

L-ETAJIET KBAR TAL-PATRIJARKI (George Ebejer)

Hija haġa ta' l-iskantament kemm xi whud jaċċettaw minghajr ebda hsieb tagħlim żbaljat dwar xi sugġett li naqraw dwaru fil-Bibbja Mqaddsa. Sugġett wiehed minn dawn huwa l-etajiet kbar li naqraw dwarhom fil-Ktieb ta' Ġenesi. Billi għalina llum dawn jidhru li huma impossibbli li persuna tgħix dawk is-snin kollha, eżempju, 900 sena, allura għal xi whud, minflok ma jgħidu li għal Alla xejn ma huwa impossibbli huma jgħidu li dawk ma kinux snin bħas-snin tagħna tal-lum. Imma jekk xi hadd tassew ikollu fiduċja f'Alla, mija fil-mija, minghajr ma jiddubità Fih, allura dan kull ma għandu jagħmel huwa li jaqbad il-Kelma ta' Alla, il-Bibbja Mqaddsa u jfittex fiha u jhalli lil Alla Nnifsu jgħidlu Hu.

Halli ahna li tassew għandna fiduċja mija fil-mija f'dak li jgħidilna Alla fil-Kelma Tiegħu naghmlu dan u nħallu Lilu jgħidilna jekk dawk is-snin kinux l-istess bħas-snin tagħna tal-lum jew le.

A. Is-Snin Meqjusa Bħala Li Kienu Xhur!

Xi kritiċi jistqarru lid-900 sena ta' hajja msemija fil-Bibbja ma kinux snin letterali. Huma jistqarru li f'dak iż-żmien kull xahar kien bħal sena. Huma jgħidu li int għandek tiegħu l-età mogħtija fil-Bibbja u tiddividiha bi tmax-il xahar. Huma hafna llum li nqabdu f'dan it-tagħlim żbaljat minghajr lanqas biss qatt ma ndenjaw ruħhom jaraw huma nfushom tassew x'tgħid il-Bibbja Mqaddsa, li hija l-Kelma ta' Alla. Huma jharsu biss lejn l-etajiet kbar imma ma jharsux lejn l-etajiet l-oħra, bħal per eżempju, 74, 80, sena, eċċ., li huma msemija fl-istess żminijiet.

Imma dak li jgħidu huwa żbaljat għal kollox għal hafna raġunijiet. Il-Bibbja tgħidilna kemm kellhom żmien il-patrijarki meta twieldu wliedhom.

1. Jekk is-snin kienu xhur (kif xi whud isostnu li kienu) allura dak li naqraw f'Ġenesi 5:6 fejn jintqal li Set kellu (nissel) lil Enos meta kellu 105 sena, allura dan il-vers jipproponi li Set kellu iben meta hu kellu biss madwar disa' snin!
2. Jintqal li Qajnan kellu 70 sena meta ibnu Mahalel twieled (Ġenesi 5:12). Jekk int tiddividi l-età bi 12, allura dan ikun ifisser li Qajnan kellu iben meta hu kellu biss 5 snin. Dan huwa impossibbli u mhux li Alla jippermetti li persuna tgħix 900 sena!
3. Jintqal ukoll li Henok kellu iben, Metuselah, meta hu kellu 65 sena. Jekk ahna niddividu bi tmax, kif ighidu xi whud li s-snin kienu ta' dak iż-żmien, allura Henok kellu iben meta hu kien biss ta' hames snin u f'it xhur. (Ġenesi 5:21).

4. Ix-xhur u s-snin huma spjegati çari fl-Iskrittura fejn naqraw f'Ġenesi 8:13-14, “¹³U ġara, *fis-sena sitt mija u wiehed, fl-ewwel xahar, fl-ewwel jum tax-xahar*, illi l-ilmijiet nixfu mill-art: u Noè nehha l-ghatu ta' l-arka, u ħares, u, ara, wiçç l-art kien niexef. ¹⁴U *fit-tieni xahar, fis-sebġha u għoxrin tax-xahar*, l-art kienet niexfa.” Minn hawn jidher çar li Noè fehem tajjeb id-differenza bejn jum, xahar u sena, imma llum xi wħud din id-differenza għadhom ma jistgħux jifhmuha!
5. Abram kellu 86 sena meta twieled Ismaghel fejn naqraw, “U Hagar wildet iben lil Abram: u semma Abram isem ibnu, li wildet Hagar, Ismaghel. ¹⁶U Abram kellu *sitta u tmenin sena*, meta Hagar wildet lil Ismaghel lil Abram” (Ġenesi 16:15-16). Jekk, kif iġħidu xi wħud lis-snin ma kinux bħal tagħna llum, imma li wiehed għandu jiddividihom bi 12, dan ikun ifisser li l-patrijarka Abram kien sewwasew ftit aktar minn 7 snin fit-twelid ta' l-ewwel iben tiegħu, u Sara kienet sewwasew ftit aktar minn 7 snin meta welldet l-ewwel iben tagħha! (Ġenesi 17:17; 21:2). Imma llum xi wħud għadhom jaħsbu kif haħsbu Abraham u Sara, jġigifieri, li xi hwejjeġ huma impossibbli għal Alla (Ġenesi 17:17; 18:11). Imma min jaħseb hekk tajjeb li jaqra Ġenesi 18:14, “*Ewwilla hemm xi ħaġa tqila ħafna għal Yahweh?...*” U wkoll dak li jġħid il-Mulej tagħna, Ġesù Kristu, “*...Dak li ma jistax ikun għall-bnedmin jista' jkun għal Alla.*” (Luqa 18:27). Li bniedem iġħix 900 sena u aktar, għalina llum jidher li huwa impossibbli. Imma sejjer xi ħadd ikun daqshekk prużuntuz u jġħid li għal Alla huwa impossibbli wkoll li jħalli persuna tgħix dak iż-żmien? Barra minn hekk, Abraham miet fl-età sabiħa kbira ta' erbagħtax-il sena għaliex huwa kellu 175 sena meta miet, imma billi dik l-età hija impossibbli, skond xi wħud, allura meta wiehed jiddividuha bi tnax Abraham jġi li kellu, bejn wiehed u ieħor, 14-il sena meta miet.
6. Naraw f'Ġenesi 25:26 li meta Izakk kellu t-twemin, Ghesaw u Ġakobb huwa kellu 60 sena. Iddividihom bi tnax u r-rizultat ikun li hu kellu 5 snin meta twliedu t-twemin! Temmnu dan int?
7. Meta Ġakobb kellu lil Ġużeppi, huwa kellu madwar 91 sena. (Ġenesi 30:25-43; 31:41). Temmen int li Ġakobb kellu ftit inqas minn 8 snin meta kellu lil Ġużeppi?
8. Meta Ġakobb iltaqa' mal-Fargħun huwa kellu 130 sena. Ifisser dan li Ġakobb kellu biss qrib il-ħdax-il sena f'dak il-waqt? (Ġenesi 47:9).
9. Nistgħu nsemmu wisq aktar minn hekk bħala eżempji imma dawn għandhom ikunu biżżejjed biex juru kemm huma żbaljati dawk li jġħidu lis-snin tal-Patrijarki ma kinux snin letterali bħal tagħna llum!

10. Ukoll Mosè kiteb Ġenesi, Hu għamel differenza ċara hafna bejn xahar u sena. Hu għamel dan f'ħafna drabi. Eżempju, fejn naqraw f'Ġenesi 1:14, “U Alla qal: Ha jkun hemm dawwaliet fil-firxa tas-sema, biex jifirdu n-nhar mil-lejl: u halli jkunu ta' sinjali, u biex jagħzlu *l-istaguni*, u *l-jiem*, u *s-snin*.” Jekk is-snin mhumiex snin letterali bħal tagħna illum, allura lanqas l-istaguni u l-jiem ma jistgħu jkun staguni u jiem letterali bħal tagħna illum!
11. Ukoll, meta Ġesù gie fid-dinja Hu għallimna hafna hwejjeg. Jekk il-Patrijarki ma ghexux dawk is-snin twal kif tistqarr il-Bibbja, jiena ċert li Ġesù kien jghidilna.

B. Etajiet Meqjusa mit-Twelid Ta' l-Ewwel Wild

1. Imkien fil-Iskrittura ma hemm xi prova għal dan. Hija haġa wahda li *tispekula* fuq haġa bħal din, imma hija haġ'ohra għal kollox differenti biex *tipprovaha*.
2. Il-Bibbja tagħti daqqa tal-mewt għal suggeriment bħal dan meta speċifikament tippreżenta etajiet ta' individwi *qabel ma huma saru ġenituri*, jeliminaw l-idea li l-etajiet ta' nies ma kinux ikkalkulati qabel dik il-ġrajja. Ġenesi 12:4, “Għalhekk Abram telaq, bħal ma qallu Yahweh; u Lot mar miegħu: u Abram kellu ħamsa u sebghin meta telaq minn Haran.” Dan biċ-ċar ikisser l-attentat tal-kritiċi biex iġibu fix-xejn dak li tghid il-Bibbja Mqaddsa dwar l-età tal-patrijarki.

Ċ. Etajiet Jirrapprezentaw Mhux Individwi, Izda Dinastiji

1. Hemm numru ta' problemi serji b'din il-veduta.
 - a. L-ewwel, dawk li jsostnu din il-veduta ta' “dinastiji” ma jistgħux jibqgħu konsistenti, għaliex saħansitra huma nfushom huma sfur-zati biex jammettu li ċerti ismijiet fil-listi ma jistgħux jirrapprezentaw *biss razza*, imma minflok *għandhom* jirrapprezentaw individwi.
 - b. Noè u wliedu kellhom ikunu individwi reali, għaliex huma kienu fuq l-arka.
 - ċ. Abraham kellu jkun individwu, mhux dinastija, għaliex hu kien il-missier ta' nazzjon Lhudi.
2. Sabiex din l-interpretazzjoni tkun aċċettabbli, wiehed għandu jaqra r-rakkont Bibliku b'doża qawwija ta' immaginazzjoni u b'doża żgħira ta' sens komun. Bħala eżempju, meta t-test iġhid li Eva wildet lil Kajjin u Abel, kulhadd jgħaraf li dan qieghed jitkellem dwar individwi għaliex wiehed minnhom (Kajjin) qatel lil l-iehor (Abel). Izda, meta Eva wildet lil Set, minnufih dinastija f'distanza kienet diskussa. Ukoll, kif wiehed li jsostni dik it-teorija stramba jittratta

mal-fatt li f'hafna waqtiet fit-Testment il-Qadim, ahwa specifici, subjien u bniet, huma msemija? Dinastiji m'ghandhomx ahwa subjien u bniet.

D. Il-Kalendarju Ta' Dak Iz-Zmien Kien Differenti minn tal-Lum.

Huwa minnu li l-kalendarju li nuzaw ahna llum (Gregorjan) mhuwix dak li kienu jimxu fuqu daww il-Patrijarki li semmejt aktar qabel u li naqraw dwarhom fil-Ktieb ta' Ġenesi. Imma jfisser dan li l-jiem, ix-xhur u s-snin tagħhom kienu differenti minn tagħna? Jekk kien hemm xi differenza żgur li ma kinetx differenza li wiehed jista' jghid li jekk patrijarka kellu 600 sena dan kien ifisser li huwa kellu, skond il-kalendarju tagħna, 50 sena. Żgur li mhux hekk.

Il-Bibbja Mqaddsa, li hija l-Kelma ispirata ta' Alla, tispecifica ezatt il-jiem, xhur u snin kif ukoll l-istaguni. Jekk wiehed tassew ikun irid jaf minghajr ma jhalli lil xi hadd iqarraq bih billi jagħti xi interpretazzjoni hu, kif fil-fatt qiegħed isir illum, dan jista' jkun jaf minghajr ebda diffikultà kemm kienu twal il-jiem, xhur u snin ta' dak iż-żmien u jekk kienx hemm xi differenza kbira meta ahna nqabbluhom ma' daww li nafu ahna llum. Eżempju, il-Bibbja tispecifica ezatt liema jiem tas-sena li l-festi (fit-Testment il-Qadim) kellhom ikunu osservati—u hija ma tużax il-kalendarju Gregorjan u lanqas dak Lhudi jew xi ieħor!

Mill-kalendarji kollha, il-veru Kalendarju Bibliku huwa wiehed mill-aktar faċli li tifhem. Huwa tant loġiku li kull pesuna li tirraġuna tista' tifhem l-istruttura tiegħu faċilment. Dan ma jehtieg ebda kalkoli kkumplikati jew xi regoli arbitrarji biex iżzommu jaqbel ma' l-istaguni tas-sena. Huwa kalendarju tal-qamar u x-xemx. Żomm f'moħħok, li l-istess qamar u l-istess xemx li kienu jaraw il-Patrijarki għadhom jidhru llum u għadna narawhom ahna wkoll. Dan ifisser li kemm il-qamar u kemm ix-xemx kellhom parti fil-kostruzzjoni ta' dak il-kalendarju. Ir-regoli għal dik il-kostruzzjoni jigu kollha kemm huma mill-Bibbja Mqaddsa u huma tant sempliċi li wara li tkun qrajthom inti nnifsek int tkun tista' tifhimhom u tispjegahom lil min trid.

Alla (Yahweh) qal lill-poplu li huma kellhom jingabru flimkien f'ċerti żminijiet tas-sena biex josservaw il-jiem tal-Festi Tiegħu u Hu ma semmiex "Mejju" jew "Novembru" jew xi xhur oħra tal-kalendarju Gregorjan jew ta' xi kalendarju ieħor. Huwa uża kliem bħal "l-ghaxar jum ta' l-ewwel xahar" u "l-ewwel jum tas-seba' xahar" biex juri l-osservanzi tal-jum tal-Festa (*moedim* fl-Ebrajk). Hu jghid, "Izda raġel li jkun safi, u ma jkunx f'xi safra, u jibqa' ma jagħmilx il-ghid, ikun maqtuġh minn fost niesu: ghax ma pprezentax l-offerta ta' Yahweh fl-istagun tagħha; dak ir-raġel igib fuqu dnuhu" (Numri 9:13). Alla appunta żmien meta l-offerta kellha tkun ipprezentata.

Ahna nitghallmu li Yahweh ordna li l-jiem tal-festi Tieghu kellhom ikunu osservati fiż-żmien preċiż (Levitku 23:2), mhux btajjel f'jiem li jagħzlu huma għall-kumdità tagħhom. Huma kienu jidinbu jekk ma josservawhomx fil-jum u ż-żmien li Alla kkomanda.

Yahweh ighidilna pjuttost bl-aktar mod ċar kif ahna niddeċiedu dwar il-jiem korretti minn “kalendarju” fis-sema. Innota Ġenesi 1:14: “U Alla qal: Ha jkun hemm dawwaliet fil-firxa tas-sema, biex jifirdu *n-nhar mil-lejl*: u halli jkunu ta’ sinjali, u biex jagħzlu *l-istaguni*, u *l-jiem*, u *s-snin*.” Nistaqsi jien, kienu daww in-nhar u l-lejl *differenti* min-nhar u l-lejl tagħna tal-lum? Kienu daww l-istaguni u l-jiem, *u s-snin differenti* mill-istaguni u jiem *u snin* kif nafuhom ahna illum? Żgur li le!

Kalendarji jirreġistraw il-jiem tas-sena, imqiegħda f’sura li normalment tifrixhom fuq xhur u ġimgħat. Kalendarju baziku jirrelata erba’ elementi ta’ żmien: jum, ġimgħa, xahar u sena. Minn dawn l-elementi il-**jum** huwa l-pedament. Kif Yahweh jiddetermina t-tul ta’ jum, jew ġurnata? Naqraw f’Ġenesi 1:1-5, “¹Fil-bidu Elohim halaq is-sema u l-art... ³U Elohim qal: Ha jkun hemm id-dawl: u kien hemm id-dawl. ⁴U Elohim ra d-dawl, li kien tajjeb: u Elohim fired id-dawl mid-dlam. ⁵U Elohim semma d-dawl *Nhar*, u d-dlam semmieh *Lejl*. U *l-ghaxija u l-ghodu kienu l-ewwel jum*.”

Għaxija wahda u għodu wiehed jagħmlu jum wiehed. Huma dawn l-ghaxija u l-ghodu jum l-istess bħal tagħna illum? Iva. Id-differenza forsi hija meta kien jibda l-jum u meta jispiċċa. Imma bħala jum ta’ 24 siegħa huwa l-istess.

Il-Bibbja tghidilna ezatt li: “*l-ghaxija u l-ghodu kienu l-ewwel jum*.” Kemm minn dawn il-jiem ahna naghmluhom flimkien biex jagħmlu ġimgħa? Għaliex ahna ngħoddu sebat ijiem, mela, u nsejnhom ġimgħa? Il-kelma Ebrajka tradotta “ġimgħa” hija *shabua*, u din tissinjifika kompletanza, jew perfezzjoni. Il-ġimgħa kienet ukoll introdotta kmieni f’Ġenesi (2: 3): “U Elohim bierek *is-seba’ jum*, u qaddsu: għax fih strieh mix-xogħol tiegħu kollu li Alla halaq u għamel.” Il-kelma tradotta “strieh” hawn hija l-għerq Ebrajk *shabath*, (*Strong’s Concordance* No. 7673 – the Sabbath.) Li Alla juża ġimgħa ta’ sebat ijiem huwa ċar matul il-Bibbja: “Mill-ghada tas-Sibt, minn meta tkunu ġibtu l-qatta tat-tixjira, tghoddu seba’ ġimgħat shah: ¹⁶Sal-ghada tas-seba’ Sibt, tghoddu hekk hamsin jum, imbagħad toffru lil Yahweh offerta ġdida tal-qamh” (Levitku 23:15-16).

Kemm jiem **int** tpoġġi f’ġimgħa tal-lum? Ftakar li inti osservatur antik u li qiegħed tosserva x-xemx u l-qamar għall-perjodi twal. Ix-xemx titla’ u tinzel u l-jiem ighaddu. Il-qamar qiegħed jgħamel xi haġa ftit differenti. Il-qamar ukoll jitla’ u jinzel imma l-ammont tiegħu int tista’ tara li jvarja—xi kultant dan ma jkunx vizibbli. Imma dan isegwi ċiklu.

Inti tinnota maż-żmien li l-qamar jibda bħala felli rqiq fuq naħa waħda, jibda jikber u jiddi aktar, imbagħad jonqos għal felli rqiq hafna fuq in-naħa l-oħra. Imbagħad dan ma jidhirx aktar għal ftit tal-hin, biss biex jirripeti dawn il-fażijiet. Inti tghodd in-numru tal-jiem minn punt wiehed għall-punt identiku li jkun imiss u tinnota li hemm madwar 29½ jum għaċ-ċiklu tal-qamar biex ikun komplut. Imma meta inti tibda l-għad tiegħek taċ-ċiklu tal-qamar? Inti tikkonkludi illi li tibda b'l-ewwel felli li jidher jagħmel l-aktar sens u twarrab kaluklazzjonijiet mhux neċessarji.

Inti tinnota wkoll xi haġa interessanti meta tħares lejn il-qamar. Mill-hin li inti bilkemm tkun tista' tara l-felli l-gdid sakemm il-qamar ikun l-aktar li jiddi, (shih) jiehu 14-il jum. Kull kwart (l-ewwel, it-tieni, it-tielet u r-raba') jimmarka perjodu ta' sebat ijiem. Dan huwa faċli—wiehed jista' jghodd il-jiem f'pakkett ta' sebat ijiem billi jħares mill-qrib lejn il-qamar. Sorpriż! Dak hu l-mod li Alla halqu! Nistaqsi jien lil dawġ li jippruvaw ighidu li l-etajiet tal-patrijarki huma fuq kalendarju differenti minn tagħna, huma s-sebat ijiem ta' dak iż-żmien differenti minn tagħna wkoll? Jekk le, għaliex le? Jekk il-kalendarju kien differenti allura wkoll il-gimghat għandhom ikunu differenti! Imma l-qerq f'dan ir-rigward sfortunatament hafna jin-qabdu fih! Imma halli issa naraw dwar *ix-xhur*. Rajna dwar *il-jiem* u dwar *il-gimghat*. Issa naraw dwar *ix-xhur* u wara dwar *is-snin*.

Jinkludi Alla *xhur* fil-kalendarju Tiegħu? Ukoll, kif dwar il-gimghat, hemm hafna riferenzi Bibliċi dwar *ix-xhur*—imma tlieta huma biżżejjed, nibdew b'Dewteronomju 16:1: “Hares *ix-xahar* ta' Abib, u aghmel il-għid lil Yahweh, Alla tiegħek: għax *fix-xahar* ta' Abib, Yahweh, Alla tiegħek, hargek bil-lejl mill-Egittu.” Fl-Ebrajk, il-kelma tradotta “*xahar*” hija *chodesh* (Strong 2320), li tfisser “il-qamar *gdid*; b'implikazzjoni, *xahar*.”

Yahweh mhux biss jinkludi *xhur*, imma Hu wkoll jibdihom bid-dehra ta' qamar *gdid*. Dan il-vers letteralment ighid, “Hares għall-qamar *gdid* ta' Abib, u zomm l-Għid...” L-Għid (Passover) għandu jkun osservat f'Abib 14 (Eżodu 12:6): “U zommuh sa l-erbatax ta' l-istess *xahar*; u l-laqgħa kollha tal-gemgħa ta' Izrael toqtlu filgħaxija.”

It-tieni riferenza għal *xhur* u ż-żmien tagħhom tinsab f'Salm 104:19: “Hu għamel il-qamar għall-istaġuni; *ix-xemx* taf meta tinzel.” It-tielet riferenza hija wkoll f'Salm 81:3: “Doqqu t-tromba mal-qamar *gdid*, mal-qamar mimli f'jum il-festa tagħna.” Hawn l-unika festa li tibda fl-ewwel jum tax-*xahar* (Ethanim) hija msemmija—Trombi. Versi oħra dwar il-“*chodesh*” jinsabu bil-bosta fil-Bibbja (aktar minn 200), kollha jfissru “qamar *gdid*.”

Kif wiehed josserva madwar tnaħ-il *ċiklu* tal-qamar, dan jinnota li-x-xemx tidher li miexja matul l-orizzont fil-hin ta' l-inzul tagħha, sejra min-nofsinar għat-tramuntana u lura għan-nofsinar. Hekk kif inti tirrealizza

dan, inti tagħmel marka fuq l-orizzont qrib l-inzul tax-xemx, u fi ftit jiem inti tibda biex ikollok idea dwar kemm ix-xemx qed titbiegħed minn dik il-marka. Maż-żmien inti tinnota wkoll id-dija madwarek qed tishon aktar, u mbagħad tiksah aktar, u mbagħad tishon mill-ġdid.

Inti tghodd il-jiem mill-pożizzjoni tax-xemx mill-marka li inti tkun għamilt sakemm ix-xemx terġa' tigi lura hemm, tmur fl-istess direzzjoni. *L-ghadd tiegħek huwa 365 jum*. Dan in-numru, jipprezenta ċ-ċiklu tax-xemx, u n-numru jipprezenta ċ-ċiklu tal-qamar (29½), mhumiex saħansitra vizibbli. Ftit matematika bażika tghidlek li sena solari mhux eżattament tagħmel 12-il xhar lunari ta' 29½ jum (354 jum) u t-tul ta' sena solari (365) jikkawża l-erba' staġuni biex jimxu matul is-sena.

Dan forsi jista' ma jkun ta' ebda importanza għal xi whud—x'jimporta jekk ir-rebbiegħa tigix fl-ewwel xahar jew fit-tieni xahar jew fit-tielet? Imma Yahweh jimpurtah. Yahweh qal lil Mosè f' Eżodu 12:2, “Dax-xahar (Abib) ikunilkom il-bidu tax-xhur: ikunilkom l-ewwel xahar tas-sena.” Abib hija l-kelma Ebrajka għal dan ix-xahar, u din tfisser “sbul hodur” ta' qamh. Imma liema qamh? Mur f' Eżodu 9, fejn aħna naqraw dwar wieħed mill-kastigi li Yahweh qiegħed fuq il-Fagħrun: “²³U Mosè medd il-hatar tiegħu lejn is-sema: u Yahweh bagħat ragħad u silġ, u nar ġera 'l isfel lejn l-art, u Yahweh għamel xita ta' silġ fuq l-art ta' l-Eġittu. ²⁴Għamel is-silġ, u nar iżiġġ ġos-silġ, qawwi wisq, li bħalu qatt ma kien hemm fl-art kollha ta' l-Eġittu, mindu saret nazzjon. ²⁵U s-silġ harbat fl-art kollha ta' l-Eġittu dak kollu li kien fir-raba'; sew il-bniedem u sew il-bhima; u s-silġ harbat kull haħixa tar-raba', u kisser kull sigra fir-raba'. ... ³¹U tharbtu l-kittien u x-xgħir: għax ix-xgħir kien bis-sbul, u l-kittien bin-nwar. ³²Iżda l-qamh u l-ġulbiena ma tharbtux: għax kienu għadhom ma kibru.” (23-25, 31-32).

Ix-xgħir kien dak il-prodott tar-raba' li diġà kien “fis-sbula,” u x-xahar li fih l-ewwel Għid sar huwa Abib, ix-xahar tas-sbul aħdar tax-xgħir. Ix-xahar ta' Abib u l-istat tax-xgħir huma marbuta flimkien mill-qrib. Jekk ix-xgħir ma jkunx fl-istat proprju f'dak ix-xahar, dak ix-xahar ma jistax ikun Abib.

Issa mur għal Levitku 23. Hawn Yahweh jispjega l-konċett ta' l-ewwel frott għal l-Iżraeliti, u jghidilna x'forma għandu jkun ix-xgħir matul ix-xahar ta' Abib: “Hobż, u qamh ingaljat, u *sbul aħdar*, ma tiklux sa dak in-nhar, sa meta ġġibu l-offerta lil Alla tagħkom: dan ikun statut għal dejjem għal kull nisel tagħkom, kull fejn tkunu tghammru” (Levitku 23:14). L-Iżraeliti ma kinux imħollija li jaħsdu l-uċuħ tar-raba' tagħhom tax-xgħir qabel ma l-ewwel faxx xħir kienet imxejra quddiem Yahweh mill-qassis. Ix-xgħir ikun miżrugħ f' Novembru u jiehu madwar erba' xhur biex jimmatura. Għandu jkun fl-istadju tas-sbula haħdra fl-ewwel xahar, u għallinqas xi ftit minnu lest għall-ħsad maż-żmien ta' l-offerta tat-tixjir li kienet issir

matul il-Festa ta' l-Azzmi. Ahna nafu li dan kien jigri matul il-Festa ta' l-Azzmi ghaliex dawn il-versi jispjegaw kif tghodd 'il quddiem mit-tixjira għall-Festa tal-Ġimghat. Yahweh iżomm l-istaġuni f'linja max-xhur billi riedhom josservaw ix-xghir matur.

Issa, wara li rajna dan kollu, wara li rajna dwar il-kalendarju ta' Yahweh dwar il-jiem, ġimghat, xhur, u snin, jista' jibqa' xi dubju dwar jekk is-snin u l-etajiet kbar li naqraw dwarhom f'Ġenesi humiex l-istess snin bħal tagħna illum? Wiehed m'għandux iħalli lil min jipprova jqarraq bih billi jsemmillu kalendarji differenti. Dak kollu qerq. Ix-xemx u l-qamar, l-ghaxija u l-ghodu, in-nhar u l-lejl li naqraw dwarhom f'Ġenesi huma l-istess bħax-xemx u l-qamar, l-ghaxija u l-ghodu, in-nhar u l-lejl li nafu dwarhom ahna illum. Għalhekk ahna għandna twissijiet fil-Bibbja Mqaddsa bħal: "*Thallu lil hadd iqarraq bikom bi kliem fieragh*, ghaliex minhabba f'dawn il-hwejjeġ tinzel il-korla ta' Alla fuq ulied id-dizubbidjenza" (Efesin 5:6). Imma xi whud donnhom ikunu kuntenti li jiġu mqarrqa!

Il-Kalendarju ta' Alla – Façli daqs 1, 2, 3, 4

Ahna rajna u mxejna skond ir-regoli tal-Kalendarju Bibliku u mhux ta' xi kalendarju magħmul mill-bnedmin. Il-Patrijarki kollha kienu jimxu fuq dan il-kalendarju u ma kellhom l-ebda diffikultà biex jifhmuh. Jiena çert, li meta wiehed jara sewwa u jifhem dan, huwa għandu jsib li daww ir-regoli huma sempliçi u loġiçi.

1. *Jiem*: "d-dawl Nhar, u d-dlam semmieħ Lejl. U l-ghaxija u l-ghodu kienu l-ewwel jum." (Ġenesi 1:5). Taqbel int li jum wiehed huwa Nhar u lejl, ghaxija u ghodu? Hemm xi differenza mill-jum tal-lum għal jum li naqraw dwaru f'Ġenesi 1:5?
2. *Ġimgha*: Ibda l-ġimgha fl-ewwel jum u spicçaha fis-seba' jum – "Mill-ghada tas-Sibt, minn meta tkunu ġibtu l-qatta tat-tixjira, tghoddu seba' ġimghat shah: ¹⁶Sal-ghada tas-seba' Sibt, tghoddu hekk hamsin jum, imbagħad toffru lil Yahweh offerta ġdida tal-qamh" (Levitku 23:15-16). Hemm xi differenza fit-tul taż-żmien mil-ġimgha tal-lum fit-tul ta' żmien għall-ġimgha li naqraw dwarha f'Levitku 23: 15-16?
3. *Xhur*: Ibda x-xhur bid-dehriet ta' qamar ġdid: "Hares ix-xahar ta' Abib, u aghmel il-ghid lil Yahweh, Alla tiegħek: ghax fix-xahar ta' Abib, Yahweh, Alla tiegħek, hargek bil-lejl mill-Egittu" (Dewteronomju 16:1). Tinsiex li Abib tfisser "sbula." Hemm xi differenza fit-tul taż-żmien mix-xahar tal-lum ghax-xahar li naqraw dwaru f'Dewteronomju 16:1?

4. *Snin*: Ibda s-snin fix-xahar li x-xghir ikun tajjeb għall-hasd man-nofs ta' dak ix-xahar: ¹U Yahweh kellem lil Mosè, qallu: ²Kellem lil ulied Izrael, għidilhom: Il-għidien ta' Yahweh, li intom tneduhom bhala laqgħat imqaddsa, dawn huma, l-għidien tiegħi. ³Sitt ijiem tahdem ix-xogħol: iżda s-seba' jum ikun Sibt, serh għal kollox, u jkun hemm laqgħa mqaddsa: l-ebda xogħol ma tagħmlu fih: hu Sibt Yahweh, kull fejn tkunu tghammru. ⁴Dawn huma l-festi ta' Yahweh, laqgħat imqaddsa, li tneduhom f'waqthom. ⁵L-ewwel xahar, l-erbatax tax-xahar, waqt l-għabex ta' filghaxija, hu hu għid Yahweh. ⁶U l-hmistax ta' l-istess xahar ikun għid l-ażżmi, f'għieh Yahweh: sebat ijiem tieklu ħobż azzmu. ⁷L-ewwel jum ikollkom laqgħa mqaddsa: l-ebda xogħol tal-haddiema ma tagħmlu. ⁸Izda toffru offerta magħmula bin-nar lil Yahweh għal sebat ijiem: fis-seba' jum ikollkom laqgħa mqaddsa: l-ebda xogħol tal-haddiema ma tagħmlu. ⁹Yahweh kellem lil Mosè, qallu: ¹⁰Kellem lil ulied Izrael, għidilhom: Meta tidhlu fl-art li sa nagħtikom u taħsdu l-hasda, iġġibu qatta ta' l-ewwel frott tal-hasda tagħkom, lill-qassis: ¹¹U jxejjer il-qatta quddiem Yahweh għal-ikom, biex toghġbuh: il-għada tas-Sibt ixejjirha l-qassis. ¹²U dak in-nhar li xxejru l-qatta tagħkom, toffru haruf bla difett ta' *dik is-sena*, bhala offerta tal-hruq lil Yahweh. ¹³U l-offerta tal-qamh tiegħu tkun zewġ eghxur dqiq mibxux biż-zejt, offerta magħmula bin-nar lil Yahweh b'riha tfuh: u l-offerta tax-xorb tkun irbigħa ta' hinn inbid. ¹⁴Ħobż, u qamh ingaljat, u sbul aħdar, ma tiklux sa dak in-nhar, sa meta ġġibu l-offerta lil Alla tagħkom: dan ikun statut għal dejjem għal kull nisel tagħkom, kull fejn tkunu tghammru” (Levitku 23:1-14). Hemm xi differenza fit-tul taż-żmien mis-sena tal-lum għas-sena msemija f'vers 12? Jekk ahna nhallu lill-bnedmin jingannawna billi jgħidulna li l-kalendarju kien differenti minn dak tagħna, allura t-twegiba tkun, iva, hemm differenza, imma jekk ahna nhallu lil Alla jgħidilna Hu fil-Kelma Tiegħu, allura t-twegiba għandha tkun biss, LE, ma hemm l-ebda differenza!

Fatti u Mhux Teoriji

Problema kbira li teżisti llum fil-qasam teologiku hija li hafna minn nies mhumiex lesti li jaċċettaw dak li hu muri b'mod l-aktar sempliċi fil-Bibbja Mqaddsa imma huma jaċċettaw dak li huma nfushom ma jistgħux jifhmuh l-aqwa li dak ikun intqal minn xi teologu u mhux sempliċiment billi qrawh mill-Kelma ta' Alla, il-Bibbja Mqaddsa. (Tajjeb hawn li wiehed jaqra 1 Korintin 1:18-31 u 1 Korintin 2:1-5)

L-unika spjega teologika għal li rrapporta dawn il-fatti ta' l-għageb li naqrawhom f'Ġenesi f'mod hekk sempliċi hija li, meta l-kittieb originali

rregistrahom dawn ma kinux xi haġa mhux tas-soltu, imma esperjenza komuni. Kif urejt aktar qabel, l-etajiet kbar tal-Patrijarki msemmija fil-Ktieb ta' Ġenesi kienu miktuba b'mod sempliċi u li jifhmu kulhadd u Alla fisser dak li Hu ried li jfisser, imma matul iż-żminijiet bdew jinholqu opinonijiet differenti dwar l-interpretazzjoni tagħhom u xi whud warrbu s-semplicità li nsibu f'dawk il-kapitli u ġew ingannati biex jaċċettaw l-interpretazzjonijiet tal-bnedmin. Eżempju, x'nisimghu llum u li hafna qegħdin jaċċettawh dan? Li Ġenesi huwa hrafa. Li l-etajiet kbar tal-patrijarki mhumieq letterali? Li dawk l-etajiet kbar m'għandhomx x'jaqsmu mal-kalendarju tagħna tal-lum. U hafna qerq iehor bħal dan. Imma l-Kelma sempliċi ta' Alla mhumieq lesti li jaċċettawha kif inhi mingħajr ma jhallu lil xi hadd jibdel xi parti minnha billi jagħtiha interpretazzjoni personali tiegħu. Ma rridux ninsew x'tgħidilna l-Kelma ta' Alla, *"Dan fuq kollox għandkom tkunu tafu: li l-ebda profezija ta' l-Iskrittura ma għandu hadd ifissirha minn rasu."*²¹ *Għax qatt ma kien li xi profezija giet mir-rieda tal-bnedmin; imma, meta l-bnedmin tkellmu fl-isem ta' Alla, dan għamluh għax kienu mqanqlin mill-Ispirtu s-Santu."* (2 Pietru 1:20-21). Dak li wiehed għandu jagħmel, iħalli l-Kelma ta' Alla tinterspreta lilha nfisha u mhux jinterspre-taha skond l-opinjoni tiegħu!

Li l-etajiet kbar tal-patrijarki huma mogħtija f'termini ta' snin reali hu evidenti, kif diġà rajna, mill-etajiet tal-missirjiet fit-twelid ta' wliedhom, li jilhqqu minn 65 sena fil-każ ta' Maħalel u Henok (Ġenesi 5:15, 21) għal 500 sena fil-każ ta' Noè (Ġenesi 5:32). Prova oħra ta' dan huwa l-fatt li, wara d-Dulluvju, it-tul taż-żmien tal-ħajja kien beda niezze, jonqos minn 950 sena għal Noè (Ġenesi 9:29) għal 205 sena għal Terah (Ġenesi 11:32), u eventwalment l-isfel madwar 70 sena fiż-żmien ta' Mosè (Salm 90:10)

It-tul tal-ħajja beda taħsir l-isfel f'Noè u beda jzomm f'livell fiż-żmien Ġuzeppi. Alla qal: **"U Yahweh qal: L-ispirtu tiegħi ma jdumx għal dejjem jithabat mal-bniedem, għax hu laham ukoll: iżda jiemu jkunu mija u għoxrin sena."** (Ġenesi 6:3).

Dan l-inżul jew nuqqas fiż-żmien tal-ħajja kien ġudizzju dirett minn Alla għall-ħażen tal-bniedem (Ġenesi 6:5-6). Il-bniedem ipprova jfisser dan bħala fenomenu naturali. Dawk li jagħmlu hekk, huma l-istess nies li jiċhdu l-validità ta' Ġenesi. Jekk huma ma jemmnux Ġenesi, mela għaliex jippruvaw biex jirrazzjonalizzaw dak li ġara biex ikkawża l-bidla.

Alla kien intenzjona għall-bniedem li jgħix għal dejjem, imma l-bniedem dineb u kkawża l-mewt li tidhol (Rumani 5:12). Imma Alla ppermetta lill-bniedem li jgħix ħajja ta' kwazi elf sena ukoll wara l-waqa' (Ġenesi 5:30-31). Madankollu, il-qalb kontinwament fil-ħażen tal-bniedem (Ġenesi 6:5), ikkawzatu li jsir ħazin u Alla ddispaciħ li għamel lill-bniedem (Ġenesi 6:6-7). Alla raġa' naqqas il-ħajja (Ġenesi 6:3) din id-darba għal 120

sena. Ghalhekk iż-żmien tal-hajja tal-bniedem mar minn hajja bla tmiem, ghal kwazi elf sena, ghal mija u ghoxrin minhabba d-dnub tiegħu stess.

KONKLUŻJONI

Mhix xi haġa mhux komuni għal dawk li jirrifjutaw li jaċċettaw l-etajiet tal-patrijarki kif jidhru li huma biex jissuggerixxu lin-numri għandhom xi “tifsira teologika kbira marbuta magħhom. Spiss nisimghu jew naraw stqarrijiet bħal dawn isiru. Imma, meta ppressati fuq **xhiex** dik it-tifsira teologika tista’ tkun, dawk li jappoġġjaw idea bħal din jintilfu u jonqsu milli joffru xi spjega.

Is-snin tal-patrijarki li dwarhom naqraw f’Ġenesi kapitli 5 sa 11 *huma snin letterali u dak huwa eżattament kif il-kittieba tal-Bibbja aċċettawhom*. Eżamina din l-istqarrija ta’ l-ghageb mill-pinna ta’ Mosè, b’ispirazzjoni minn Alla. F’Ġenesi 47:9, Ġakobb, waqt li kien qiegħed ikellem lil Fagħ-run, qal, “U Ġakobb qal lil Fargħun: jiem is-snin tal-pellegrinaġġ tiegħi huma mija u tletin sena: ftit u hżiena kienu snin hajti, **u ma laħqux snin il-hajja ta’ missirijiet** f’jiem il-pellegrinaġġ tagħhom.” Innota l-punt li qie-ghed jagħmel Ġakobb. Hu kellu 130 sena, madankollu, huwa jghid li wkoll f’dik l-età kbira, il-jiem tiegħu ma laħqux “il-jiem tas-snin il-hajja ta’ missirijiet.” Jekk hu kellu 130 sena, u madankollu hu ma laħaqx l-età ta’ xi whud mill-patrijarki li kienu qablu, kemm mela kellhom żmien “missiri-jietu”?

Mhijiex xi haġa ta’ l-ghageb kemm tajjeb ir-rakkont Bibliku jaqbel flimkien? U mhijiex xi haġa sabiha li dan wiehed jista’ jafdah u jaċċettah, mingħajr xi xorta ta’ “manuvrar qarrieqi” li fuqu l-kritiċi għandhom joq-ghodu sabiex jagħmlu t-teoriji foloz tagħhom jiksbu xi grad ta’ rispett?

Imma, għal darb’ohra, min jahseb hekk tajjeb li jerga’ jaqra Ġenesi 18:14, “***Ewwilla hemm xi haġa tqila hafna għal Yahweh?...***”

U wkoll dak li jghid il-Mulej tagħna, Sidna Ġesù Kristu, “***...Dak li ma jistax ikun għall-bnedmin jista’ jkun għal Alla.***” (Luqa 18:27).

Li bniedem għex 900 sena u aktar, għal xi whud illum jidher li huwa impossibbli u minhabba f’hekk jinqabdu fit-tagħlim falz tal-bnedmin u jwarrbu dak li tghid il-Kelma ta’ Alla billi jghidu li s-snin ma kinux snin bħal tagħna.

Imma lest int li tkun daqshekk prużuntuż u tghid li ***għal Alla huwa impossibbli li jhalli persuna tghix 969 sena?***

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The Bible, Science, and the Ages of the Patriarchs
by Bert Thompson, Ph.D.

INTRODUCTION

As one reads through the Bible, on occasion he is confronted with statements, situations, or events that, at first glance, seem to be either impossible or improbable—when viewed from a distinctly modern vantage point. One good example of such an occurrence might be the statements of Scripture regarding the ages of several of the Old Testament patriarchs. Genesis 5 records that prior to the Flood, people typically lived for hundreds of years, with the average age of the antediluvian patriarchs (excluding Enoch, who was taken to his reward without dying) being 912 years. As Leupold observed, “At once we are struck by the longevity of these patriarchs; all except three lived in excess of nine hundred years. It is useless to attempt to evade this fact” (1942, 1:233).

Leupold’s observation that it is “useless to attempt to evade” the clear statements of Scripture regarding the long life spans of the patriarchs is correct, of course, in the sense that no one can deny that the Bible attributes long ages to many of the ancient patriarchs. The Bible specifically states that Adam, for example, lived 930 years (Genesis 5:5), Methuselah lived 969 years (Genesis 5:27), etc. However, as Leupold himself discussed in his two-volume *Exposition of Genesis*, some have suggested that while the Bible **says** these old worthies lived to be vast ages, that is not what it **means**. In other words, while the biblical statements themselves on these matters are clear, their meaning is not.

This is the case, we are told, because it is a matter of record that men today (obviously) do not live to be centuries old. Thus, some have suggested that the biblical record is unacceptable and therefore needs to be “fixed” or “explained” to bring it more into line with modern scientific facts on these matters, and to make its message palatable to people of our day and age. What recourse is available, then, to the person who discovers that there is a disagreement between plain, historical statements of Scripture and modern scientific pronouncements?

First, one might simply acknowledge that the Bible is inspired of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17), and as such is accurate in its renderings. If such a person has studied the matter(s) at hand, and is assured that his understanding of Scripture is accurate, he will revere the Word of God as just that—the Word of God—and will accept its teachings as trustworthy, in spite of modern-day claims to the contrary. Second, of course, a person might merely dismiss the biblical record as little more than ancient folklore—worthy of about as much admiration and reverence as, say, Aesop’s fables. Such an attitude rejects biblical claims of inspiration, and instead does obeisance to current scientific or philosophical pratings. Third, one might—from all outward appearances—claim to accept the Bible as speaking accurately and truthfully on whatever matters it addresses, all the while in reality compromising its teachings on a variety of subjects. Thus, while such a person pretends to respect the Bible as God’s Word, he instead is sowing seeds of compromise. Generally, this is the person who waits to see what “science” has to say before making any determination on the matter. Then, if science is at odds with the Bible, the Scriptures must be “corrected” to fit the scientific data or interpretations. We never are told that science must correct its view, only the reverse—viz., the biblical record must be altered to fit currently prevailing scientific data.

DOES THE BIBLICAL RECORD OF THE PATRIARCHS’ AGES NEED TO BE “FIXED”?

It is my intent here to examine and discuss the spirit of compromise exhibited by those in the third group mentioned above. There are a number of notable examples of such compromise, any one of which is illustrative of the attitudes portrayed. Two such examples will suffice.

In 1990, Ronald F. Youngblood edited a book titled *The Genesis Debate*, in which various areas of Scripture were discussed by disputants on both sides of an issue. Chapter eight of that volume discusses the question, “Did people live to be hundreds of years old before the Flood?” In that chapter, Duane L. Christensen first advocated the view that the biblical record

simply cannot be accepted as it is written. He then suggested a number of methods that could be employed to “fix” the text so as to resolve what he considered a serious discrepancy between biblical statements and current scientific knowledge (Christensen, 1990, pp. 166-183). Christensen’s assessment was that these numbers are, to use his words, “excessively large,” scientifically unverifiable, and therefore, quite simply, unacceptable.

In the June 1978 *Does God Exist?* journal that he edits, John Clayton addressed the patriarchs’ ages in an article on “The Question of Methuselah.” He suggested:

One of the most frequently asked questions that we receive in our lecture series is “How did men live so long during early Biblical times?” The Bible indicates ages of 969, 950, etc., years for early men. **From a scientific standpoint we cannot verify this figure.** By studying the bones of the oldest men we get ages of ten to thirty-five years usually, and only rarely an age as high as fifty (1978a, 5[6]:11, emp. added).

The point made by both Christensen and Clayton is that **from a scientific standpoint**, the patriarchs’ ages as given in the Bible **cannot be verified**. In the September 1978 issue of his journal, Clayton commented:

One final difficulty that this relates to is the attempts made by some to nail down specific historic dates to Biblical events of great antiquity. **The ages of men in the past cannot be answered with great accuracy** (1978b, 5[9]:9, emp. added).

Why can the ages of men in the past not “be answered with accuracy”? Is it because the Bible is unclear on its statements regarding these men’s ages? No, the biblical statements are both clear and unambiguous. The simple fact of the matter is that neither of these two writers is willing to accept the biblical testimony because allegedly there is **no scientific evidence**. In an April 20, 1987 letter to a gentleman in Wyoming who had written to ask him about this very point, Mr. Clayton wrote:

It is a fact that there is **no scientific evidence** that people lived to be hundreds of years old. It may just be that we haven’t found the right bones, but most bones of ancient men turn out to be twenty or thirty years of age and none have [sic] been found, to my knowledge, older than eighty years old. For this reason, I have tried to point out that **there are many possible ways in which the extreme age of Methuselah might be explained...** (p. 2, emp. added).

The absence of scientific evidence substantiating the Bible’s claims for the ages of the patriarchs is why Clayton cannot bring himself to accept those ages. Think for just a moment how radical this position really is. What

“scientific evidence” do we possess that “proves” the virgin birth of Jesus? Since science cannot prove that such an event ever occurred, should an alternate explanation be sought? This line of reasoning could be expanded almost endlessly. Since science cannot “prove” Christ’s bodily resurrection, the parting of the Red Sea, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and hundreds of other such occurrences, then must these events—which remain both scientifically unverified and unverifiable—simply be dismissed in the same way these two authors suggest that the patriarchs’ ages be dismissed?

Furthermore, there is another aspect to this question that needs to be explored. Aging is a metabolic process. Various species appear to be “programmed” for death within a given age range. Fleas, for example, live for about five years. Dogs live for an average of around fifteen years. Humans, on the other hand, can live upwards of seventy, eighty, ninety, or even a hundred years. Fleas never reach such an age; their genetic package will not allow it. In an article titled “Decreased Lifespans: Have We Been Looking in the Right Place?” that he authored for the *Creation Ex Nihilo Technical Journal*, Carl Wieland commented on this matter as follows:

Barring accidental death, one-celled organisms are potentially “immortal.” A bacterial cell reproduces by dividing into two where there was one, those two then become four, and so on. Why then do multicelled organisms die? Individual human cells in tissue culture divide some fifty times and then stop—**some sort of pre-programmed genetic limit is reached**. Human tumor cells, on the other hand, can be propagated indefinitely by division—the DNA mechanisms for pre-programmed cessation of division appears to be lacking or damaged in such cancer cells.

In multicellular organisms, once damaged and worn cells can no longer replace themselves, death is only a matter of time as the function of whole organ systems deteriorates. So even without accidents or disease there is a programmed “upper limit” on our age, which appears to be 120 years or so.

I suggest that our ancestors simply possessed genes for greater longevity which caused this “genetic limit” to human ages to be set at a higher level in the past.

Suggestive evidence in support of this is the fact that in some other organisms (for example, fruit flies), it has been shown that changes in average life spans can be bred into or out of populations....

If this suggestion has merit as the major (if not the sole) cause of great pre-Flood ages, then the obvious question is how some of these longevity genes were lost. The human population went through a severe genetic bottleneck at the time of the Flood—only eight individuals. The phenomenon of “genetic drift” is well known to be able to account for “random,” selectively neutral changes in gene frequencies which may be quite rapid. Also, loss of genes is far more likely in a small population....

It is also likely (if not more so) that genes coding for lesser longevity arose by mutational degeneration, with their frequency of possession rising as time passed. At the moment, too little is known of the exact mechanics of the way in which cells are programmed to die in order to offer more specific suggestions (1994, 8[2]:139-140, emp. added, parenthetical comments in orig.).

What if, in the past, human metabolism was much slower? What would be the end result? Gerald Schroeder, in his book, *The Science of God*, addressed such questions.

There are terrible mutations that upset the delicate aging process. Progeria speeds up the aging process almost tenfold, causing a teenager to die with the body of an old person. Within the realm of possibilities is the reverse process, slowing aging tenfold. It would be surprising but not inconceivable that manipulation of a flea’s genome might allow it to live ten times longer than normal, thus reaching the age of fifty years. After all, several animals species live even longer than fifty years. The fact that no animals currently reach the long ages associated with pre-Noah biblical persons does not preclude the possibility that this potential exists within our genome.

If human metabolism was slower and life spans were longer during the pre-Noah period, fossils would not indicate this. The slower metabolisms would result in fossils that appear to have formed from younger individuals (1997, pp. 202-203, emp. added).

In a fascinating article published in *Science Digest* some years back (“How Your Bones Tell Your Age”), Frederic W. Nordsiek observed:

Bone is hard and cannot grow from the inside out as can soft tissues like skin or muscle. Therefore, for example, each of the long bones of the arms and legs at first consists of two bones, with a growing section in between them. After growth is finished, these pairs of bones fuse together.... **Human bones continue to fuse together right up to advanced old age** (1960, 47[5]:17-18, emp. added).

Consider all of these scientific facts collectively, and you will see how they demolish arguments like those from Christensen and Clayton which suggest that “there is no scientific evidence that people lived to be hundreds of years old.” Observe what happens when the scientific facts of the matter are interpreted properly.

We know—scientifically—that: (1) aging “is a metabolic process”? (2) the process is indeed controlled by a “pre-programmed genetic limit”? and (3) “human bones continue to fuse together right up to advanced old age.” If people at that distant point in human history possessed slower metabolism rates (an extremely reasonable suggestion, considering the condition of the world in which they were living at the time—see Dillow, 1981), and if the human genome contained genes for greater longevity, then the patriarchs **could** have lived to vast old ages, and the slower metabolisms would result in fossils that appeared to have formed from much younger individuals. In short, scientists actually could be in possession of—could be staring at in their laboratories—bones from people who had lived to ripe old ages, and they never would know it! Thus, the allegation that “most bones of ancient men turn out to be twenty or thirty years of age and none has been found older than eighty years old” (to use Clayton’s exact words) means absolutely nothing in light of the actual scientific facts concerning human aging.

And surely the question must be asked: Why do the great ages of the patriarchs need to be “explained” in the first place? Why not simply accept the biblical record as it is written? In his June 1978 article on Methuselah, John Clayton provided the answer to that question as he discussed several possible ways to “explain” the patriarchs’ ages. He wrote:

The first possibility is that God miraculously changed man’s life expectancy. There is no discussion of such a miracle in the Bible, but many miracles occurred during the creation which are not recorded in Genesis I. This may well be the answer, **but since no skeptic would accept it** we’ll consider some other possibilities (1978a, 5[9]:11, emp. added).

This is incredible. First we are told that because there is “no scientific evidence,” the great ages of the patriarchs therefore must be “explained.” Second, we are told that since “no skeptic would accept” a particular view on these matters, “other possibilities” need to be explored. What a sad commentary on how Mr. Clayton, and others like him, view God’s inspired Word. It brings to mind the comment of biblical scholar Edward J. Young in his book, *Studies in Genesis One*:

What strikes one immediately upon reading such a statement is the low estimate of the Bible which it entails. Whenever “science” and the Bible

are in conflict, it is always the Bible that, in one manner or another, must give way. We are not told that “science” should correct its answers in the light of Scripture. Always it is the other way around (1964, p. 54).

The question, then, no longer becomes, “Does the Word of God affirm it?” but instead “Can science confirm it?” As Wayne Jackson observed:

Whenever such people read the Scriptures they do so with an eye cast back over their shoulder to see if science agrees; and whenever science asserts that which is different from what the Bible says, in desperation they are ready to append, delete, stretch, or constrict the sacred narrative to make it conform to the latest notions of the scientific community (1978, 14:14).

SUGGESTED METHODS FOR “FIXING” THE AGES OF THE PATRIARCHS

Exactly how do Bible critics suggest that the patriarchs’ great ages be “explained”? Several methods have been offered, among which are the following.

Ages Determined by Counting Years as Months

Some have suggested that men’s ages were not determined in ancient times as they are today. For example, John Clayton wrote:

The guess that appeals to this writer is that the methods of measuring age are not the same today as they were when men lived so long... We also know that many cultures use the moon as a measure of age (such as many American Indian tribes). If Methuselah were measured on such a system his age would be 80 years, plus the time till he became a father. This doesn’t change anything as he would still be phenomenally old—especially for the day in which he lived, but it would give a modern comprehension of how such an age was calculated (1978a, 5[6]:12, parenthetical item in orig.).

Old Testament scholar John J. Davis addressed this suggestion in two of his books. In the first, *Biblical Numerology*, he observed:

The most common method of escaping the problem connected with these large numbers is to make “year” mean a shorter period such as a month. This view, however, finds no support at all in the Biblical text for the term “year” is never used in this manner in the Old Testament. In addition to this textual weakness, there is a serious chronological problem that is raised by such a view. The Bible tells us how old the patriarchs were when their children were born. In Genesis 5:6 we are told that Seth begat Enos when he was 105 years old. If “years” in this text really means “months” then this verse would propose that Seth had a son when he was

only about nine years old! (1968, p. 58; see also Borland, 1990, p. 171). In Genesis 5:9 we are told that “When Enosh had lived ninety years, he became the father of Kenan.” If you divide the age by 12, then that means he would have had a child at 5 years old. In Genesis 16:16 we are told that Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.” If you divide the age by 12, then that means Abram would have had a child at 7 years old.

In his second work, *Paradise to Prison*, Dr. Davis suggested: “There seems to be no reason to regard the names and ages of the individuals in this chapter as other than fully historical.” Why so? The reason is simple. It would be difficult for someone to believe a person (e.g., Seth) could beget a child when he was only nine years old, but, as Davis pointed out, “Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, and Enoch **would have been fathers at even younger ages**” (1975, p. 106, emp. added). Frederick Filby discussed this solution in his book, *The Flood Reconsidered*:

This we reject completely, as not only can it be shown to be absolutely wrong, but it makes more difficulties than it solves. Enoch, we are told, had a son, Methuselah, when he was sixty-five. If we divide by twelve he had a son when he was 5.4 years old! (1970, p. 21).

John Clayton has complained that skeptics **never** would believe that men lived to the vast ages ascribed to them in the Bible. One cannot help but wonder if these same skeptics would find it any easier to believe that Enoch—to use Dr. Filby’s example—produced a child when he himself was barely over five years old!

The Bible itself makes a clear distinction between the length of years and months, thereby eliminating the critics’ suggestion that perhaps men’s ages were counted via “moons” (i.e., months), not years. In Genesis 8:13 it is recorded: “And it came to pass in the six hundred and first **year**, in the first **month**...” Moses apparently understood the difference between a month and year. Why do the Bible’s critics have so much difficulty in distinguish-ing between the two?

The Bible similarly presents compelling evidence to eliminate the idea that men’s ages should be divided by 12 in order to arrive at an accurate figure for the number of years they actually lived. As already quoted, Abraham was 86 when Ishmael was born (Genesis 16:16). Divided by 12, this means that the patriarch was just over 7 years of age at the birth of his first child, and Sarah was just under 6 when she first gave birth! Further, Abraham must have died at the “good old age” of a shade over 14 (Genesis 25:7-8)! As it turns out, the critics’ attempts to “fix” the Bible create a worse problem than they sought to solve.

Ages Counted from Birth of First Offspring

Another suggestion offered in response to the patriarchs' vast ages is that these ages appear larger than normal because "some primitive people measure their age not from the time of their birth, but from the time they produce offspring, or are accepted as an adult in the community in which they live" (Clayton, 1978a, 5[6]:12). In other words, the figures presented in the Bible are too large because they have not yet been "adjusted" (i.e., shortened) to allow for the **true age**—calculated from the time of the birth of the first offspring, or from the time a person was recognized as an adult.

Two things may be said regarding this idea. First, there is not a scrap of evidence that the ages of the patriarchs were counted only from the time of the birth of their firstborn. It is one thing to speculate on such, but another thing entirely to prove it. Where is the critics' evidence that the patriarchs' ages were treated in such a manner? Second, the Bible deals a deathblow to this suggestion when it specifically mentions men's ages **before they produced offspring**, eliminating the idea that their ages were not calculated prior to that event. Genesis 12:4 says: "And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed out of Haran." Once again, the critics' attempts to "fix" the inspired text have made their last condition worse than their first.

Ages Represent not Individuals, but Dynasties

In the late 1800s, as opposition to the Bible grew and skepticism in general increased, theologians sought ways to make the Bible conform to the claims of Darwinian evolution and uniformitarian geology. While liberal theologians were working diligently to **insert vast ages** of geological time into the biblical text, somewhat ironically, they simultaneously were working to **remove the vast ages** of the patriarchs from that same text.

One novel way to do that was to offer the idea that the names in the genealogical lists (specifically those mentioned in Genesis 5 and 11) were used to refer to entire dynasties, clans, or tribes, and only rarely to actual individuals. Borland has explained what this would accomplish:

This would mean that when the **Adam clan** had exercised dominion for 130 years, a person was born in the Adam clan who eventually either ruled or was the progenitor of the **Seth clan**. The Adam clan continued to be powerful for an additional 800 years, and then perhaps the Seth clan took over or perhaps there was a gap before the Seth clan exerted its authority for 912 years (1990, p. 174, emp. added).

There are a number of serious problems with this view. First, advocates of the "dynasty" idea cannot remain consistent, because even they are forced

to admit that certain names in the lists cannot represent **only** a clan, but instead **must** represent individuals. Noah and his sons must have been real individuals, because they were on board the ark. Abraham must have been an individual, not just a dynasty, because he was the father of the Hebrew nation. If these are recognized as individuals, why should not the others be considered as such?

Second, as Leupold commented: “The attempt to let the personal names represent tribes shatters on the clear statement of how old each father was when he begot a son. A complete generation is not thus brought forth within a tribe” (1942, 1:233). Borland commented: “The notation of the age at which a father begot a particular individual (a son) eliminates the tribe concept...” (pp. 174-175). One does not speak of a “dynasty” producing a son, and then give an age for such an occurrence.

Third, in order for this strained interpretation to be acceptable, one has to read the biblical record with a large dose of imagination and a small dose of common sense. For example, when the text says that Eve bore Cain and Abel, everyone recognizes that it is speaking of individuals because one of them (Cain) slew the other (Abel). Yet, when Eve bore Seth, suddenly a distant dynasty is under discussion. Furthermore, how would an advocate of this strange theory deal with the fact that in many instances in the Old Testament, specific brothers and sisters are mentioned? Dynasties do not have brothers and sisters. Borland addressed this aspect in great detail, and gave numerous biblical examples establishing that individuals, not dynasties, are under discussion (pp. 175-176). The idea that the patriarchs’ ages are so large because their names represent tribes or dynasties is completely without merit, and should be rejected.

It is not uncommon for those who refuse to accept the patriarchs’ ages at face value to suggest that the numbers must have some great “theological meaning” attached to them. Time and again I have heard or seen just such a statement. But, when pressed on exactly **what** that theological meaning might be, supporters of such an idea are at a total loss to offer any explanation. Christensen was forced to admit:

It is probably not possible to recover the key to the theological meaning of the numbers and ages in Genesis 5 and 11, at least in detail. Nonetheless it seems likely that the numbers are not to be taken as simply historical report (1990, p. 180).

In other words, while he cannot explain what the numbers **do** mean, he does know what they **do not** mean. They are **not** to be taken as literal or historical.

But why not? That is exactly how the Bible writers accepted them. Examine this remarkable statement from Moses' pen. In Genesis 47:9, Jacob, speaking to Pharaoh, said: "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years: few and evil have been the days of my life, and **they have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers** in the days of their pilgrimage." Notice the point that Jacob was making. He was 130 years old, yet he stated that even at that great age, his days had not reached "the days of the years of the life of my fathers." If he was 130 years old, and yet he had not reached the age of some of the patriarchs who preceded him, just **how old** would "his fathers" have been?

Isn't it remarkable how well the biblical record fits together? And isn't it wonderful that it can be trusted and accepted, without the kind of "sleight of hand" tricks on which its critics have to rely in order to make their false theories attain some degree of respectability?

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