

THE END TIME MESSAGE THE SCROLL

(TETMTS) MINISTRIES

WHY JOSEPH WAS ABOUT SEVEN YEARS OLD WHEN JACOB LEFT HARAN

A Scripture-Based Chronological Study of Genesis 29-31

Central emphasis:

Rachel became Jacob's wife after the first seven years - not after the second seven years.

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1. Purpose of This Study

This study examines one narrow but important chronological question: how old was Joseph when Jacob finally left Haran? The commonly repeated figure of about six years depends on placing Joseph's birth at, or very near, the end of Jacob's fourteen years of service for Leah and Rachel. The text of Genesis, however, does not explicitly state that Joseph was born at the fourteen-year boundary.

The central observation is simple but decisive: Jacob received Rachel as his wife immediately after Leah's bridal week, after the first seven years had been completed. Jacob then served the second seven years while Rachel was already his wife. Therefore Rachel's barrenness, her giving Bilhah to Jacob, the births of Dan and Naphtali, and finally Rachel's own conception and birth of Joseph all belong to the period in which Rachel was already Jacob's wife.

The chronology advanced in this teaching places Joseph's birth approximately in Jacob's thirteenth year with Laban. On that reconstruction, Joseph was about one year old when the fourteen-year service for the two daughters was completed, and about seven when Jacob departed after the additional six years connected with the cattle.

Important method: Scripture explicitly gives the $7 + 7 + 6 = 20$ -year framework. The placement of Joseph's birth in Year 13 is a chronological reconstruction from the narrative; Genesis does not contain the sentence "Joseph was born in Jacob's thirteenth year." This study therefore distinguishes what Scripture states directly from what is derived from its sequence.

2. The First Seven Years End Before Rachel Becomes Jacob's Wife

"And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter." — Genesis 29:18 (KJV)

"And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her." — Genesis 29:20 (KJV)

These verses establish the first seven-year block. When those seven years were completed, Jacob expected to receive Rachel. Laban instead gave Leah to Jacob.

"Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years." — Genesis 29:27 (KJV)

"And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also." — Genesis 29:28 (KJV)

"And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years." — Genesis 29:30 (KJV)

This is the key point. The "week" of Genesis 29:27-28 is followed by Rachel being given to Jacob; Genesis 29:30 then says Jacob served "yet seven other years." Therefore the second seven-year service was not a seven-year waiting period before Jacob could know Rachel as his wife. Rachel was already his wife during that second seven-year period.

3. Rachel's Barrenness Occurred While She Was Already Jacob's Wife

“And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren.” — Genesis 29:31 (KJV)

The statement that Rachel was barren comes after Genesis has already said that Laban gave Rachel to Jacob and that Jacob went in unto her. Her barrenness therefore cannot be used to place her marriage at the end of fourteen years. It describes her condition while she was already Jacob's wife.

Leah then bore Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah (Genesis 29:32-35). Rachel watched this family development while she remained without a child.

“And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die.” — Genesis 30:1 (KJV)

Rachel's complaint only makes sense because she was already Jacob's wife and expected to bear him children. The text is not describing a woman waiting to become Jacob's wife; it is describing a wife distressed by her barrenness while Leah was bearing children.

4. Rachel Gave Bilhah to Jacob Before Joseph Was Born

“Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; and she shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her.” — Genesis 30:3 (KJV)

“And she gave him Bilhah her handmaid to wife: and Jacob went in unto her.” — Genesis 30:4 (KJV)

Bilhah then bore Dan and Naphtali (Genesis 30:5-8). These sons therefore precede Joseph in the Genesis narrative. This again confirms that Rachel was already functioning as Jacob's wife well before Joseph's birth.

Leah likewise gave Zilpah to Jacob when she had left bearing, and Zilpah bore Gad and Asher (Genesis 30:9-13). The household's pregnancies could overlap because Leah, Bilhah, Zilpah and Rachel were different women. The births should therefore not be added as though every pregnancy occurred consecutively in one woman.

5. Rachel Herself Finally Conceived Joseph

“And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb.” — Genesis 30:22 (KJV)

“And she conceived, and bare a son; and said, God hath taken away my reproach.” — Genesis 30:23 (KJV)

“And she called his name Joseph; and said, The LORD shall add to me another son.” — Genesis 30:24 (KJV)

Joseph's birth is therefore the culmination of Rachel's earlier barrenness. The narrative has moved from Rachel as Jacob's wife, to her barrenness, to her use of Bilhah, and finally to her own

conception. Nothing in these verses states that Joseph had to be born exactly when the fourteen years expired.

6. Jacob's Request to Leave Must Be Distinguished from His Actual Departure

“And it came to pass, when Rachel had born Joseph, that Jacob said unto Laban, Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country.” — Genesis 30:25 (KJV)

“Give me my wives and my children, for whom I have served thee, and let me go: for thou knowest my service which I have done thee.” — Genesis 30:26 (KJV)

Genesis 30:25 establishes that Joseph had already been born when Jacob asked to be released. It does not state Joseph's numerical age at that request, nor does it say Jacob departed that day. Laban answered Jacob and negotiated further wages (Genesis 30:27-34). Jacob's actual departure occurs later in Genesis 31.

The wording of Genesis 30:26 - “for whom I have served thee” - fits naturally with the completion of the fourteen-year obligation for the two daughters. On the Year-13 reconstruction, Joseph had been born about a year earlier and was about one when Jacob reached this fourteen-year boundary.

7. Jacob Himself Gives the Controlling Twenty-Year Equation

“This twenty years have I been with thee...” — Genesis 31:38 (KJV)

“Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle...” — Genesis 31:41 (KJV)

Jacob's own testimony is the controlling numerical statement. His twenty years are divided into fourteen years for Laban's two daughters and six years for the cattle:

$$14 \text{ YEARS} + 6 \text{ YEARS} = 20 \text{ YEARS}$$

This means the six-year cattle period is not the whole measure of Joseph's age. The conclusion “Joseph was six when Jacob left” requires an additional assumption: that Joseph was born precisely at the transition into those six years. Genesis never gives that equation.

If Joseph was already approximately one year old at the fourteen-year boundary, then the six cattle years make him approximately seven at the final departure.

8. The Proposed Chronology

Jacob's time with Laban	Event	Joseph's age
Year 0	Jacob arrives in Haran	-
Year 7	First seven years completed; Leah is given, then Rachel becomes Jacob's wife after Leah's bridal week	-
Years 7-13	Rachel is already Jacob's wife; Leah/Bilhah/Zilpah family development; Rachel remains barren and is later enabled to conceive	-
About Year 13	Joseph is born - proposed chronological placement	Birth
Year 14	Fourteen years for the two daughters completed; Jacob asks to leave; further wages are negotiated	About 1
Years 14-20	Six years connected with the cattle	About 1-7
Year 20	Jacob actually leaves Haran	About 7

9. Why the Six-Year Conclusion Is Not Required by the Text

A six-year age for Joseph can be obtained by placing his birth exactly at the end of the fourteen years and then counting only the six cattle years. That reconstruction is possible, but the decisive point is that Genesis does not explicitly say Joseph was born at that boundary.

The text instead establishes four facts: (1) Rachel became Jacob's wife after the first seven years; (2) Rachel was barren while already his wife; (3) Joseph was born before Jacob's request to leave; and (4) Jacob's total service was fourteen years for the daughters plus six years for the cattle. Therefore the six-year conclusion should not be presented as though Scripture itself says, "Joseph was six when Jacob left Haran."

The alternative chronology developed here places Joseph's birth about one year before the fourteen-year boundary. It therefore yields approximately seven years at departure. This is a derived chronology, but it preserves the explicit twenty-year framework and takes seriously the fact that Rachel's marital and reproductive history unfolded during the second seven-year period.

10. Independent Later Age Checks

"Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren..." — **Genesis 37:2 (KJV)**

"And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt." — **Genesis 41:46 (KJV)**

"For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years..." — **Genesis 45:6 (KJV)**

“The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years...” — Genesis 47:9 (KJV)

These later ages provide an independent framework. Joseph was 30 when he stood before Pharaoh. Seven years of plenty followed, and two years of famine had passed when Joseph revealed himself to his brothers. Joseph was therefore about 39 when Jacob, aged 130, entered Egypt. This places Jacob at about 91 when Joseph was born.

The later ages do not themselves distinguish Haran Year 13 from Year 14, but they do not contradict the Year-13 reconstruction. They confirm that the proposed chronology must be tested as part of a larger, internally consistent biblical timeline.

11. Teaching Summary

1. Jacob served seven years before the marriage episode (Genesis 29:18-20).
2. After Leah's bridal week, Rachel was given to Jacob as his wife; Jacob then served “yet seven other years” (Genesis 29:27-30).
3. Therefore Rachel was Jacob's wife during the second seven years.
4. Rachel's barrenness and her complaint occurred while she was already Jacob's wife (Genesis 29:31; 30:1).
5. Rachel gave Bilhah to Jacob, and Bilhah bore Dan and Naphtali before Joseph's birth (Genesis 30:3-8).
6. God later opened Rachel's womb and she bore Joseph (Genesis 30:22-24).
7. Joseph was already born when Jacob asked Laban to let him go (Genesis 30:25-26).
8. Jacob's actual service totals were fourteen years for the two daughters and six years for the cattle, twenty years in all (Genesis 31:38, 41).
9. The statement that Joseph was six when Jacob left depends on placing Joseph's birth exactly at the fourteen-year boundary; Genesis does not explicitly state that.
10. On the chronology advanced in this study, Joseph was born about Haran Year 13, was about one at the fourteen-year boundary, and was therefore about seven when Jacob left at Year 20.

12. Conclusion

The decisive correction is not merely a subtraction of twenty minus fourteen. The first question is: when did Rachel become Jacob's wife? Genesis answers clearly: after Jacob's first seven years and after Leah's bridal week. Jacob then served another seven years while Rachel was already his wife.

Consequently, Rachel's years of barrenness, her giving Bilhah to Jacob, the births of Dan and Naphtali, and the eventual birth of Joseph belong to a family history already unfolding during the second seven-year service. The text does not require Joseph's birth to be placed exactly at the end of Year 14.

The chronology presented here therefore places Joseph's birth at approximately Year 13, Jacob's request to leave at the completion of the fourteen-year wife-service when Joseph was about one, and the final departure after the six cattle years when Joseph was about seven.

The WORD must be allowed to establish its own chronology.

Scripture References for Teaching

Genesis 29:18-20; 29:21-30; 29:31-35; 30:1-13; 30:14-24; 30:25-34; 31:17-21; 31:38-41; 37:2; 41:46-53; 45:6; 47:9.

Scripture quotations: King James Version (KJV).

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