generally assume an uncertainty in assigned secular dates of around ± 50 years (3σ) at the close of the second millennium, increasing to about ± 300 years at the

It is unfortunate that a standard naming convention for the chronology of Palestine does not exist, for this means that rather than showing a single time chart correlating the chronology of the Bible with that of Palestine, we really need to display many charts, one for each naming convention used by the archaeologists. This is too big of a task for this article, however, and I have chosen to restrict to the single case of the following period names and divisions:

1. Early Bronze: EBI, EBII, EBIII, EBIV
2. Middle Bronze: MBI, MBII
3. Late Bronze: LBI, LBII
4. Iron Age: IRON I, IRON II

This convention is not far removed from the majority of those which are in use today, and it is the same as I use in my book, *A New Approach to the Chronology of Biblical History from Abraham to Samuel*.

1 Early Bronze

1.1 Early Bronze I

EBI was a period of new beginnings in Palestine following the abrupt termination of the preceding Chalcolithic period (which increasingly appears to have been caused by Noah's Flood [see this issue's "Research in Progress" column]). It is characterized archaeologically by the founding of numerous settlements, many of which persist, with varied fortunes, through the next several millennia and some even into the present time. Population densities were low, relative to later times, and "cities" were generally small settlements of a few acres only. These archaeologically revealed characteristics harmonize naturally with the history which is found in Genesis regarding the lives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who belong to this period.

1.2 EBI-EBII Transition

The EBI to EBII transition is generally dated by the secular chronologists around 2600 or 2700 B.C. These dates are tied, to a greater or lesser degree, beginning of the third millennium.

to the historical chronology of the Old Kingdom of Egypt, which is 300 years too recent.³ Thus, we expect the true date of this transition to be about 300 years older than these dates suggest. That is, from purely secular considerations, we expect it to be around 2900 or 3000 B.C.

The EBI to EBII transition appears to have been caused by Joseph's famine,⁴ and I take it to be synchronous with that event. Note, however, that when I say "synchronous" I do not mean to imply that this transition took place "at a single instant in time." The famine was a protracted affair which lasted seven years (Genesis 45:6), and the transition from EBI to EBII should also be viewed as protracted and continuous, when looked at with single-year resolution, rather than sudden or at a single instant in time.

For graphical purposes, however, we prefer to have a discrete "boundary" to draw between adjacent periods. To this end it is expedient to *define* some datable event in history as a "boundary" marker.

It seems most natural, at the present time, to equate the final year of EBI with the final year of Joseph's famine, and the first year of EBII with the first year following the famine. That is, I define the end of Joseph's famine as the boundary marker between EBI and EBII.

The date of the end of Joseph's famine can be calculated from Biblical data as follows. Starting from the Exodus at 2447 ± 12 B.C.,⁵ add 430 ± 0 (Exodus 12:40-41) to arrive at the date of the entrance of Jacob and his family into Egypt. This gives 2877 ± 12 B.C. This was at the end of the second year of the famine, with five years of famine yet remaining (Genesis 45:6,11). Thus, the date of the end of the famine is $2877 \pm 12 - 5 \pm 0 = 2872 \pm 12$ B.C. I assign this date to the EBI to EBII transition. It obviously agrees well with the purely secular expectations discussed above.

EBI comes to an end Biblically with the departure of Jacob and his family from Palestine.

³Gerald E. Aardsma, *A New Approach to the Chronology of Biblical History from Abraham to Samuel*, 2nd ed. (Loda IL: Aardsma Research and Publishing, 1993), 60.

⁴Gerald E. Aardsma, *A New Approach to the Chronology of Biblical History from Abraham to Samuel*, 2nd ed., 68-72.

⁵Gerald E. Aardsma, "Chronology of the Bible: 3000 - 1000 B.C.," *The Biblical Chronologist* 1.3 (May/June 1995): 2.

This departure must have been typical of that of many families throughout Palestine during the famine, for the archaeological data shows a significant decline in the density of urban population in Palestine at this transition.

1.3 Early Bronze II and III

EBII and EBIII mark the maturation of Canaanite civilization in Palestine.

The Israelites were in Egypt for most of the duration of these two periods. Because the Bible gives us almost no historical insight into these years – even for Egypt – it is not possible to say much about them Biblically.

Archaeologically, these periods carry on in the mode of life established in EBI. The Canaanite cities grow and become fortified, evidently amid significant internal turmoil and strife.

1.4 EBII-EBIII transition

No disruption of any sort is seen between EBII and EBIII archaeologically – these two periods appear to be continuous. There is no obvious datable event which one might choose as a marker between them. To get around this problem I arbitrarily assign the chronological mid-point between the beginning of EBII and the end of EBIII (see below) as the boundary. This definition yields a date of $(2872 \pm 12 + 2407 \pm 13) / 2 = 2640 \pm 9$ B.C.

1.5 EBIII-EBIV transition

The EBIII to EBIV transition was caused by the Israelite Conquest of Palestine under Joshua.⁶ It marks the displacement of the Canaanites from Palestine, and the establishment of the Israelites there. The urbanization which characterized Palestine in EBII and EBIII was reversed at this time.

Once again, this transition took place over an extended period of time. Furthermore, the displacement of the Canaanites took place at different times in different parts of Palestine. It is important to keep this in mind when working with the archaeological data. While it is convenient to talk of EBIII and EBIV as if they were distinct time

⁶Gerald E. Aardsma, *A New Approach to the Chronology of Biblical History from Abraham to Samuel*, 2nd ed., 43-47; 63-65; 85-94.

periods, in actual fact these labels have a natural, unique significance only in the classification by *type* of archaeological material remains, not by *date*. In practice, we fully expect that typical EBIII assemblages of archaeological artifacts can be found in some parts of Palestine which will be synchronous with EBIV assemblages elsewhere in Palestine. If we are to use EBIII and EBIV as labels for time periods, then we must, once again, establish their beginning and ending dates by recourse to definition.

It seems most natural to define the EBIII-EBIV “boundary” to be at the beginning of the Conquest, with the crossing of the Jordan. This was 40 years following the Exodus (Exodus 16:35, Joshua 5:12). Thus, I compute its date to be $2447 \pm 12 - 40 \pm 5 = 2407 \pm 13$ B.C.

1.6 Early Bronze IV

The Early Bronze IV period roughly corresponds to the history recorded in the Biblical books of Joshua, and (especially) Judges. It begins with the (protracted) Conquest of Palestine under Joshua and stretches through the lives of the judges of Israel recorded in the book of Judges, with the possible exception of Samson (see below).

EBIV is marked archaeologically by the destruction or abandonment of all of the urban centers in Palestine and the influx of a new, tribally organized, nomadic population who settle in Palestine at this time.⁷

2 Middle and Late Bronze

The Middle and Late Bronze period boundaries have fairly well established “consensus-dates” within the secular literature at present. For our time chart I have simply adopted those of the *New*

⁷This period is often described by the archaeologists as a “dark age” in Palestine. They see the destruction of the Canaanite urban society of EBIII, and its replacement by the Israelite pastoral/agricultural society of EBIV (which they fail to recognize as Israelite) as a significant regression. I suggest that the loss of urbanization should not automatically be viewed as an unfortunate regression. After all, the *quality* of life cannot be measured by the density of cities, the strength of their defenses, or the grandeur of their palaces. It consists in other things – personal, societal, and especially spiritual.

Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land.⁸ Most of these are difficult to say much about Biblically because they fall within the 800 year Biblical historical gap between the end of Samson's judgeship and the birth of Samuel.⁹ However, we are able to tell something of the history of these periods from the data (including written materials) which the spade of the archaeologist has revealed.

2.1 Middle Bronze I and II

Egypt's influence is apparent in Palestine during MBI; some scholars suggest Egypt ruled Palestine at this time, others suggest commercial relations only. This period coincides, chronologically, with the waxing and waning of the powerful Twelfth Dynasty in Egypt. This dynasty brought Egypt to prominence once again following the national debacle which had resulted from the Exodus some 450 years earlier at the end of the Old Kingdom.

However, another foreign influence appears to infiltrate the land at this time. It seems to enter from the north along the coast, establish settlements which soon become fortified cities, then penetrate inland during Middle Bronze II.

It is tempting, and perhaps correct, to identify the Philistines whom Samson battles (Judges 13-16) as the first of these infiltrators. If so, then it would seem natural to define the beginning of MBI with the start of the Philistine oppression which preceded Samson's judgeship (Judges 13:1). This oppression began *ca.* 2017 B.C.¹⁰ However, chronological uncertainties admit other possibilities so that we are unable to specify a Biblical boundary marker for the start of this period. Unfortunately, archaeological excavation at Gaza, the Philistine city which figures so prominently in the history of Samson, seems unable, so far, to shed any light on this matter.

What seems completely clear, however, is that the Middle and Late Bronze were periods of considerable setback for the Israelites. Aharon

⁸*The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, vol. 4, ed. Ephraim Stern (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 1529.

⁹Gerald E. Aardsma, *A New Approach to the Chronology of Biblical History from Abraham to Samuel*.

¹⁰Gerald E. Aardsma, *A New Approach to the Chronology of Biblical History from Abraham to Samuel*, 2nd ed., 52.

Kempinski, for example, writes:¹¹

What then happened to the semi-nomadic Intermediate Bronze Age [our EBIV/Israelite] population? I believe that it was to some extent absorbed, particularly in the new rural population. . . . The rest of the population was again driven to the periphery, where it formed the nucleus of the nomadic groups of the Middle Bronze Age IIb [our MBII] and of the Late Bronze Age.

2.2 Late Bronze I and II

The character of the Late Bronze is summarized as follows by Rivka Gonen:¹²

The entire Late Bronze Age stands in the sign of Egyptian supremacy in Canaan, beginning with the renewal of Egyptian control, following the expulsion of the Hyksos dynasty and the reunification of Egypt under the Theban kings, and ending with the gradual attenuation of Egyptian rule, leading to the retreat of Egypt from the region. For four hundred-odd years, Canaan was part of the Egyptian empire and under its direct administration.

2.3 Iron I

The Biblical narrative takes up once again near the middle of the Iron I period with the birth of Samuel. The setting of the Biblical narrative at this point is significantly illuminated by what is known through extra-Biblical sources about the end of the Late Bronze Age.

At the end of the Late Bronze Age, a grave crisis overtook the political, social, and economic structure that had existed in the ancient world for hundreds of years. In the Late Bronze Age, and

¹¹Aharon Kempinski, "The Middle Bronze Age," *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel*, ed. Amnon Ben-Tor (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 167.

¹²Rivka Gonen, "The Late Bronze Age," *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel*, ed. Amnon Ben-Tor (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 211.

B.C.	Bible		Palestine
	period	details	period
1000	MONARCHY <small>1051 ± 16 B.C.</small>	- Solomon begins to reign - - David begins to reign - - Saul begins to reign -	IRON II
1100		- birth of Samuel -	IRON I
1200		- birth of Eli -	
1300			LATE BRONZE II
1400			
1500			LATE BRONZE I
1600			
1700	THEOCRACY		MIDDLE BRONZE II
1800			
1900			MIDDLE BRONZE I
2000		- death of Samson -	
2100		- Jephthah begins to judge - - Tola begins to judge - - Gideon begins to judge -	
2200		- Deborah begins to judge -	EARLY BRONZE IV
2300		- Ehud begins to judge - - Othniel begins to judge -	
2400	<small>2447 ± 12 B.C.</small>	- Conquest begins - - the Exodus -	<small>2407 ± 13 B.C.</small>
2500		- birth of Moses -	EARLY BRONZE III
2600			<small>2640 ± 9 B.C.</small>
2700			
2800	PROTO-ISRAEL	- death of Joseph -	EARLY BRONZE II
2900		- Joseph's famine - - birth of Joseph -	<small>2872 ± 12 B.C.</small>
3000		- birth of Jacob - - birth of Isaac -	EARLY BRONZE I
	<small>3092 ± 16 B.C.</small>		

Figure 1: Chronology of the historical/archaeological time periods of Palestine synchronized with the Biblical time periods and selected Biblical events in the 2nd and 3rd millennia B.C.

particularly in the thirteenth century, a balance had been achieved between the Egyptian empire and the Hittite Empire, which controlled large portions of the Near East, while the Aegean came largely under the influence of Mycenaean civilization, which maintained close contacts with the Levant. Within this balance of power, Canaanite towns managed, despite Egyptian domination, to maintain their cultural distinctiveness. This state of affairs came to an end in the late thirteenth century. Within a short time the Hittite Empire collapsed, a wave of destruction engulfed the centers of Mycenaean culture, and Egyptian power declined, putting an end to Egyptian rule in Canaan.¹³

It is in the wake of this collapse of foreign powers, then, that the struggles between the Philistines and Israelites, recorded in the books of Samuel, take place. (These Philistines are not a direct continuation of the Philistines of Samson's time, however. Rather, they appear, archaeologically and historically, to be relatively new to Palestine, having arrived in the land with other "Sea Peoples" as part of a massive migration near the beginning of the Iron I period.) These struggles culminate in the re-establishment of Israel's sovereignty in Iron II, following some nine centuries of foreign domination. ◇

Biblical Chronology 101

[We take a break from "class" this issue to enjoy a summer recess. I'll meet you back here in the fall.]

Research in Progress

You will recall that I have been concentrating on Mesopotamia, asking the question, "Can a cultural break or any other evidence of the Flood be discerned in this region near 3500 B.C.?" The modern chronology of Mesopotamia, spanning the

¹³Amihai Mazar, "The Iron Age I," *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel*, ed. Amnon Ben-Tor (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 258-259.

late Ubaid to the Early Dynastic periods, which I showed last issue is reproduced here as Figure 2. I suggested that uncertainties of up to 500 years seemed possible in this chronology during the fourth millennium B.C., the period of interest to the present investigation. This meant that the time-bracket in which the Flood might be found stretched from the late Ubaid, through the Uruk (Gawra for northern Mesopotamia) and into the middle of the Jamdat Nasr. I ended by noting that I had been unable to find anything suitable to the Flood in either the late Ubaid or Uruk periods.

I have now begun reading J. N. Postgate's recent book, *Early Mesopotamia*.¹⁴ One thing which emerges from this book is the fact that we have far from a complete set of archaeological and historical data to work with in Mesopotamia at the early dates of interest to our investigation. For example, in Postgate's chapter on early palaces in Mesopotamia he notes that "both the historical and the archaeological record from before the EDIII period are very scrappy,"¹⁵ and speaking of the Uruk period he says, "With a suddenness which may be partially the consequence of the poverty of archaeological excavation, . . .," and again, "virtually nothing of the early Uruk period has yet been excavated in South Mesopotamia."¹⁶ This relative lack of data is an impediment to our investigation, but not a fatal one – a Flood which would wipe out a civilization should be a difficult thing to conceal.

That the Flood is not to be found during either the late Ubaid or Uruk periods can now be concluded with considerable confidence. After noting the paucity of available data from the early Uruk, Postgate, for example, is still able to state, in reference to the Uruk period:¹⁷

One thing however seems clear, that there was not some sudden cataclysmic break with what had gone before. The continuity with the Ubaid culture is epitomized in the famous sequence of temples at Eridu, enlarged time and again through the centuries; the latest surviv-

¹⁴J. N. Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia: Society and Economy at the Dawn of History* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

¹⁵Postgate, 137.

¹⁶Postgate, 24.

¹⁷Postgate, 24.

B.C.	Mesopotamia	
	North	South
2500		
2600	EARLY DYNASTIC	EARLY DYNASTIC
2700		
2800		
2900		
3000		JAMDAT NASR
3100		
3200	LATE GAWRA	
3300		LATE URUK
3400		
3500		
3600	MIDDLE GAWRA	MIDDLE URUK
3700		
3800		
3900	EARLY GAWRA	EARLY URUK
4000		
4100		
4200		
4300	LATE N: UBAID	UBAID 4
4400		
4500		

Figure 2: A modern chronology of Mesopotamia, 4500-2500 B.C. (See previous issue's footnote 8 for reference.)

ing remnants of the temple's platform are in fact from the Uruk period, although the plan of the building itself is lost. More recently excavations deep below the Anu ziggurat at Uruk itself have shown that the Uruk period temple on its platform was also built over the site of an Ubaid period temple, giving us another clear instance of continuity of worship in one place.

Such detailed continuity is not what we would expect from the Flood.

However, this continuity does not last forever, as the following observation by Postgate indicates.¹⁸

At the beginning of the Early Dynastic period, *when cities were perhaps re-establishing themselves after a period of abandonment, ...* [my emphasis]

This, of course, is the sort of discontinuity we should expect in relation to the Flood – the Flood would necessarily cause an “abandonment” of cities.

Thus, we seem to have continuity in Mesopotamia through the Ubaid and Uruk periods, and a re-establishment of cities at the beginning of the Early Dynastic. This indicates a break of some sort between the end of the Uruk and the beginning of the Early Dynastic. Let us suppose that this break was caused by the Flood and see where this leads us.

Between the Uruk and the Early Dynastic sits the several centuries of the Jamdat Nasr period. Should we regard this period as pre-Flood or post-Flood?

I answer this question as follows. The chronology of the Early Dynastic in Mesopotamia seems closely linked to the historical chronology of the Early Dynastic period in Egypt. It appears to have been linked in this way for quite some time.¹⁹ The two are regarded as beginning essentially simultaneously.

¹⁸Postgate, 82.

¹⁹See, for example, Edward F. Campell, Jr., “The Chronology of Israel and the Ancient Near East; Section B., The Ancient Near East: Chronological Bibliography and Charts,” *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, ed. G. Ernest Wright (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1961), 214-215 and chart on page 220.

The simultaneous inception of state-controlled societies (which the Dynastic periods represent) over a widespread geographical area is anticipated Biblically following the dispersion of mankind from Babel (which I will hereafter refer to simply as the *Dispersion*). Thus, we expect these Early Dynastic periods to be post-Babel.

Between the Flood and the Dispersion we are led, by the Biblical history recorded in Genesis 10 and 11, to expect a significant, city-building society to be found in South Mesopotamia, corresponding to the immediate descendants of Noah who settled in the land of Shinar (the archaeological *Sumer*) and ultimately began the construction of the tower of Babel. The apparent unity of mankind up to Babel, and the Dispersion of mankind from Babel, lead us to expect this post-Flood, pre-Dispersion culture to be found only in South Mesopotamia.

The Jamdat Nasr period, which immediately precedes the Early Dynastic period, and which appears, from chronological charts, to be found only in South Mesopotamia, obviously recommends itself for identification with the Biblical period from the Flood to the Dispersion. Thus, I am led to advance the following two new hypotheses:

Flood Hypothesis 3 *The Uruk period in South Mesopotamia was terminated by Noah's Flood.*

Flood Hypothesis 4 *The Jamdat Nasr period in South Mesopotamia was terminated by the Dispersion of mankind from Babel.*

Immediate support for these hypotheses can be gleaned in two ways. First, the Uruk period is apparently regarded as part of the Late Chalcolithic sequence in Mesopotamia.²⁰ Thus, placing the Flood at the end of the Uruk/Late Chalcolithic in Mesopotamia produces a natural correspondence with the Flood at the end of the Chalcolithic in Palestine, as we have previously proposed. (See Flood Hypothesis 1 in *The Biblical Chronologist*, volume 1, number 1, page 6.)

Second, these hypotheses seem to work out very well chronologically. The Uruk to Jamdat Nasr boundary is presently dated by secular scholars near 3100 B.C. (see Figure 2). This date is, no

doubt, derived by adding the probable duration of the Jamdat Nasr period which is deduced archaeologically to the beginning of the Early Dynastic period. But the date of the beginning of the Early Dynastic period in Mesopotamia, we have already seen, appears to be tied to the date of the beginning of the Early Dynastic period in Egypt. And we have previously seen that the presently accepted historically derived dates for the Old Kingdom (and, hence, Early Dynastic period) in Egypt are about 300 years too recent.²¹ Thus, we can immediately expect that the presently accepted date for the beginning of the Early Dynastic period in Mesopotamia is also about 300 years too recent, and, as a result, the presently accepted date for the beginning of the Jamdat Nasr period is about 300 years too recent.

Adding 300 years to the presently accepted date for the beginning of the Jamdat Nasr period of 3100 B.C. yields a date of about 3400 B.C. This is very close (for this early period) to our Biblically derived date for the Flood (and beginning of the Jamdat Nasr period according to Flood Hypothesis 3) of 3520 B.C. – certainly within secular dating uncertainties. Indeed, Postgate places the beginning of the Jamdat Nasr period at 3200 B.C., which, when corrected by 300 years, yields 3500 B.C. for the beginning of this period – indistinguishable from the Biblical date for the Flood when dating uncertainties are taken into consideration.

It would be very nice if we could precisely date the Dispersion (end of the Jamdat Nasr period according to Flood Hypothesis 4) from the Bible. We are, however, unable to do so.

In Genesis 10:25 we learn that the Dispersion happened in the days of Peleg (which name means *division*). From Genesis 11:10-16 we learn that Peleg was born about 100 years after the Flood, and from Genesis 11:18-19 we learn that Peleg died when he was 239 years old. Thus, the Dispersion must have occurred no sooner than about 100 years, and no later than about 340 years after the Flood. However, the phrase “for in his days the earth was divided” (Genesis 10:25) does not allow us to be any more specific than this.

²⁰Guillermo Algaze, “The Uruk Expansion,” *Current Anthropology* 30.5 (December 1989): 577.

²¹Gerald E. Aardsma, *A New Approach to the Chronology of Biblical History from Abraham to Samuel*, 2nd ed. (Loda IL: Aardsma Research and Publishing, 1993), 60.

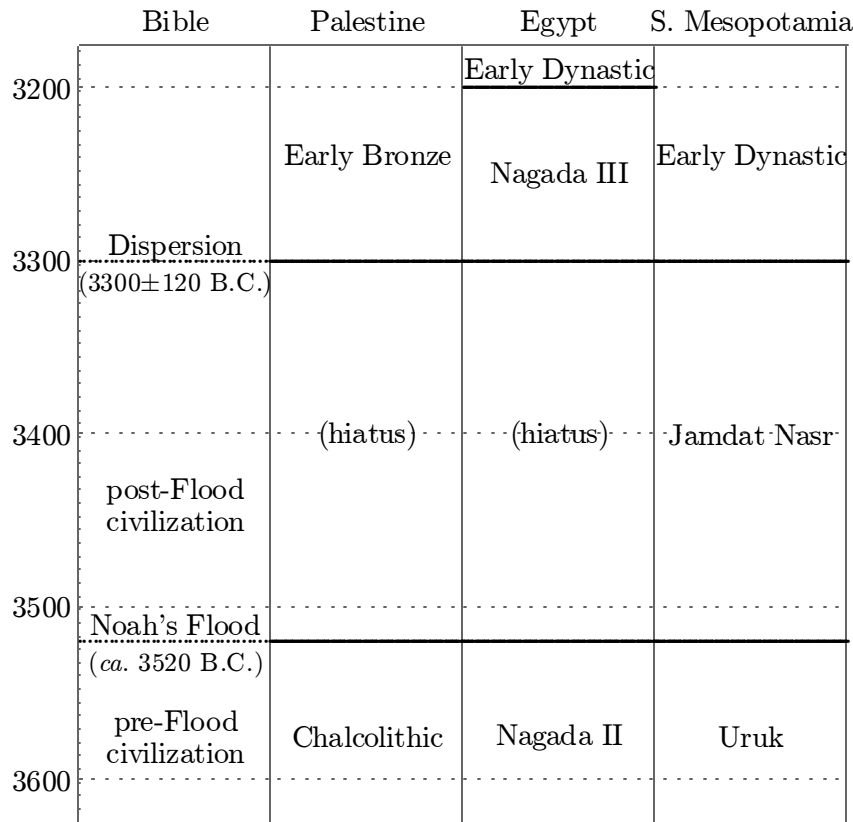


Figure 3: Proposed relationship of the chronologies of Scripture, Palestine, Egypt, and South Mesopotamia near 3500 B.C.

While it is customary today in North America to name children only at birth, we have several good Biblical examples of the renaming of individuals back at this early time at a much later point in their lives. Specifically, Abram's name was changed to Abraham when he was ninety-nine years old (Genesis 17:1-5), and Jacob's name was changed to Israel (Genesis 32:28; 35:10) when he was approximately ninety-one years old. Thus, we cannot specify at what point in his life Peleg was so named.

Consequently, we cannot date the Dispersion precisely from Biblical chronological data. We can only specify that the total duration of time from the Flood to the Dispersion must have been strictly greater than 100 years, and strictly less than 340 years.

Nonetheless, it is the case that this Biblical expectation harmonizes readily with modern secular chronologies of South Mesopotamia which seem generally to regard the Jamdat Nasr period as having lasted about 200 years.

Summary

The relationship of the chronologies of Scripture, Palestine, Egypt, and South Mesopotamia in the mid-fourth millennium B.C. which I am proposing by the four Flood Hypotheses advanced thus far is shown in Figure 3.

I have placed the date of the Dispersion at 3300 B.C. on this chart and shown an uncertainty of ±120 years to cover its Biblically allowed limits. It appears that one would need to employ an extensive radiocarbon dating program for the end of the Jamdat Nasr period to refine this date further.

The chart would display greater symmetry of nomenclature if the Flood in Egypt were to have occurred after Nagada III rather than after Nagada II as shown. This would keep the Nagada period together before the Flood, and produce a one-to-one correspondence between the Early Dynastic in Egypt and Mesopotamia. However, the data I have seen so far regarding Egypt seems to forbid such a shift. It is certainly not difficult to imagine the Early Dynastic being delayed in Egypt relative to

Mesopotamia as the chart currently portrays, since those who were scattered from Babel would have had to begin again from scratch, while those who remained would have been able to carry on with much less of a setback.

In any event, this overall scenario seems a reasonable platform from which to launch further inquiry. A great deal more research is necessary before the puzzle will be complete, of course, but the pieces which have already come together seem beyond what might reasonably be put down to mere chance. At the very least we must insist that the idea of the Flood having taken place in the real world, as the Bible describes, can no longer be relegated by the skeptic to the realm of the incredible.

The *geographical extent* of the Flood has been hotly debated for some time now. Was it global, regional, or merely local? If, as currently seems the case, we have detected the Flood archaeologically in Egypt, Palestine, and Mesopotamia – and we add to this the Biblical data (Genesis 8:4) that the ark came to rest in Ararat (i.e., in eastern Turkey) – then we are looking at an event which certainly has no right to be called “local.” Whether evidence of this same event can be found in other, far-distant geographical locations, such as the Americas, remains to be seen.

Be that as it may, I am personally of the opinion that we have, indeed, found the Biblical Flood in secular history and archaeology. While the picture is still far from clear, one must take very seriously the discovery of substantial secular data in essential agreement with the Biblical record of the past when one finds such data at the Biblically specified date. This is so for the Conquest, it is so for the Exodus, and it is so for the Flood.

I can find no physical evidence to suggest the Flood should be regarded as a great earth-shattering, tectonic affair, as some have suggested, and, I humbly submit, there is no real basis from the Biblical account of the Flood (Genesis 6:9-9:17) for claiming that one should find such evidence. The word used to describe this event in Genesis 6-9 is *flood* – that is, water covering the ground. The Genesis account says much about the water – where it came from, how long the rain lasted, how it lifted the ark, how it continued to increase in depth, how it covered everything in sight, how long it continued to rise, how it receded,

and how long it took to dry up; it says nothing about volcanoes going off, cracks opening in the earth, continents ripping apart, crust sinking into the mantle, or any other such thing.

I am very pleased to find my research routinely making archaeological connections in Genesis 10 and 11 now. Just a year ago I was questioning whether the wall which seemed to separate Genesis 11 and 12 would be penetrated in my lifetime. Most recently I have come upon a piece of information pertinent to the geographical location of the Eden of Genesis 2:8. This information seems to shed considerable light upon the meaning of Genesis 2:5-6, verses pertinent to the nature of the world immediately prior to the creation of Adam. I hope to discuss this in some future issue of *The Biblical Chronologist*. I bring it up now merely to note that there presently appears every probability we will soon be able to properly synchronize the chronology of the Bible with secular chronologies back into Genesis 2. The recent rate of discovery has truly been remarkable, and for this I am very thankful to the Lord. ◊

The Biblical Chronologist is a bimonthly subscription newsletter about Biblical chronology. It 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 threefold purpose:

1. to encourage, enrich, and strengthen the faith of conservative Christians through instruction in Biblical chronology,
2. to foster informed, up-to-date, scholarly research in this vital field within the conservative Christian community, and
3. to communicate current developments and discoveries in Biblical Chronology in an easily understood manner.

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