

Job—Part 1: Did He Really Live During the Ice Age?

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Abstract

It is believed by many that Job lived during the Ice Age and that The Book of Job is the oldest book in the Bible. However, it is shown in this first installment of a three-part series that these traditional beliefs about Job most likely are not true. It is shown that Job lived some centuries after Abraham, long after the end of the Ice Age. We will look at who Job was, as he appears in the Masoretic Bible; how his friends fit into the story; and in what language The Book of Job may have been originally written. The role of the LXX will be examined in Part 2 of this series.

Who was Job?

We learn immediately in the first chapter of The Book of Job that Job was someone of great importance in his part of the world. After telling us about the vast numbers of sheep, camels, oxen and donkeys that he owned, and his many servants, there is a significant statement: “He was the greatest man among all the people of the East” (Job 1:3 NIV). Later on, from Job 29:7–25, we see that Job was of high standing in his home city because people took note of him when he went to take his seat in the public square. Even the chief men listened respectfully when he spoke. He appears to have been a leader in his city, whatever title he may have held, for he says, “I chose the way for them and sat as their chief; I dwelt as a king among his troops” (Job 29:25 NIV).

The very fact that today we have in writing what was said in Job’s presence during the discourses tells us that there must have been a scribe writing it all down as each man spoke. This indicates a court of high level, because only wealthy people or important leaders would have employed a scribe to record what was said. The tradition of royal scribes goes back in history to very early times. For instance, Hesy-Re was an Egyptian scribe who served Djoser in the 3rd Dynasty; one of his titles was “Overseer of the king’s scribes.”¹ Habermehl² places Hesy-Re at the same time as Joseph. In another example, Schniedewind³ says that there were scribes in the major Canaanite cities during the second millennium BC. We will see shortly that Job would have lived during this era.

It is most likely that Job and his friends made their speeches in their normal spoken language, which is what the scribe would have written down. However, because the discourses have been preserved for us in the form of poetry, there must have been a change in format made somewhere along the way. Also, there is some narrative both at the beginning (Job 1:1–2:13) and end (Job 42:7–17) of the book, that acts as a sort of frame around the many chapters of poetry in-between.

In what country did Job live?

The language of The Book of Job supports an ancient setting and origin outside of Israel/Judah because of the statement that Job lived in the land of Uz (Job 1:1). This was a territory that is also called Edom, according to Lamentations 4:21: “Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, that dwellest in the land of Uz.” Because scholars do not seem to know where the borders of Uz were, we can say merely that where Job lived, Uz and Edom were both names for that area. However, writers have rendered wide-ranging opinions on where Uz was, including some unlikely places.^{4, 5, 6, 7} None of these can be possible locations because of the requirement that these locations also be in Edom. “Uz” was the name of a grandson of Shem (Genesis 10:22–23) and also the name of a grandson of Seir (I Chronicles 1:38–42). Whether Job’s land of Uz was named after one of these men is difficult to say. Later on in Part 3 we will show where in Edom it is likely that Job lived.

Edom, like much of the Middle East, was tribal in its organization in Job’s day, and has remained so throughout history.⁸ Each tribe was essentially a family descended from its patriarch, the chief (“duke” in the KJV); the sheik occupies a similar position in the Middle East today.⁹ The chiefs of Edom are mentioned in scripture in various places (Genesis 36:15–21, 29–30, 40–43; Exodus 15:5; I Chronicles 1:51, 54).

Edomite women appear to have held strong positions in their culture. Two women are named among the chiefs of Edom: Aholibamah, wife of Esau; and also Timna, sister of Lotan (son of Seir), concubine of Eliphaz, and mother of Amalek (Genesis 36:40–41). In view of this, we see that Job gave his three daughters (from his second family) a portion along with his sons (Job 42:15); interestingly, these daughters are named in scripture, but their brothers are not (an exception is that the LXX names one brother, Ennon, in Job 42:17). Job’s wife is mentioned as speaking up to him rather assertively (Job 2:9–10). In this representation of women, the story of Job supports the customs of Edom.

That a book in the inspired canon of scripture would be devoted to an Edomite is perhaps surprising, because the Jews and Edomites were bitter enemies. Limburg¹⁰ lists scripture verses that describe what the Edomites did to Israel, concluding, “One has only to read through some of these chilling oracles to sense something of the enmity between Israel and Edom.”¹¹

Was The Book of Job originally written in the Edomite language?

The poetry discourses of Job and his friends contain many rare words and examples of unique syntax and morphology; they are written in a different dialect of Hebrew than that of Jerusalem, closer to Aramaic.¹² Scholars debate why this is so, but concede the possibility that the book was written in another language first and then translated into Hebrew.¹³ For a more in-depth discussion, with some contra arguments, see Rata.¹⁴

These scholars are perhaps mystified by the obscure words and other unusual characteristics of the Book of Job because they do not recognize how old the original

poetry may be. If this poetry was first written in Job's day, the Semitic language of his time and place would have included words that may have been difficult to translate into Hebrew later on. Because Job lived in Edom, it is entirely possible that the poetry of The Book of Job was first written in a form of early Edomite, a Canaanite Semitic language. Aramaic eventually took over from Edomite during the first millennium BC.¹⁵ The narrative frame could have been put around the poetry at any time in the past. Davis argues for a translation into Hebrew from an earlier Semitic language around 700 BC, with Isaiah as the most likely translator.¹⁶

Although most of the OT was originally written in Hebrew, there are some passages that were written in Aramaic (Daniel 2:4b–7:28; Ezra 4:8–6:18, 7:12–26). It is possible that The Book of Job had been translated from Aramaic to both Hebrew and Greek.

The significance of Eliphaz the Temanite

The first named of the three friends that came to visit Job in his misery was Eliphaz the Temanite (Job 2:11), who appears to have been the chief of the three. At the end of Job's trial, it was to Eliphaz that God gave orders to sacrifice seven bulls and seven rams as a burnt offering for himself and his two friends (Job 42:7–9).

Teman, the name of the home city of Eliphaz, was also the name of the oldest grandson of Esau. Teman was the son of Esau's oldest son, also named Eliphaz, whose mother was Adah, one of Esau's first two wives (Genesis 36:2,4,15). It is therefore most likely that this grandson of Esau founded the city of Teman in Edom. The area of Teman will be shown later on, in a companion paper about Edom (Part 3 of this series), to have been located most likely in the northwest of Edom, near Esau's territory of Seir. Job's friend, Eliphaz, would have been a namesake of this earlier Eliphaz, and would have lived some generations later.¹⁷

We would expect that Eliphaz and his two friends lived fairly close to each other because they maintained a friendship, and also had arranged to arrive together at Job's place (Job 2:11). Presumably they lived not too far from Job in order to maintain their friendship with him. We know that they must have spoken the same language as Job. There was one other important thing about them: from their discourses we know that they all worshipped God, as did Job, and clearly did not follow the pagan gods of the countries about them. For example, Eliphaz, the chief of the three friends, takes up most of Job 22 in speaking of God. As Morris¹⁸ points out, Job's friends carried on the custom of sacrificing to God. Job and his three friends were all most likely descendants of Abraham, not just Eliphaz. Also, because Job himself was very important, we would expect that his three friends were men of high standing in their respective communities.

We do not know with certainty what generation Job's friend, Eliphaz, belonged to, but it would have to have been a minimum of the fifth generation after Abraham (Isaac, Esau, Eliphaz, and Teman being the first four). Because Eliphaz is called a "Temanite," and not "son of Teman," we might even wonder whether he was of at least the sixth generation. Therefore this Eliphaz supports Job as being in at least the fifth generation after

Abraham, if we assume that there was not a great age difference between Job and Eliphaz because of their friendship. We will look at Job's lineage later on in Part 2.

Job's other friends

Besides Eliphaz the Temanite, two other friends came to pay Job a visit, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite (Job 2:11).

Bildad the Shuhite was possibly a descendant of Shuah, son of Abraham's second wife, Keturah (Genesis 25:2). While Abraham was still alive, he sent these sons "eastward to the east country" (Genesis 25:6). If Bildad was a descendant of Keturah, he would not have traveled very far east to settle, if he found a home in western Edom. In any case, whoever he was, we would expect that he lived fairly close to Eliphaz.

Zophar the Naamathite would also have lived near Eliphaz. According to Robinson¹⁹, there is a tribe called the Na'aimat "who till the soil on the eastern slopes of Mt. Seir." Teman, where Eliphaz lived, was adjacent to Mt. Seir, as we will show in Part 3 on Edom.²⁰

In addition, there was a fourth man present, Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite,²¹ of the family of Ram, who appears for the first time in Job 32:2. It is uncertain what Buz gave the Buzite clan their name; for instance, there is a Buz in Genesis 22:20–21, Nahor's second-named son. Younger than the others (Job 32:4,6), Elihu is not described as being a friend of Job, and there is no explanation given for his presence. It does not say that Elihu had to travel to see Job, and it is possible that he lived locally, or at least not too far away. Indeed, the LXX adds in this same verse that Elihu was from Job's land of Uz (called "Auis" in the LXX).

Because Job's three friends had probably travelled with cavalcades of servants and animals as befitting their station, their arrival may have caused quite a stir in Job's city. In view of Job's importance, his serious months-long illness²² and unusual losses of family and livestock, this meeting between Job and his friends could have been an occasion of great interest to all in the city and surrounding area. We cannot rule out the possibility that Elihu was present to hear the discourses between Job and his friends, along with many other people, because of the customs of the day.

Job and the Ice Age

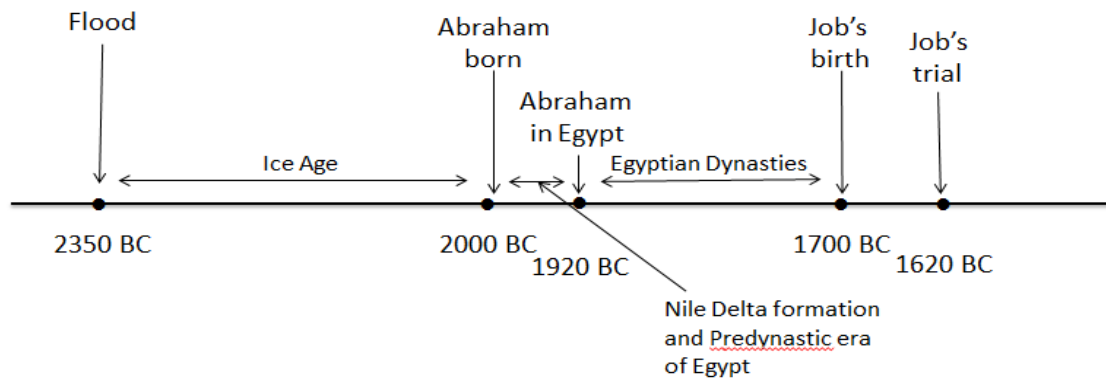
The belief held by many that Job lived during the post-Flood Ice Age²³ appears to be fueled by the idea that he lived in extremely early times,²⁴ along with a few mentions of ice and snow in The Book of Job.^{25, 26, 27} Job 30:1–8 is sometimes quoted as proof that a certain group of low-class men must have lived during the Ice Age (e.g., Northrup²⁸). However, there is no reason given in this biblical passage to believe this. Northrup also appears to think that Job was referring to the fathers of his three friends in this passage, oddly, even though his friends were important enough to be friends of Job.²⁹

We therefore need to determine when the Ice Age was on the earth. It is the geology, geography, history and archaeology of the Nile River of Egypt to which we look for an indication of when the end of the Ice Age must have occurred. The Nile River Delta, located on the Mediterranean at the north end of the river, was formed by a vast amount of sediment that was washed northward during a period when the Nile River's flow was very heavy at the end of the Ice Age. At that time there was catastrophic melting of the ice in the African mountain glaciers, as well as belts of heavy rain that moved northward, swelling the Nile enormously. During this period the early inhabitants of Egypt, who had been living along the Nile, moved elsewhere, only returning after the river settled down. After that, the earliest Predynastic civilization of Egypt started to form, eventually developing into the Dynastic era of the pharaohs. When Abraham went to Egypt because of a severe famine in Canaan (Genesis 12:10–20), he had to deal with a powerful pharaoh; this tells us that the civilization of Egypt was well on its way by then. This sequence of events in Egypt is described in detail by Habermehl.³⁰

What this all means is that the Ice Age had to have been over well before Abraham's visit to Egypt, and therefore long before Job (who lived several generations later, as already shown). The amount of time between the end of the Ice Age meltdown and Job's trial would be around 400 years on the MT timeline, and could be quite a bit more on the LXX timeline.^{31, 32} Although not a precise measurement, this gives us an idea of how much earlier than Job's time the Ice Age had ended. See the Figure 1 timeline below.

If the weather in Job's day was anything like what it is in those parts of the world today, it is not unexpected that Job would have mentioned ice and snow in his discourses. Travel writers of the past describe cold winter conditions that included severe storms, snow, and sleet in the mountains of eastern Edom.³³ In modern times, a February, 2015, snowstorm in south Jordan made the news by dumping 1.5 m of snow in the Governorate of Tafleh; Buseira (Bozrah) is mentioned in this news report as one of the places affected.³⁴ Although this winter storm was more severe than normal, a survey of weather reports from this region shows that snowstorms are not unusual. We will suggest later on in Part 2 that Bozrah was where Job most likely lived.

Having shown that Edom (south Jordan today) is a land where there can be snowstorms and below-freezing weather in winter even today, we see that there is no need to invoke the Ice Age because of a few mentions of ice and snow in The Book of Job.



Job Part 1: Timeline figure

Figure 1. The above figure is based on the MT genealogy of Gen. 11. Note that the LXX genealogy of Gen. 11 differs from the MT largely in placing the Flood about 900 years earlier, and therefore allows more time than shown here for the Ice Age. The date of 2000 BC marking the end of the Ice Age and the beginning of the Nile Delta formation is estimated. On the MT timeline, this allows for a maximum of 350 years from the Flood to the end of the Ice Age meltdown. It also allows only a total of 80 years for both the formation of the Nile Delta and the Predynastic era of the pharaohs (these events would have taken place largely during Abraham's lifetime before his visit to Egypt). Since the current Oard Ice Age model (based on the MT) requires 700 years for the entire Ice Age from its beginning to the end of the meltdown (see ref. 23, pp. 116–117), this figure shows that only half the time needed for his model is available at most. Meanwhile, it is shown in ref. 30 that today's scientists calculate that there was twice as much ice at maximum glaciation as Oard shows in his model, which would require even more time to build up than he allows. However, a different model than that of Oard would need to be developed to accommodate the LXX timeline. The timeline date of 1620 BC for Job's trial (shown above) is addressed in Part 2.

Why was Job not the Jobab of Genesis 10:29?

The name “Job” is similar to “Jobab,” and some believe that these are merely Semitic variations of the same name.³⁵ There is more than one Jobab mentioned in the Bible, and this has led some scholars to point to another man as Job. In Genesis 10:29, a man named Jobab is listed as the 13th son of Joktan, brother of Peleg. The line of descent of this early Jobab is Shem, Arphaxad, Cainan,³⁶ Salah, Eber, Joktan, Jobab, putting this Jobab in the same generation as Peleg's son, Reu. Some argue that this Jobab must be our Job on the basis of the latter's long lifespan.^{37, 38} It is therefore necessary to examine this earlier Jobab to be sure that we are not making a mistake by overlooking him.

As we have shown earlier, Job's three friends all had to have lived several generations after Abraham. This indicates that Job himself also lived well after Abraham. Therefore, we cannot place Job back in the time of Reu, four generations before Abraham (Genesis 11:18–26).

The earlier Jobab and his family settled somewhere in Joktan's family territory, which is defined as "from Mesha, as thou goest unto Sephar a mount of the east" (Genesis 10:30). Various ideas have been offered as to where these places could be, but there is general agreement that this area was along the south of the Arabian Peninsula, in the territory of Yemen and Oman. Writers have pointed out that most, if not all, of Joktan's sons' names can be found among the peoples and places there; there is even a people called the Jobarites, who are believed to be descendants of Jobab.^{39, 40} The mountain of Sephar could be in today's territory of Zufar, located on modern maps in Oman.⁴¹ However, the location of ancient Mesha to the west is controversial. Some sources confuse the issue of Sheba and Havilah, two of Jobab's brothers, and include their territory in the Arabian Peninsula with Ham's territory;⁴² it would appear that they do not realize that both Cush and Joktan had sons named Sheba and Havilah (Genesis 10:7, 10:28–29).

For both chronological and geographical reasons, we therefore conclude that Job cannot be the earlier Jobab of Genesis 10:29. However, the argument could be made that this early Jobab actually *did* live during the Ice Age.

Summary

In this first segment, we have seen that Job was an important man with a high-level court, who lived in Edom. The Book of Job has linguistic indications of having been possibly written in another language in ancient times, and later translated into Hebrew. The name of his friend, Eliphaz the Temanite, is evidence that Job may have lived at least five generations after Abraham; the early Jobab, son of Joktan, had to have been someone else. Because the Ice Age ended well before Abraham, Job cannot have lived during the Ice Age.

Abbreviations

ASV: American Standard Version

Brenton: LXX¹

KJV: Authorized King James Version. Biblical references are from KJV unless otherwise noted.

LXX: Septuagint

MT: Masoretic

NETS: LXX¹

NIV: New International Version

OT: Old Testament

References

- ¹ Romer, J., *A History of Ancient Egypt from the First Farmers to the Great Pyramid*, St. Martin's Press, New York, pp. 264–267, 2013.
- ² Habermehl, A., Revising the Egyptian chronology: Joseph as Imhotep, and Amenemhat IV as pharaoh of the Exodus; in: Horstemeyer, M. (Ed.), *Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference on Creationism*, Creation Science Fellowship, Pittsburgh, PA, 2013.
- ³ Schniedewind, W.M., *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel*, Cambridge University Press, New York, p. 49, 2004.
- ⁴ For example, Nienhuis claims that Job's Uz was in Uzbekistan (Nienhuis, J.I., Uzbekistan is Book of Job Land of Uz where Ice Age climate explains the environment described, *Dancing from Genesis Blog*, <http://dancingfromgenesis.wordpress.com/2007/09/15/uzbekistan-is-book-of-job-land-of-uz-where-ice-age-climate-explains-the-environment-described/>, accessed 21 February 2018).
- ⁵ Bury puts Uz in south Arabia between Oman and Yaman. See Bury, G. W., *The Land of Uz*, Macmillan & Co., London, England, 1911.
- ⁶ Delitzsch places Uz somewhere around Palmyra in Syria. See Delitzsch, F., The land of Uz. *The Old Testament Student* 4(9):417–420, 1885.
- ⁷ Malouf tries hard to turn Job into an Arabian. See Maalouf, T., *Arabs in the Shadow of Israel: The Unfolding of God's Prophetic Plan for Ishmael's Line*, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI, pp. 120–135, 2003.
- ⁸ Kitchen, K.A., The Egyptian evidence on ancient Jordan; in: *Early Edom and Moab: The Beginning of the Iron Age in Southern Jordan (Sheffield Archaeological Monographs)*, Bienkowski, P. (Ed.), J.R. Collis Publications, Sheffield, England, pp. 21–34, 1992. See p. 21 re Edom as a tribal country.
- ⁹ LaBianca, O.S., and R.W. Younger, The kingdoms of Ammon, Moab and Edom: the archaeology of society in Late Bronze/Iron Age Transjordan (ca 1400–500 BCE); in: *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*, Levy, T.E. (Ed.), Leicester University Press, London, England, pp. 399–411, 1995.
- ¹⁰ Limburg, J., *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching, Hosea–Micah*, John Knox Press, Atlanta, GA, 1988. See p. 130 for this quote.
- ¹¹ II Kings 25 describes the taking of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 578 BC. The Edomites are not mentioned by name in this chapter, but elsewhere we are told what they did: Psalm 137:7; Ezekiel 25:12–14; Ezekiel 35:5–6; Lamentations 4:21–22. See also Isaiah 34; Jeremiah 49:7–22; Ezekiel 35; Malachi 1:2–4.
- ¹² Hartley, J.E., *The Book of Job*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI, pp. 5–6, 1988.
- ¹³ Bellinzoni, A.J., *Old Testament: An Introduction to Biblical Scholarship*, Prometheus Books, Amherst, New York, p. 280, 2009.
- ¹⁴ Rata, C.G., Observations on the language of the Book of Job, *Scripture and Interpretation* 2(1)5–24, 2008.

¹⁵ Pardee, D., Canaanite dialects; in: *The Ancient Languages of Syria-Palestine and Arabia*, Woodard, R.D. (Ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom, pp. 103–107, 2008. See p.103.

¹⁶ Davis, C., *Dating the Old Testament*, Craig Davis, Pearland, TX, pp. 369–375, 2007.

¹⁷ Eliphaz, eldest son of Esau, could not have been the same Eliphaz as Job's friend. As we show in Part 2 of this paper, Esau's son would most likely have been Job's great uncle, and would have been an estimated 180 years old at the time of Job's illness if he were still alive (which is unlikely). Also, Job's friend, Eliphaz, is described as a Temanite, a citizen of the city of Teman. As the eldest son of the elder Eliphaz, Teman would have founded the city that bore his name, and Teman's father would not have been described as a Temanite. It is most likely that Teman's father, Esau's eldest son, Eliphaz, would have inherited Esau's home territory of Seir.

¹⁸ Morris, H., *The Remarkable Record of Job*, Master Books, Green Forest, AR, p. 13, 2000.

¹⁹ Robinson, G.L., *Sarcophagus of an Ancient Civilization*, The Macmillan Company, New York, p. 26, 1930.

²⁰ In the LXX, Zophar is called Sophar, king of the Minites (Job 2:11, 42:17 NETS), and Sophar, king of the Minaeans (Job 2:11, 42:17 Brenton). It would appear that the Minites, Minaeans and Naamathites were the same people. In II Chronicles 20:1 (LXX) the Minites/Minaeans are named along with the sons of Moab and Ammon; they are called sons of Mt. Seir in v. 10, and inhabitants of Mt. Seir in vv. 22–23. This supports Zophar as ruler over a people who lived in Mt. Seir.

²¹ In Jeremiah 25:23, “Dedan, and Tema, and Buz...” are mentioned together. Some believe Buz to be a place in the Arabian desert on the east or southeast of Edom because of proximity to Dedan and Tema. See Pritchard, J.P. (Ed.), *HarperCollins Atlas of the Bible*, HarperCollins Publishers, London, England, p. 135, 1998.

²² There are two indications of months having gone by since the onset of Job's illness. One is in Job 7:30, where he speaks of months of “vanity” (KJV), “futility” (NIV), or “misery” (ASV). The other is in Job 29:2–25, where he wishes that his life could be as it had been in months past.

²³ By “Ice Age,” creationists mean a post-Flood period when there was a great build-up of ice on earth. By contrast, secular historians recognize multiple ice ages spread over millions of years. For a thorough discussion of these two opposing concepts, see Oard, M.J., *An Ice Age Caused by the Genesis Flood*, Institute for Creation Research, El Cajon, California, pp. 135–166, 1990.

²⁴ See Morris, ref. 18, p.12.

²⁵ See Morris, ref. 18, pp. 29–30.

²⁶ Northrup, B.E., On finding an Ice Age book, <http://ldolphin.org/iceage.html>, 22 February, 2018.

²⁷ Based on the KJV, Strong gives the following mentions in the Book of Job: ice: 2x (6:16, 38:29), snow 5x (6:16, 9:30, 24:19, 37:6, 38:22), cold 2x (24:7, 37:9), frozen 1x (38:30).

²⁸ See Northrup, ref. 26.

²⁹ See Northrup, ref. 26.

³⁰ Habermehl, A., Ancient Egypt, the Ice Age, and biblical chronology; in: *Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference on Creationism*, Creation Science Fellowship, Pittsburgh, PA, Horstemeyer, M. (Ed.), 2013.

³¹ These two timelines are different because the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 give different lengths of time to fatherhood.

³² When Job lived will be discussed in Part 2 of this series.

³³ See Robinson, ref.19, pp. 21–22.

³⁴ Obeidat, O., Tafileh residents describe weekend blizzard as severest in decades, *The Jordan Times*, 22 February, 2015, <http://ftp.jordantimes.com/news/local/tafileh-residents-describe-weekend-blizzard-severest-decades>, accessed 23 February 2018.

³⁵ See Northrup, ref. 26.

³⁶ I believe that there probably was a Cainan between Arphaxad and Salah, as he was listed in both the LXX (Gen. 11:12) and Luke 3:36 (for more on this, see Habermehl, ref. 30).

³⁷ See Northrup, ref. 26.

³⁸ Setterfield, B., Are Job and Jobab the same person? http://www.setterfield.org/Jobab%27s_identity.html, accessed 23 February 2018.

³⁹ Von Bohlen, P., *Historical and Critical Illustrations of the First Part of Genesis: Vol. II: Cosmogonies and Primaeval History*, Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, London, England, pp. 253–254, 1862.

⁴⁰ Ridpath, J.C., *With the World's People*, Clark E. Ridpath, Washington, DC, pp. 389, 391, 1916.

⁴¹ Heritage, A. (Ed.), *World Reference Atlas*, Dorling Kindersley Publishing, Inc., New York, pp. 146–147, 2004.

⁴² See Pritchard, ref. 21, pp. 92–93.