

WHICH CHRONOLOGY TEXT IS MORE RELIABLE – THE MASORETIC OR SEPTUAGENT

For the article linked below, the numerical data of the Septuagint text of the chronogenealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 are considered by some to have priority over that of the Masoretic text. The author outlines some impressive problems with that conclusion.

Geoscience Research Institute Article link: <https://www.grisda.org/origins-12026>

Summary of Article Conclusions

- The chronogenealogies in Genesis 5 and 11, as found in both the Septuagint (LXX) and the Samaritan Pentateuch, show significant inconsistencies due to textual variants in their numerical data and various forms of schematization.
- The Septuagint manuscripts (MSS) display a wide range of numerical variations, which undermines their reliability as the most accurate source for biblical chronology.
- In contrast, the Masoretic text stands out because it has no variant readings of the numerical data in any known manuscripts and does not reveal any kind of schematization.
- Given the evidence, the article concludes that the Masoretic text most likely preserves the figures closest to the original biblical chronology, making it the preferred source over the Septuagint and Samaritan Pentateuch for these genealogical numbers.

Let's Review the Detailed Reasoning and Manuscript Comparisons

1. Manuscript Variants and Schematization

- The article highlights that the **Masoretic text** (MT) is unique in having no numerical variants in any known manuscripts for Genesis 5 and 11. This consistency is contrasted with the **Septuagint** (LXX) and **Samaritan Pentateuch**, which both show numerical variants—especially the LXX, which has numerous variants across its manuscripts.
- The LXX's numerical data are described as “highly schematic,” meaning the numbers often appear to be arranged according to patterns or schemes rather than historical accuracy. The Samaritan Pentateuch also shows some schematization, but to a lesser degree than the LXX.

2. Priority and Reliability of Manuscripts

- Some scholars have argued that the LXX should have priority over the MT for biblical chronology, but the article points out that the LXX's figures have proven inadequate when applied to the chronology of the Hebrew Kings. The MT's figures are found to be both internally and externally consistent, while the LXX's are not.
- There are no absolute dates or synchronisms available for the periods covered by Genesis 5 and 11, so the article relies on factors like consistency and lack of schematization to judge priority.

3. Comparative Tables and Manuscript Evidence

- The article provides tables comparing the numerical data for Genesis 5 and 11 across the MT, LXX (with Alexandrinus as the representative manuscript), Samaritan Pentateuch, and Josephus. It notes that the LXX manuscripts show at least one variation for each verse, except for two cases (Genesis 5:23 and 11:10a), where all sources agree.
- The Samaritan Pentateuch agrees with the MT 19 out of 28 times for the antediluvian period, but only 4 out of 19 times for the postdiluvian period. The article suggests that some changes in the Samaritan Pentateuch may have been made to create symmetry or to align deaths with the year of the flood.

4. Selection of Representative Manuscripts

- When choosing a representative LXX manuscript, the Alexandrinus is usually selected because it is the oldest extant manuscript for this part of Genesis. However, the article cautions that "older is not always necessarily better," and even Alexandrinus contains its own variants.
- The article also discusses Josephus as a fourth line of evidence, but notes that Josephus's manuscripts also contain several variants, and agreement between sources does not necessarily prove originality.

5. Implications and Final Assessment

- The wide variation in LXX manuscripts and the presence of schematization in both the LXX and Samaritan Pentateuch suggest these texts are less likely to preserve the original figures.
- The MT, with its lack of numerical variants and schematization, is assessed as most likely to preserve the original biblical chronology for Genesis 5 and 11.

Summary Table of Key Points

Manuscript Tradition	Numerical Variants	Schematization	Reliability (per article)
Masoretic Text (MT)	None	None	Highest
Septuagint (LXX)	Numerous	High	Low
Samaritan Pentateuch	Few	Moderate	Moderate
Josephus	Several		
