

When did Terah beget Abraham?

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Unfortunately, in an attempt to defend the strict chronology of Bible genealogies, there are some who read them without taking into account that certain Hebrew phrases possess a wider connotation than what might be perceived in English. One of these phrases occurs several times in Genesis 11. In that chapter, we learn of various Messianic ancestors who **lived to a certain age** and **begot sons**. For example, verse 16 of the chapter reads: “Eber lived thirty-four years, and begot Peleg.” Later, we read where “Nahor lived 29 years, and begot Terah” (11:24). The sons listed in this chapter generally are thought to be the firstborn sons, yet the evidence shows that this was not always the case because there was not always a father-to-firstborn-son linkage.

Many have assumed that because Genesis 11:26 states, “Now Terah lived seventy years, and begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran,” that Abram (also known as Abraham; cf. Genesis 17:5) was Terah’s firstborn, and that he was born when Terah was 70. The truth is, however, **Abraham was not born for another 60 years**. When Stephen was delivering his masterful sermon recorded in Acts 7, he stated that Abraham moved to the land of Palestine “after the death of his father [Terah—EL]” (7:4). Yet if Terah was 205 years old when he died (Genesis 11:32), and Abraham departed Haran when he was 75 (Genesis 12:4), then Terah was 130, not 70, when Abraham was born. In light of this information, John Whitcomb and Henry Morris have aided us in better understanding Genesis 11:26 by paraphrasing it as follows: “And Terah lived seventy years and begat the first of his three sons, the most important of whom (not because of age but because of the Messianic line) was Abram” (1961, p. 480, parenthetical item in orig.).

Lest you think this is an isolated incident (in which the son mentioned was not the firstborn son), consider another example. Genesis 5:32 states: “And Noah was five hundred years old, and Noah begot Shem, Ham, and Japheth.” Like the situation with Terah begetting Abraham, Nahor, and Haran, here we read that at age 500, Noah begot Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Was Shem the firstborn? Were the three sons of Noah triplets? Or was Shem mentioned first because of his Messianic connection? In all likelihood, the evidence seems to indicate that Shem was not the firstborn, but was born two years later. Consider the following passages:

“Noah was six hundred years old when the flood waters were on the earth” (Genesis 7:6).

“And it came to pass in the **six hundred and first year**, in the first month, the first day of the month, that the waters were dried up from the earth and Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and indeed the surface of the ground was dry” (Genesis 8:13, emp. added).

“Shem was **one hundred years** old, and begot Arphaxad **two years after the flood**” (Genesis 11:10, emp. added).

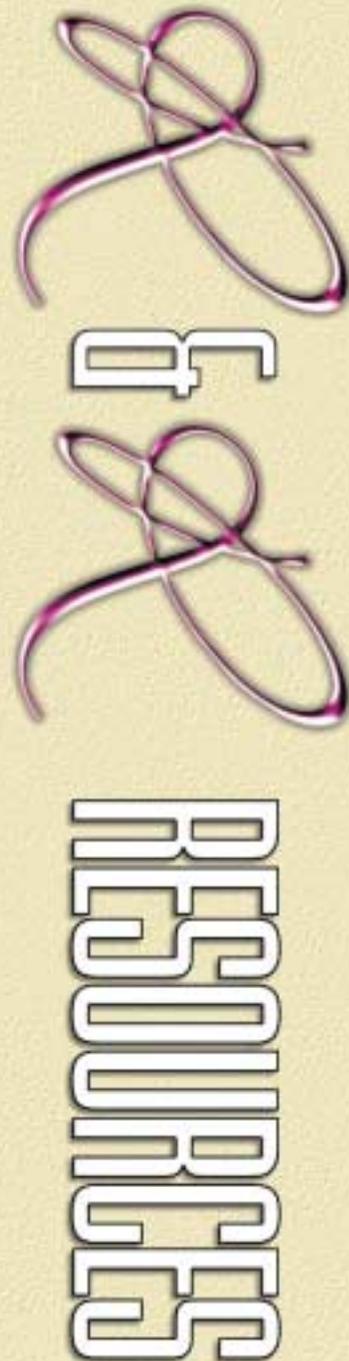
These verses seem to suggest that Shem was born, not when Noah was 500, but rather when he was 502. A comparison of Genesis 11:10 with 10:22 may suggest that Shem’s son, Arphaxad, was not the firstborn son in his family. Likely, Shem, Arphaxad, and others are mentioned first for the same reason Abraham is—because they are Messianic ancestors, and not because they were the firstborn sons of their fathers. Interestingly, numerous other Messianic ancestors, such as Seth, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and Perez, were not firstborn sons. Was Moses being dishonest when he recorded these genealogies? Absolutely not. We must remember that

the year of begetting a first son, known in the Old Testament as “the beginning of strength,” was an important year in the life of the Israelite (Gen. 49:3; Deut. 21:17; Psa. 78:51; and Psa. 105:36). It is this year...and not the year of the birth of the Messianic link, that is given in each case in Genesis 11 (Whitcomb and Morris, p. 480).

Just as Genesis 5:32 does not teach that Noah was 500 when Shem was born, Genesis 11:26 does not teach that Abraham was born when Terah was 70. This verse basically means that Terah **begun having children** at age 70, not that all three children were born at that age. According to other passages, Terah was 130 when Abraham was born. Those who allege these passages contradict Genesis 11:26 simply are misunderstanding the text by not taking into account that certain Hebrew phrases possess a wider connotation than what might be perceived in modern-day English.

REFERENCES

Whitcomb, John C. and Henry M. Morris (1961), *The Genesis Flood* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker).



RESOURCES

Q I am attempting to demonstrate to a friend that the Earth is young, but I am not a scientist and cannot discuss such things as the fossil record with any authority. What other evidence might I be able to use to help him to see that the Earth is young, as the Bible teaches?

A One of the easiest-to-understand, yet strongest, arguments for a young Earth comes from the field of human population statistics. According to United States Census Bureau, the Earth currently is home to a little more than six billion people. The human population grows when more people are born than die. According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the current growth rate of the world population is about 1.7%. This means for every 100 people, 1.7 are added each year. Using these data along with historical records, we know that the human population on Earth doubles approximately every 40 years. With this information in mind, we can ask two questions: (1) What would the growth rate need to be in order to get today's population from the eight individuals on Noah's ark; and (2) What "should" the population be? Calculating that the Noahic flood was approximately 4,500 years ago, we would need only a population

growth of about 0.5%. Factor in things like war, famine, and diseases, and I think you easily can see how the population reached the 6 billion figure we have today.

If the Earth really is 4.5 billion years old (as evolutionists claim), and if people have been around for 3-4 million years, then what should the population be? Let's suppose that humankind started with just two individuals (we will call them Adam and Eve for the sake of our argument). And suppose that they lived on the Earth 1 million years ago (even though evolutionists contend we have been here longer, we will use a conservative figure). Allowing for wars, famine, disease, etc., there would be more than 1×10^{500} people on the Earth today! That number is a 1 followed by 5,000 zeros. Yet the **entire Universe** (at an estimated size of 20 billion light-years in diameter) would hold only 1×10^{100} people. Evolutionary time does not explain the current population. Population statistics provide additional verification of the accuracy of the Scriptures regarding matters related to time.

Brad Harrub

IN THE NEWS

Once again, Hollywood has turned its lights and cameras onto the creation/evolution controversy. PBS launched the first melée with its series, *Evolution*. This seven-part series was a colossal extravaganza of glitter and drama, but was sadly misleading. (For a full refutation revealing the misinformation portrayed in the series, see the Answers In Genesis Web site (www.answersingenesis.com).

The next feature was a "documentary" (their term, not mine—BH) on "The Real Eve" that premiered April 21 on the Discovery Channel. The producers of this series filmed footage that left viewers with the impression that photographers were able to travel backwards in time to Africa in order to obtain actual footage of the woman referred to as "genetic Eve." Mapping out mutations using mitochondrial DNA (which is passed on to offspring only by the mothers, not the fathers), evolutionary scientists have concluded that everyone outside of Africa descended from the same small band of humans that left the African continent some 150,000 years ago. This is not the first time evolutionists have poked fun at the biblical account of creation using the name "Eve" as a designation for a common ancestor. To find out the truth regarding this mitochon-

drial "Eve" see Trevor Major's article, "Who is this Eve?" on our Web site (<http://www.apologeticspress.org/rr/rr1989/r&r8904a.htm>). [In addition, look for a full review of "Genetic Eve" in an upcoming issue of *Reason & Revelation*.]

The most recent series Hollywood has produced was a Hallmark miniseries titled *Dinotopia*, featuring an island where dinosaurs and humans live together. While we applaud the promotion of the fact that humans and dinosaurs coexisted, and while many no doubt will find the series entertaining, we must point out that the show was written intentionally to be viewed as a fantasy—not reality. Reviewers have been quick to point out that this is a fabricated world that never existed (think "Gulliver's Travels"). Evolutionists, of course, express great disdain for such an idea, even if it is "fabricated." Those of us at Apologetics Press strongly encourage parents and grandparents to assume a **proactive** role in educating and monitoring what their children and grandchildren absorb—whether it is from television, magazines, or even school textbooks. The adage, "garbage in, garbage out" is true. And unfortunately, many of our youngsters are losing their souls because of Hollywood hype.

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