

The Genesis 5 and 11 fluidity question

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Many modern scholars believe that the Genesis 5 and 11 genealogies contain gaps due to fluidity, and thus cannot be used to help date creation or the Flood. Their case is threefold. First, the Genesis 4 and 5 genealogies are so alike they must have come from a single original genealogy that developed into two. Second, the symmetrical ten-generation form of Genesis 5 and 11 indicates schematization. Third, science has proven that mankind is older than a no-gap reading of Genesis 5 and 11 will allow. This paper negates the first two of these arguments by showing that conflation of two original genealogies better accounts for the similarity of the Genesis 4 and 5 names, and by demonstrating that at least three lines of evidence argue against schematization of Genesis 5 and 11. Thus, as far as the biblical evidence is concerned, the arguments for fluidity lack a firm basis. One might reasonably conclude that the Genesis 5 and 11 genealogies do not contain gaps.

Since the nineteenth century, many scholars have expressed the opinion that the genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 contain generational and chronological gaps, and thus should not be used, as James Ussher did, for chronological purposes. These scholars believe that genealogies experience fluidity over time; that is, names are often added, omitted, or changed in form, especially spelling form. Since the earth is allegedly older than what the church has consistently believed from earliest times, they suggest that names must have been omitted from the Genesis 5 and 11 lists as they were handed down from generation to generation. Thus, in their view, these genealogies cannot be used to establish the date of creation or the Flood.

Such a view, however, is troubling to some scholars, who see no indication in the biblical text of generational or chronological gaps. They insist that Genesis 5 and 11 clearly present a continuous no-gap genealogy and chronology from Adam to Abraham. These texts, they argue, are worded in such a way as to exclude omissions and gaps. To suggest omissions and gaps is, in their view, a violation of a straightforward reading and inerrant view of the passages. Thus, they believe that the text can be used to date creation and the Flood, and modern scholars would do well to follow suit.

Which view is correct? Did fluidity occur during the transmission of the Genesis 5 and 11 genealogies? Were names dropped so that the genealogies now contain generational and chronological gaps?

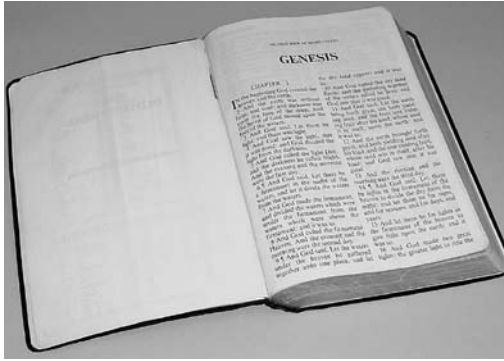
The non-chronogenealogy view

Two groups of scholars argue for gaps. One group thinks the Genesis 5 genealogy is not an accurate historical record, but the result of an ancient Mesopotamian list of legendary heroes (either a king, sage, warrior or tribal ancestor list) that has experienced so much fluidity during the long process of transmission from one generation to the next that most, or all, of its historical and chronological value, if it ever had any, has been lost. They express similar views concerning the Genesis 11 genealogy. For these scholars, the early Genesis genealogies, if they ever were genealogies, are discontinuous; that is, they contain generational omissions or gaps.

Claus Westermann is generally representative of this group.¹ He argues that the ten names listed in Genesis 5 were derived from an ancient tribal oral tradition regarding primeval ancestors. Early in its history this tradition was divided into different segments, and the segments were handed down independently. Westermann locates one segment, or partial segment, in Gen 4:25–26 (Adam, Seth, Enosh), and another in Gen 4:17–18 (Cain, Enoch, Irad, Mehujael, Methusael, Lamech) as employed by the Yahwist (J). He thinks these two segments were also used by the priestly author (P) of Genesis 5, and so the names of Genesis 4 and 5 were originally the same. He thinks fluidity during transmission of the segments accounts for the differences between Genesis 4 and 5 concerning the spelling of names (Cain/Kenan, Mehujael/Mahalalel, Irad/Jared, Methusael/Methuselah) and the order of names (Cain, Enoch, Irad, Mehujael/Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch). Westermann also argues that P reduced the list of names originally available to him to ten because this number was ‘typical and normal for genealogies’ in the Ancient Near East.² Other scholars who take this view in general are Nahum M. Sarna, Gerhard von Rad, E.A. Speiser, John C. Gibson, Jack Sasson and Robert Davidson.^{3–8}

The second group of scholars (mostly evangelicals) who argue for gaps believes that the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 are accurate historical records, but that a certain number of names have been omitted from the lists. Thus, they disagree with the theologians just mentioned concerning the historicity of Genesis 5 and 11, but agree with them concerning the presence of gaps in the genealogies due to fluidity.

Derek Kidner is generally representative of this group.⁹ He suggests the names in Genesis 5 and 11 are historical persons selected as separate landmarks, rather than continuous links. He finds examples of this practice in Matthew 1 and in the genealogical records of modern Arab tribes. He also notes that scientific evidences, which



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he does not spell out, 'prove' that civilization is older than a no-gap reading of the text will allow. Other scholars who take this view in general are Gleason Archer, Kenneth A. Kitchen, Gordon J. Wenham, John J. Davis, Victor Hamilton and Kenneth A. Mathews.¹⁰⁻¹⁵

These two groups most often mention the following three arguments in support of gaps due to fluidity in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11. (1) The genealogies in Genesis 4 and 5 are so alike that they must have evolved from a common source. (2) The symmetrical ten-generation form of the Genesis 5 and 11 genealogies indicates schematization in the tradition of ancient Mesopotamian king, sage and ancestor lists. (3) Humankind originated longer ago than a no-gap reading of Genesis 5 and 11 will allow according to scientific evidence.

The chronogenealogy view

Some other modern theologians believe the names and numbers in Genesis 5 and 11 form a continuous (without generational omissions) linear genealogy and chronology from Adam to Abraham. While they readily acknowledge fluidity as a fairly common occurrence in ancient genealogies, they reason that the occurrence of fluidity in some genealogies does not prove fluidity in all genealogies. They see the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 as two of the many exceptions to the fluidity rule.

The late Samuel R. Külling is representative of this group.¹⁶ In his analysis of early biblical genealogies, he begins by acknowledging that many biblical genealogies, such as those in Ezra 7 and Matthew 1, contain gaps. In his opinion, however, biblical genealogies come in more than one genre. One type of genealogy (for example, Ezra 7) aims mainly at establishing someone's right to a certain office, position or inheritance, and need not include every generation. Another type includes sufficient details, especially numerical data, to indicate it intends to establish a chronology. Külling finds numerous examples of this genre through 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles in those brief passages where a king of Israel or Judah is said to have reigned a certain number of years before being succeeded by

his son (or a usurper). When grouped together these passages form a twenty-generation chronology for both Israel and Judah, and are often used by theologians for establishing the dates of important events. For other examples of this genre, Külling points to the passages in Genesis giving the age of Abraham at the birth of Isaac and the age of Isaac at the birth of Jacob. These patriarchal passages are also commonly used for chronological purposes.

Külling then asks to which genre the Genesis 5 and 11 genealogies belong. He answers that surely the many numerical notations therein, especially the fathers' ages at procreation, place these genealogies in the second category; that is, with the chronogenealogies. Thus, they should be interpreted as possessing no omissions, at least as far as the biblical evidence is concerned.¹⁶

Recent scholars who agree with this reasoning include Brevard S. Childs, David T. Rosevear, James B. Jordan, Richard Niessen, Bert Thompson, Robert R. Wilson and Martin Anstey.¹⁷⁻²³ Earlier supporters of this view include John Calvin and Martin Luther.

Negating arguments for fluidity

Most of the theologians who deny fluidity in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 realize their 'genre argument', as reasonable as it may sound, will gain credibility only if they can offer reasonable alternative interpretations of the evidence for fluidity. How do they reply to the three main arguments for fluidity?

The first argument

The first main argument says the names and order of names in the Genesis 4 and 5 genealogies are so similar that they must have come from a common source which underwent fluidity during transmission, resulting in two different, but similar, lists. Theologians opposed to this argument reply that the two lists are really quite different, and that any similarities probably resulted either from the tendency of extended families to use the same names repeatedly or from conflation of two originally separate genealogies.²⁴

Wenham points out that, while the Cainite genealogy covers seven generations, only six of the names bear any resemblance to a name in the Sethite list. Of the six, four require the change or addition of at least one consonant to become identical. The only two exact matches, Enoch and Lamech, are distinguished by additional biographical notations. The Lamech of Genesis 4 murders a young man and boasts about it, whereas the Lamech of Genesis 5 acknowledges God in the naming of his son. Little is said concerning the first Enoch, but the second one walks with God for at least three hundred years before being taken away by God in a special way. Fluidity cannot account for such vast characterization differences. Thus, the two Enochs and the two Lamechs are different men, and there

are actually no matches at all. Wenham further points out the differing styles of the two passages, which he believes suggest distinct sources.²⁵

Mathews agrees with Wenham, but sets forth additional differences which he says cannot be attributed to fluidity. Genesis 4 seems ignorant of the Flood, unlike Genesis 5. Genesis 4 has a segmented genealogy after Lamech, and mentions his daughter, Naamah, unlike Genesis 5. Genesis 5 follows a consistent formula in giving the patriarchs' ages at procreation and death, but the language of Genesis 4 is much less formulaic and the ages are totally missing. Seth's genealogy is closely tied to creation, but Cain's is set in the context of expulsion from paradise and family. Thus, Mathews concludes the two chapters derive from different sources.¹⁵

Hamilton explains the similarity of names by suggesting that it was not uncommon in ancient times for two people to have the same, or a similar, name at the same time, especially in the same extended family. Parents throughout all ages have often named their children after uncles, cousins, and so on. Perhaps the Cainites and Sethites did likewise.¹⁴

Among studies which conclude Genesis 4 and 5 descended from different sources, David T. Bryan's is the most exhaustive.²⁶ Bryan admits a striking similarity between the two texts as they now stand. He notes most scholars have explained the likeness by positing one original source as the basis for both texts. They think the original may have been the Sumerian King List or a list of important ancestors. A few scholars have accounted for the likeness in another way. In 1890, Green argued that these genealogies probably experienced partial conflation or assimilation at the time they were translated into Hebrew.²⁷ Bryan notes that recently Finkelstein and Hallo^{28,29} advanced a similar theory. Pointing to the Sumerian King List and the similar-sounding list of pre-Flood sages as a case in which two distinct but closely associated lists gradually grew more alike over time,

they suggest the same happened to the Cainite and Sethite genealogies.

Bryan believes one thing is obvious. Since the similarity is too remarkable to be coincidental, fluidity has occurred. Fluidity either caused one list to develop into two or caused two lists to become more like one. Bryan opts for the latter theory. He notes that in known cases of conflation the two lists are usually still more dissimilar than similar. In cases where one list has evolved into two, the two lists are normally more similar than dissimilar. One might imagine, then, that one could simply list the similarities and dissimilarities and expect the longer list to indicate the original form. Bryan, however, says this method will not work, because some characteristics of genealogies are more prone to fluidity than others. For example, the spelling of an individual's name is much more likely to change than the biographical comments about the same individual. Thus, some differences (e.g. name changes) carry less weight than others (e.g. changes in description). One must consider the weight of each similarity or dissimilarity in judging the original form.³⁰

Working on the basis of this principle, Bryan finds two main similarities: some similar names and a similar order of names, both of which are highly prone to fluidity and, therefore, carry diminished weight. He also finds ten dissimilarities. Five of these [(1) connection to the Flood in Genesis 5 not found in Genesis 4; (2) Genesis 5 records ten generations, but Genesis 4 only seven, or eight if Adam is included; (3) the segmentation after Lamech in Genesis 4 appears to be part of the original list, but the segmentation after Noah in Genesis 5 appears to be added to the list; (4) the begetting formulas differ; (5) the functions differ] are prone to change and carry little weight.

The other five dissimilarities tend to resist fluidity.³¹ One is the absence of Noah in Genesis 4. Bryan implies that even a change in function or purpose would not lead

to the omission of such an important figure. A second is the inclusion of a segmented generation of three males and a female after Lamech in Genesis 4, which is absent entirely in Genesis 5. A third fluidity-resistant difference is the stress on the beginnings of certain aspects of culture in Genesis 4, which is totally missing from Genesis 5. A fourth is the numerical data given throughout Genesis 5, but nowhere found in Genesis 4. Bryan comments:

'This is not easily explained by fluidity since even in the [Sumerian King List] the varying traditions of seven to ten kings all have the [numbers] included. The



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numbers are present even in texts that are fragmented.³²

The final fluidity-resistant dissimilarity listed by Bryan is the difference in biographical information concerning the two Enochs and the two Lamechs. The Cainite Enoch is associated with the building of a city, but the Sethite Enoch walks with God. The Lamech of Cain's line commits murder and brags about it, but his counterpart fathers righteous Noah and prophesies about it.³³ Because he judges these five dissimilarities to be resistant to fluidity, Bryan grants them great weight and determinative importance. He concludes that the two texts are so different that they must have come from separate sources which partially assimilated over time. Thus, he believes that fluidity has occurred with regard to the spelling of names, but not necessarily with regard to the omission of names.

The second argument

How do theologians who deny fluidity has altered the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 reply to the second main argument for fluidity, which says the symmetrical ten-generation form of these texts indicates schematization in accordance with a standard Ancient Near Eastern pattern? Their replies follow several lines of thought.

Richard Niessen reasons that just because some ten-generation lists have been schematized, it does not necessarily mean that all have been. In his view, Genesis 5 and 11 record ten generations each, because there actually were ten generations before the Flood and after the Flood to Abraham. He notes that nothing in the texts indicates otherwise, and the numbers indicate no omissions have been made. Niessen admits that the genealogy in Matthew 1 has been schematized, but since Matthew lists three sets of fourteen generations, surely this simply proves that ancient scribes were not locked into a ten-generation form. Niessen also notes that believing Genesis 5 and 11 have been schematized because Matthew 1 has been ignoring the fact that they are different types of literature; that is, the Genesis texts have numbers, but Matthew 1 does not. Thus, comparing Genesis 5 and 11 to Matthew 1 is like comparing apples to oranges, and constitutes a basic hermeneutical error.³⁴

Külling highlights an important point that most scholars seem to have overlooked; namely, that the Genesis 5 and 11 genealogies are not really symmetrical. The genealogy of Adam contains ten names (Adam to Noah),³⁵ with the tenth having three sons (Shem, Ham and Japheth). The genealogy of Shem records only nine names (Shem to Terah), with the ninth fathering three sons (Abraham, Nahor and Haran).

Adam's genealogy

(Gen 5:1–32)

1. Adam
2. Seth
3. Enosh
4. Kenan
5. Mahalaleel
6. Jared
7. Enoch
8. Methusalah
9. Lamech
10. Noah (three sons)

Shem's genealogy

(Gen 11:10–26)

1. Shem
2. Arphaxad
3. Salah
4. Eber
5. Peleg
6. Reu
7. Serug
8. Nahor
9. Terah (three sons, including Abram)

To say that Abraham (Abram) counts as the tenth generation in Genesis 11 is no help to symmetry, because consistency would then demand that Shem be counted in Genesis 5 (compare 11:26 with 5:32). The supposed symmetry does not really exist.^{36,37}

To these arguments must be added the findings of several well-known and widely respected scholars who do not necessarily support a no-gap view of Genesis 5 and 11, but who nevertheless maintain that these biblical genealogies have no connection to the Sumerian King List, or who conclude that there is in fact no ten-generation pattern among the ancient king sage, or tribal ancestor lists. A few examples must suffice.

In a carefully reasoned and well-documented article, Gerhard F. Hasel analyzes all the relevant ancient texts and concludes no connection exists, either in fact or in form, between Genesis 5 and the Sumerian King List (SKL).^{38,39} He gives ten reasons:

1. SKL names are distinct from those of Genesis in terms of languages;
2. SKL gives years of reign, not lifespans, due to different function;
3. SKL links kings with cities, not fathers with sons;
4. SKL uses much larger numbers;
5. SKL argues for the continued political unity of Sumer and Akkad under one king, but Genesis 5 has nothing to do with politics;
6. SKL lists kings, not ancestors;
7. SKL is local in scope, not universal as Genesis 5;
8. SKL starts with the beginning of kingship, not man;
9. SKL ends with a king named Suruppak, not a flood hero like Noah;
10. SKL does not really exist consistently in a ten-generation form.

In connection with the last reason, Hasel notes that as recently as 1965 a major study concluded that the Hebrews borrowed the ten-generation pattern of Genesis 5 from the SKL.⁴⁰ Hasel, however, points out that:

‘... the major rescension of the Sumerian King List (WB 444) contains only eight and not ten kings. One text contains only seven kings (W) and another (UCBC 9–1819) either seven or eight, whereas a

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bilingual fragment from Ashurbanipal's library has but nine kings. Berossos and only one ancient tablet (WB 62), i.e. only two texts (of which only one is a cuneiform document), give a total of ten antediluvian kings. On the basis of the cuneiform data it can no longer be suggested that the Sumerian King List contained originally ten antediluvian kings after which the biblical genealogies were patterned.⁴¹

Hasel makes two additional observations. First, he says, 'the supposedly unbroken line of descent in Genesis 5 is in stark contrast to the concurrent or contemporaneous dynasties of the Sumerian King List'.⁴¹ Then he reminds his readers that the SKL lists thirty-nine postdiluvians, about four times as many as Genesis 11 lists.⁴¹

Wenham twice makes reference to the different number of pre-Flood kings in the various Mesopotamian versions of the SKL, thus showing his doubt about a ten-generation norm.⁴² He does see, especially in T. Jacobsen's reconstructed Sumerian version,⁴³ a correspondence in the order of events between the Sumerian flood story and Genesis 5–9, 11. To him this demonstrates not dependence of one on the other, but a common early tradition about the beginnings of the world, humankind, civilization, the Flood, and so on. The differences in the genealogical parts of the two versions, he implies, has to do with the purpose for which they were used. A Sumerian story writer may have inverted the names of a number of early kings in a politically motivated effort to justify his city's claim to leadership in Mesopotamia. Other cities may have inserted different names of kings in different numbers to support their claims. The Hebrews, meanwhile, worked from the same historical framework, but did not insert a king list, since they had no political agenda. Instead, they used the names of their forefathers all the way back to the first man for religious and/or historiographic reasons. The point is that the Hebrew ancestor list of Genesis 5 does not appear dependent on any Sumerian king list for its names or ten-generation form.^{44,45}

Among scholars who think generations have been omitted to make Genesis 5 and 11 fit a standard ten-generation form, the works of Abraham Malamat have been influential.^{46,47} Westermann credits him with demonstrating the common use of a ten-name pattern in ancient genealogies. Many others also show dependence on Malamat's studies in this regard. In a thorough analysis of Malamat's studies, however, Robert R. Wilson concludes that while Malamat made some significant contributions to academia's understanding of ancient genealogies, his conclusion concerning the ten-generation pattern was unjustified—as a standard Ancient Near Eastern ten-generation genealogical form simply did not exist, or at least has not yet been demonstrated.^{22,48}

Malamat attempted to show similarities between Old Testament genealogical form and Ancient Near Eastern

genealogical patterns.⁴⁶ He sometimes used studies of modern tribal genealogies to back up his claims of a standard form. An Assyrian king list (AKL) and the Genealogy of the Hammurapi Dynasty (GHD) formed the basis for his comparisons. Malamat said he discovered that these ancient Amorite documents had four divisions, and that these same divisions could also be found in the biblical genealogies as a rule.⁴⁹

The first division, which he labelled 'genealogical stock' in the AKL and GHD, contained twelve and eleven names, respectively, after a few adjustments, and consisted of artificial names (sometimes tribal names) arbitrarily linked together. Citing also modern tribal genealogies of nine to eleven generations, he concluded these were evidence of a standard ten-generation form as found in Genesis, since all of these lists were near ten generations.⁵⁰

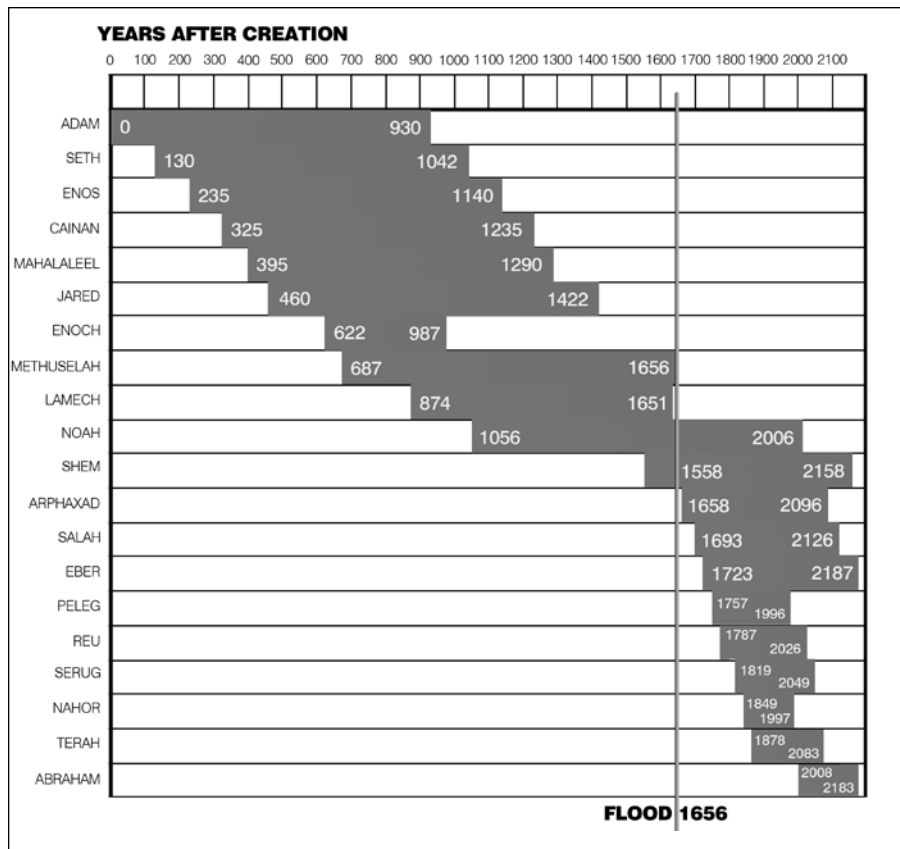
The second division, the 'determinative line', was used to link the genealogical stock with the rest of the list. Here the number of names listed amounts to five in the AKL and two in the GHD. In the Bible it began with Abraham and ended with Judah, only four generations.⁵¹

The 'table of ancestors' formed the third division and was used to link the determinative line to the last division. In the AKL this division is clearly marked by the superscription 'ten kings who are ancestors', and consists of the genealogy of Samsi-Adad, a well-known king. In the GHD the division is not clearly marked, but Malamat believed originally it contained ten names, although fluidity had made this unclear. He again cited some modern tribal genealogies near the ten-generation depth. The ten ancestors of David found in Ruth 4 provided a biblical example. He also suggested that the Bible meant to preserve ten ancestors of Saul, but he could only find seven.⁵²

The final division, the 'historical line', consisted of the immediate ancestors of a king or important person who wished to validate his right to a position by linking his line with his predecessors. This division is quite long in the AKL and GHD. He found no examples in the Bible, but felt their existence at one time was quite possible.⁴⁹ From this analysis, Malamat concluded that in Amorite culture the standard form for a table of ancestors was ten generations, just as found in Genesis 5 and 11.

Wilson finds major weaknesses in the arguments and conclusions of Malamat. First, Wilson points out that the four-division genealogical pattern supposedly found in the AKL and GHD simply does not exist in the Old Testament. For instance, the names of Malamat's second division in the Scripture, Abraham through Judah, never appear together in a linear genealogy in the Old Testament. Furthermore, Malamat himself cannot give an example from the Bible which fits his fourth division.⁵³

Second, based on his extensive study of genealogies as used by modern Arab and African tribal societies, Wilson concludes that linear genealogies regularly vary in depth from about five to as many as nineteen generations. Thus,



The chronogenealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 can be used to date creation and the Flood, as James Ussher did in the 1650s.

tribal societies do not favour one particular depth. He implies that Malamat selects only those tribal generations which support his ten-generation theory to use as examples, while ignoring the many genealogies of different depths. Even then the examples vary from nine to eleven generations and must be adjusted to fit exactly the ten-name form.^{54,55}

Third, Wilson notes that of the eight sections which Malamat says make up the AKL and GHD (four each), only one actually contains ten names in its present form. The four sections of the AKL contain twelve, five, ten and seventy-seven names, respectively. The GHD contains eleven names in its first section and two in its second. The third and fourth sections are not clearly marked. Malamat resorts to arbitrary adjustments and divisions to give the general impression of a standard depth, but none actually exists, whether it be ten or any other number.⁵⁶ In an understatement, Wilson concludes, ‘[Malamat] has not supplied enough evidence to support his claim that those genealogies had a stereotypical ten-generation depth or a four part structure.’^{57,58}

Fourth, Wilson points out that the AKL and GHD fall into the king list category. Neither emphasizes kinship relationships, and often names are listed without any genealogical or biographical references. Genesis 5 and 11, on the other hand, show characteristics of a family genealogy. Wilson claims, therefore, that it is methodologically incorrect

to compare the AKL and GHD with the Genesis records since they are different types of literature.⁵⁹

Wilson agrees with Malamat concerning the fairly common occurrence of fluidity in ancient and modern genealogies. He cautions, however, that fluidity in some genealogies does not mean fluidity in all genealogies. Each genealogy has a different function and setting, so each must be examined individually. ‘[N]o generalizations are possible.’⁶⁰

The third argument

The third main argument for gaps due to fluidity in the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 is that, according to scientific evidence, humankind originated longer ago than a no-gap reading of these two genealogies will allow. Because the reply of chronogenealogy advocates to this argument is voluminous, technical and complicated, it is beyond the scope of this study. But much evidence against this argument can be found in the pages of this journal and elsewhere.

Summary of the chronogenealogy view

In summary, those who take the chronogenealogy view insist that the first step in deciding the fluidity question is genre identification. Ancient genealogies came in different forms to serve different functions. Some forms accommodated fluidity, others did not. The inclusion of the age of each patriarch at procreation marks Genesis 5 and 11 as chronogenealogy, a genre which excludes the idea of fluidity.

For chronogenealogy advocates, the second step in deciding the fluidity question consists of exposing weaknesses in the arguments for fluidity. First, they point out that the Cainite and Sethite genealogies have more, and more significant, dissimilarities than similarities, thus indicating that they probably did not evolve from the same supposed original source. The similarities are best explained by the tendency of extended families to use the same, or similar, names repeatedly, or from conflation in the spelling of the names, rather than normal fluidity. Second, they maintain that there was no such thing as a standard ten-generation form for ancient genealogies (especially Wilson contra Malamat).

Critical evaluation

The fluidity question as posed at the beginning of this article asks, ‘Did fluidity occur during the transmission of the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11?’ Scholarly attempts to answer this question revolve around three issues.

The first issue involves the importance of genre identification in the interpretive process. The foregoing discussion reveals a tendency among gap advocates to see all genealogies as the same genre. Although they often talk of different genealogical forms and functions, in practice they regularly draw conclusions concerning one genealogy by comparing it to a genealogy of a different sort. Their comparison of Matthew 1, which has no numbers, with Genesis 5, which has three different numbers for each of the twenty generations, and then their assumption of gaps in Genesis 5 because of known gaps in Matthew 1 provide prime examples of indifference to genre. Such indifference is hermeneutically indefensible. The multitude of genealogical forms extant in the biblical world should not only provide scholars clues to different functions, but also to different rules of interpretation. Since no-gap advocates emphasize careful attention and strict conformance to such rules, the high ground on this aspect of the issue goes to them.

The second issue scholars debate in an attempt to decide the fluidity question concerns the similarity of the Cainite (Genesis 4) and the Sethite (Genesis 5) genealogies. Did one original list evolve through fluidity into two similar lists? The similarity of names is too conspicuous to be ignored and can hardly be explained as coincidence. On the other hand, there are numerous dissimilarities, some of which are not usually found in two lists which come from the same source. Only Bryan’s well-documented suggestion that the similarity of names resulted from the conflation of two separate sources adequately accounts for both the similarities and dissimilarities. Conflation, of course, is a form of fluidity, but in this case it only deals with changes in the spelling of names, not the omission of names. Thus, Bryan’s view is consistent with the no-gap view regarding the fluidity question.

The third issue of note in the scholarly debate regarding the fluidity question concerns the possible schematization of the Genesis 5 and 11 genealogies to fit a standard ten-generation form. Malamat’s works on this issue led almost all scholars at one point to believe that such a form was standard in the Ancient Near East, and that the Genesis author dropped names from his genealogical source in order to meet the accepted pattern. Wilson’s subsequent work, however, has pointed out significant flaws in Malamat’s methods and conclusions, and has shown that both Ancient Near Eastern king lists and modern tribal genealogies vary greatly in the number of generations included, with no preference evident for any particular length. Hasel has shown that the SKL can no longer be used as an example of a standard ten-generation form, since nearly all versions

of the SKL are between seven and nine generations. Thus, if a ten-generation pattern ever existed, it has yet to be demonstrated. Scholars no longer have an evidentiary basis for assuming the schematization of Genesis 5 and 11.

In summary, the case for fluidity during transmission of the Genesis 5 and 11 genealogies suffers from a lack of evidence. While all parties readily acknowledge fluidity in some ancient genealogies, scholars have yet to present sound evidence of fluidity in the Sethite and Shemite lists. Conflation adequately explains the similarity between Genesis 4 and 5. Wilson has shown that the supposed ten-generation standard genealogical form was a myth, based on selected evidence.

Thus, the main arguments for fluidity in this case lack a firm basis. This lack of evidence for fluidity does not necessarily mean that fluidity has not occurred, because evidence might yet come to light. At present, however, one might easily conclude, at least as far as the biblical evidence is concerned, that no omissions, additions or alterations (other than name conflations) have been made to the Genesis 5 and 11 genealogies.

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58. In Malamat, ref. 46, pp. 165–166, Malamat's own tentative language lends support to Wilson's conclusion that Malamat failed to prove his case. For example, in his discussion of the supposed ten-generation form of ancient genealogies, Malamat uses eight tentative words or phrases in eight consecutive sentences (possible, possibly, may have been, we may also assume, puzzling, we most likely, if we assume, tendency). Such language undermines his confident-sounding conclusion that 'The ante and postdiluvian lines [of Adam and Shem, respectively], symmetrically arranged to a ten-generation depth, are undoubtedly the product of intentional harmonization and in imitation of the concrete genealogical model.'
59. Wilson, ref. 22, p. 187.
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