

**Jacob's Sons Birth Years if He Received His Wives Shortly After Coming to Laban:  
Also Chronology for Jacob, Benjamin & Dinah's Rape in Genesis 27:41 to 35:29  
Floyd Nolen Jones, Th.D., Ph.D.**

Leah's sons	Leah	Zilpah	Bilhah	Rachel	Year BC	Yr. for wives
					1759	At Laban's
1	Reuben				1758	1
2	Simeon				1757	2
3	Levi				1756	3
4	Judah				1755	4
	<i>Barren</i>		Dan		1754	5
	<i>Barren</i>		Naphtali		1753	6
	<i>Barren</i>	Gad			1752	7
	<i>Barren</i>	Asher			1751	8
5	Issachar				1750	9
6	Zebulun				1749	10
	<span style="color: cyan;">Dinah</span>				<span style="color: cyan;">1748</span>	11
					1747	12
					1746	13
				<span style="color: red;">Joseph</span>	<span style="color: red;">1745</span>	<span style="color: red;">14</span>
					1744	15
					1743	16
					1742	17
					1741	18
					1740	19
				<span style="color: red;">Benjamin</span>	<span style="color: red;">1739</span>	<span style="color: red;">20</span>

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

Genesis 30:25 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.

26 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. (i.e., the 14 years have ended; see 31:41 below)

Genesis 31:41 Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle: and thou hast changed my wages ten times.

Now Jacob contracted to work 7 years for uncle Laban the Syrian in order to marry his daughter Rachel. But Laban deceived his nephew: instead of Rachel, Jacob awoke the morning after the wedding to find Leah, the firstborn daughter, in his bed. Shaken, 77- year-old Jacob then agreed to work another seven years to obtain his beloved Rachel.

**Problem (1):** Did Jacob acquire his wives before or after his first 7-year-dowry period. Although this is debated, the answer is straightforward. As shall be shown, the math imposed by Scripture demands that Jacob took his wives, Leah and Rachel, just over a month after he came to Uncle Laban's in Haran of northern Syria.

Now Leah had six sons and a daughter *before* Joseph was born to Rachel (30:20–24). Furthermore, after having birthed four sons, there was a period when she left off bearing (29:35; 30:9). During the barren interval she gave her handmaid Zilpah to Jacob that she might have more children through her. As Zilpah bore two sons *before* Leah began to bear again, Leah's childless interval had to have been close to a minimum of two years. Thus, it should be evident that for Leah to have had seven single births and an approximately two-year unfruitful interval in only seven years is hardly possible. Hence, we conclude Jacob received both wives after working a payless month for Laban at the *beginning* of the entire 14-year-dowry period – the other 7 years *are* necessary. Indeed, how else could it be said of a love-smitten suitor that the time to get Rachel “seemed unto Jacob but a few days” (Gen. 29:14 & 20)?

Furthermore, Jacob did not say “Give me my wife, for my *years* are fulfilled”: he said “for my *days* are fulfilled” (Gen. 29:21). Of itself, such is not conclusive, but there is more. The seven years (vs. 18) of service for Rachel were the dowry, *not* the customary waiting period. The “few days” of Gen. 29:20 could well have been the month of verse 14. Verse 15 implies Jacob was industrious and had already been “serving” Laban.

Again, there is more. Had Jacob not obtained Leah almost as soon as he came to Laban’s (and Rachel 7 days later, Gen. 29:27-28), Judah would have been born too late for all the details of his life to have occurred (in Gen. 38; see chart on last page). There are but 33 years for Judah to return with his father to Canaan, marry a Canaanitess, beget Er, Onan, & Shelah, commit sex sin with Tamar his daughter-in-law (who bore him Perez and Zerah) and Perez’s having begotten two sons by the end of the 33 years – at which time Jacob took his family down to Egypt.

### Birth Years for Jacob’s Sons if He Worked 7 Years **Before** Receiving His Wives

Leah’s sons	Leah	Zilpah	Bilhah	Rachel	Year BC	Yr. for wives
					1759	At Laban’s
					1758	1
					1757	2
					1756	3
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					1753	6
1	Reuben				1752	7
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3	Levi		Dan		1750	9
4	Judah		Naphtali		1749	10
	<i>Barren</i>	Gad			1748	11
5	<i>Barren</i>	Asher			1747	12
6	Issachar				1746	13
	Zebulun			<b>Joseph</b>	<b>1745</b>	<b>14</b>
	<b>Dinah</b>				<b>1744</b>	15
Neither this scheme nor any other realistically satisfies the birth order with Dinah’s data in only a 7 <sup>+</sup> year span (Gen. 29 & 30). Jacob’s sons being placed at Joseph’s table from first-born to the youngest must also be considered (43:33).					1743	16
					1742	17
					1741	18
					1740	19
				<b>Benjamin</b>	<b>1739</b>	<b>20</b>

Yet Genesis 30:20-24 indicates Dinah as born *before* Joseph. Indeed, the math also imposes a *tension* involving Benjamin’s age with Dinah’s at the time she is raped (Gen. 34). He must be old enough to have 10 “sons” when Jacob’s family comes to Egypt in 1706 BC (Gen. 46:21; actually 6 are sons: 4 are grandsons! Gen. 46:21; Num. 26:38-40; 1 Chr. 8:1-5 and especially 1 Chr. 7:6-12). Both their ages are restricting factors as to when Jacob obtained his wives. Benjamin must be born the year of the 1739 BC return from Padan-aram: 33:18 & 35:18 cannot be years afterward; for such would make him a grandfather while in his early twenties.

Jacob went to Laban in 1759 BC. Now Joseph was born at the end of the 14-year dowry period Jacob served to pay for both his wives (1745 BC, Gen. 30:24–26; cp. 29:18–28). Again, Scripture indicates Dinah was born before Joseph (Genesis 30:19–26). Years later, while living in Hebron, 10 of Jacob’s other sons sold 17-year-old Joseph into slavery (1728 BC; Gen. 37:2, 28 & 36; cp. 35:27). This and Joseph’s birth date also place restrictions on Dinah’s age at the time of her defiling (so conflicting Ussher avoided dating the incident in his 1650 AD *Annals of the World*).<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the above graph is most generous: Dan & Naphtali could move down 2 years, forcing all the other children to move down also.

<sup>1</sup> Ussher’s dates were added to the margin of the KJB in 1701 when the Church of England had Bishop Lloyd edit for spelling errors. However, he changed many to fit his thinking. Thus, dates believed as Ussher’s are often Lloyd’s. Except for Joseph, Ussher gave no birth dates for Jacob’s sons after Judah or the Gen. 34-35:8 rape of Dinah. Lloyd wrongly dated her birth: this forced her age to appear 3 years younger at the time of her defilement. Unfortunately, most assume the date Ussher’s.

As Dinah was Leah's youngest child and since the rape took place before Joseph's 17th year, Jacob could not have waited 7 years until 1752 (1759 – 7 = 1752 BC) before he received his wives. Otherwise, Dinah could not feasibly be born during the first 7 years as that would not allow enough time to birth all her siblings.

**Problem (2):** Upon his return (1739 BC), Jacob came to Succoth and had his servants build a house for the families goods & stocks for his vast drove (Gen 33:17). Meanwhile, he crossed Jordan and came to Shalem, a city of Shechem's in Canaan, and purchased part of a field (Gen. 33:18-19). Moreover, Dinah's birth could not have occurred before 1748 BC. As Jacob came to Laban in 1759 and departed 20 years later (1739 BC), Dinah would only be 9 years old at the time of the Genesis 34 rape (1748 – 1739 = 9). Obviously 9 is far too young to fit the context (she's only 5 if Jacob worked 7 years *before* receiving his wives), for although younger girls have been defiled by deviates, marriage to such a child is not their intent.

But Prince Shechem the Hivite did so wish. Indeed, Dinah is older, for in 34:3, 4 & 12 he calls her "damsel". Besides, a 9-year-old would hardly be allowed unescorted among Hivites. More time is needed, and we have it! The year he returned from Padan-aram Jacob's sons were referred to as "tender" children whereas at the time of Dinah's defilement they were called "men"! (Gen. 33:13, cp. 34:7, 21, 22) Several years are clearly between the return & her rape. However, adding years at this point results in several thorny problems.

Now when one casually reads without regard to Scriptures containing mathematical constraints on the storyline, Genesis 34 seems to naturally flow from chapter 33 into 34 and on thru 35. Such results in Rachel's dying while birthing Benjamin about 7+ years *after* Jacob first came to Succoth.<sup>2</sup> (1739 BC) This solves Dinah's age problem as it correctly places the rape episode near 1732 BC with her c.16. If chapter 33 does in fact flow thru 35, Genesis 35:27 is Jacob's coming to permanently live and care for his aging father immediately after the rape with Rachel's passing en-route. In such case Jacob would have so lived for 14 years, as Isaac died in 1716 at the age of 180 (Gen. 35:28). Of course, the result of this understanding would mean that, like nearly all Bible dictionaries, commentaries, and academicians would have it, we must suppose that during those 14 years while Jacob was living at Shalem he came to visit Isaac many times in Hebron. As everything apparently fits, such is today's prevailing explanation – so let's move on to chapter 36.

**The issue:** But this scenario is flawed. It fails to resolve *Grandfather* Benjamin's age constraint (see page 2) and completely misses a major point in everything from Genesis 28 through chapter 35! Now when Jacob left Beer-sheba to go to Padan-aram, the Lord promised in the "ladder dream" to bring him back to his father (Gen. 28:12-22). Later, He ordered Jacob to return and that He would protect him on the journey (Gen. 31:3). Thus, an overriding issue across these 8 chapters is – did God keep His promises? Did He bring Jacob back to the land of his fathers and Isaac? The prevailing explanation above does not adequately address this. It utterly misses the significance of Genesis 35:27 & that the Dinah incident is placed *contextually*, not chronologically.

From the 1759 BC "ladder" promise at Bethel, we go 20 years to the 1739 dream where God ordered Jacob to return to his land & kindred (Gen. 31:3 & 18). While en-route and near the Jabbok River ford, Jacob learned that Esau was coming toward him with 400 men. Fearfully, Jacob humbled himself before Esau, who forgave and tenderly welcomed his twin brother back.<sup>3</sup>

Exhausted after fleeing 300 miles in but 13 days,<sup>4</sup> he came to Succoth. Knowing a vast drove would overpower Isaac's fields, which already held huge flocks and herds (Gen. 26:14), Jacob had his servants build a house for his goods & stocks for the beasts (Gen. 33:17), while he and family crossed Jordan (a must, until so

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<sup>2</sup> Yet the Gen. 34 rape account actually ends at 35:8. This is seen in that when God told Jacob & household to depart and *dwell* in Bethel, all were said to be safe from reprisals due to the terror of the people in the nearby cities (Gen. 35:1, 5). Surely such fear was contextually due to Simeon and Levi's slaughter and pillaging of Shalem as being a recent event – not years later. The narrative of Jacob's return resumes at 35:9 (see next page).

<sup>3</sup> Most biblical authorities see Jacob's refusal of Esau's offer to accompany him as being more of his old scheming nature in order to distance himself from his brother and the 400 with him. Such misses the mark. Jacob had just fled 300 miles to escape Laban. He has now gone but a few miles farther with Issachar being only 11 years old, Zebulun 10, Dinah 9, & Joseph 6. Indeed, many of the children are "tender" and the beasts are with young (33:13-14). All are exhausted from the flight & the animals in danger of losing their little ones. Jacob was sincere. Their reconciliation was exactly as recorded, both genuine and heartfelt (Gen. 33:4, 15) as the joint participation in later burying their 180 year old father so implies (35:29).

Imputing deception to Jacob here is unwarranted. Proof: he immediately went c.5 miles west to Succoth and had some of his menservants build a house as well as booths for the drove so that all fleeing could recover (Gen. 30:43, 32:5, & 33:17).

<sup>4</sup> About 3 days to reach Laban and report Jacob that had departed, 3 more for Laban to go south and check out this report, and 7 more days from there in pursuit to overtake Jacob (31:21-23). Such large droves can't go 300 miles in 3 fewer days.

crossing Jacob has not returned into the land of his fathers as God had commanded: 31:3 and 13). To obtain pasture in Canaan, Jacob purchased a plot near Shalem from Shechem the Hivite (30:43, 33:17-19).

Now at 33:18 we meet the phrase “when he came out of Padan-aram” – the chronological key, for it time ties 33:18-20 to 35:9-27. The phrase always fastens a verse to the 1739 BC return. So we leap over the Dinah-Simeon-Levi debacle (Gen. 33:18-35:8) to Genesis 35:9. It is still 1739 for God came “again” to Jacob “when he came out of Padan-aram”. Indeed, Genesis 48:7 clarifies: “when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me” – not c.7+ years later! This shows Dinah’s rape as out of sequence. Further, she is Leah’s youngest; a “tender” 9 year old child at the 1739 return (Gen. 33:13). But at her defilement she is a damsel (34:3); years are in between.

From Shechem, Jacob continued on to Isaac and stopped at Bethel (Gen 35:9, 15-16) where God reminded him that 20 years earlier He promised at that very place to protect him, give him the land, and bring him back to it (Gen. 28:12-22). Only one promise remained unfulfilled – and so with only about 35 miles to go, south to Hebron and his father, Jacob and family continued on. Again, it is still the year of Jacob’s return: BC 1739!

As they near Bethlehem, Jacob’s beloved Rachel dies while birthing Benjamin. Then a seeming out-of-place incident is added regarding Reuben’s adultery with Bilhah, Rachel’s handmaid & concubine to Jacob (Gen. 35:22). At last, the 97 year old patriarch is rejoined with his 157 year old father. The promise given by the Lord at Genesis 28:15 had come full circle and the 20 year saga was now complete.

This is the climax and main point of the entire narrative. God kept his promises: the question has been answered. Furthermore, God brought it to pass in the very same year He told Jacob to return (1739 BC). Otherwise, the entire force of Genesis 35:7 is lost. Rather than the saga’s triumphal pinnacle, it would merely be another visit to Isaac some 7 or so years after his return – as it is in today’s prevailing account.<sup>5</sup>

But why is the Dinah-Simeon-Levi incident so placed? The out-of-place story is so placed for there is no other suitable site to put it. Genesis 36 is about Esau’s lineage, so it doesn’t fit there and 37 deals with Joseph being sold as a slave to Potiphar the Egyptian: again no fit. Then, much as in the case before us, Genesis 38 interrupts the story of Joseph with a seeming out-of-place story of Jacob’s son Judah (showing God has purpose for and does put non-sequential accounts within His Holy Word: this account of Judah is necessary, for that which follows dealing with Joseph and is actually wisely placed where it is). Indeed, here is a biblical precedent for the out-of-sequence story at chapter 34 ff., but placing Dinah here doesn’t fit either. Moreover, Genesis 39 to 48 returns to Joseph’s glory and his family coming to Egypt to escape the famine. Jacob blesses Pharaoh (47:7) and later adopts Manasseh and Ephraim as full sons, with Ephraim the younger getting the blessing (Genesis 48, 1689 BC). Here Jacob blesses Pharaoh (47:7) and later adopts Manasseh and Ephraim as full sons, conferring the blessing on Ephraim the younger (Gen. 48, 1689 BC). Thus, there is simply no suitable place to just plop the Dinah-Simeon-Levi debacle anywhere after Genesis 34.

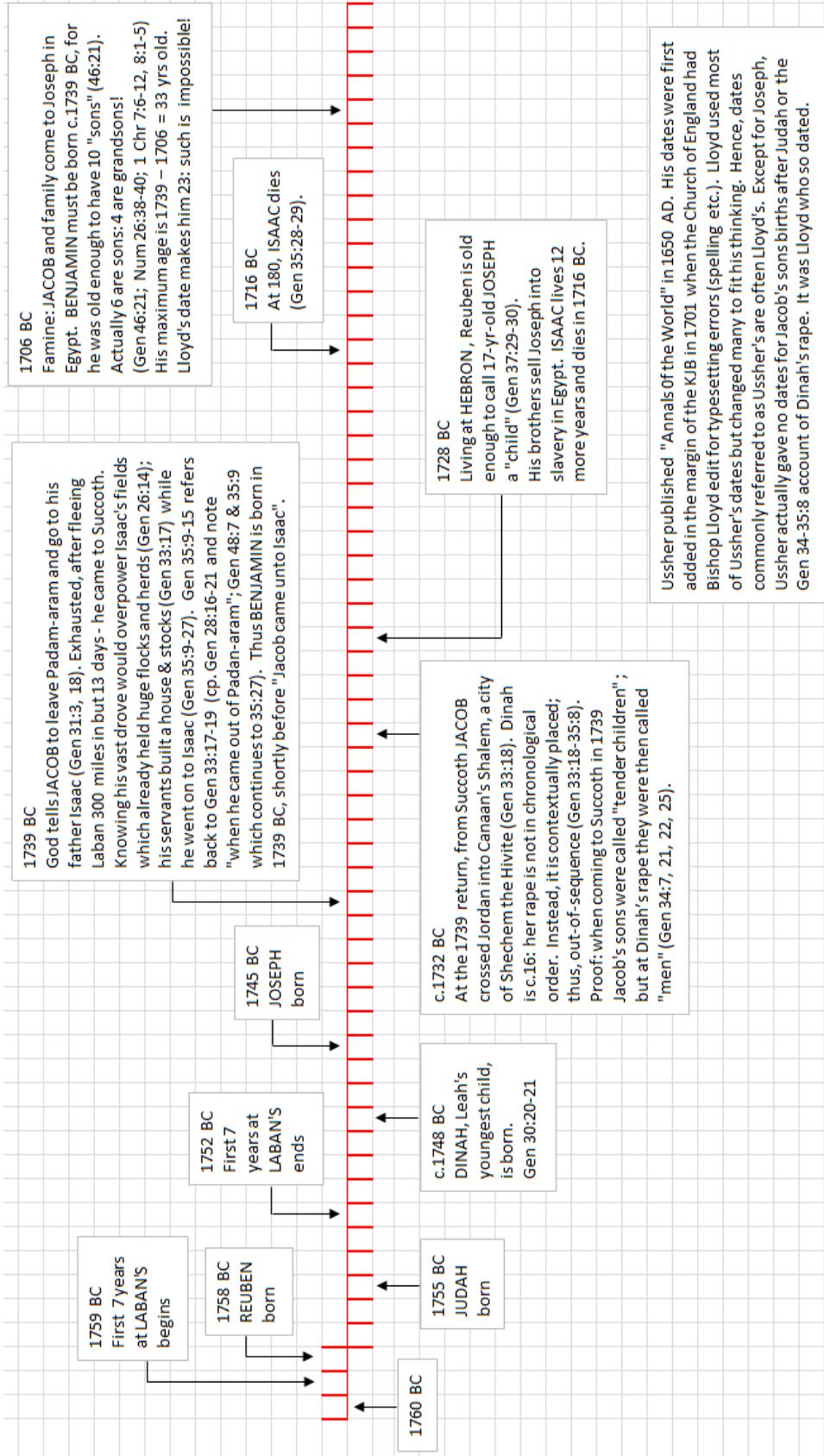
But why place the Dinah event where it is? Because Hamor and Shechem are introduced in the preceding verses concerning Jacob’s purchasing land from them – thereby making the connection. Still, other than being a warning to young girls & also to men about the seriousness of making covenant as well as taking vengeance rather than justice, what is the purpose for the Dinah-Simeon-Levi episode being in Scripture anyway?

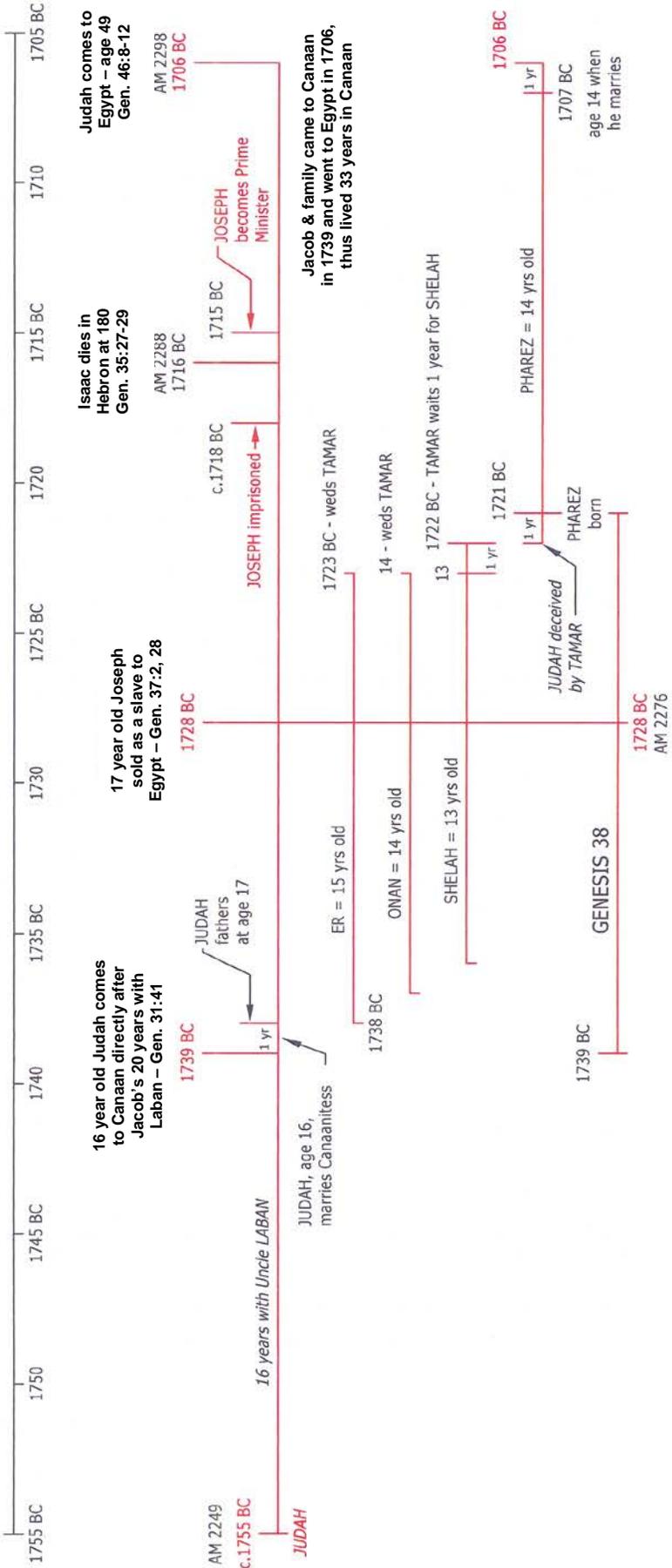
The answer is straightforward. Without it and the seeming out-of-place incident regarding Reuben’s adultery with Bilhah, the story of Jacob’s blessing his sons in Genesis 49 would be unclear – and why set aside Simeon and Levi? Now normally the blessing (i.e., the lineage to Messiah) and birthright (a double inheritance, Deut. 21:15-17 and, until the Law was given, be the family priest) would be given to the firstborn or the next down in order of birth. Yet because of their previously recorded acts, Reuben, Simeon, and Levi (Jacob’s first 3 sons, Gen. 29:32-35) are disqualified and the blessing passes on to Judah, Jacob’s fourth born (largely due to a heart change seen in his repentant integrity at Gen. 38:26 but more especially his heart at 43:9, where he is 49 years old), whereas the birthright went to Joseph (Gen. 48:21-22; 1 Chr. 5:1-2). Thus we see that Genesis 34 is especially necessary, for without it Jacob’s actions in Genesis 49 would be incomprehensible.

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<sup>5</sup> Any remaining doubt is again met by: “when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me” (48:7). This time, it is Jacob who states that Rachel died “when” he came from Padan – not years after. This absolutely fixes Benjamin’s birth as 1739: at the end of the 20 years at Laban’s! Otherwise, Benjamin came to Egypt in 1706 BC with 6 sons & 4 grandsons being only 23 rather than our 33, and it confirms the Dinah narrative as sequentially out of place.

After coming home to Isaac, Jacob returned to Succoth. Gathering his goods & beasts, he crossed the Jordan River to Shalem. Some 7 years after the 1739 BC Padan-aram return, the Dinah-Simeon-Levi horror took place. Thereafter, God told Jacob and family to go dwell for an undisclosed time at Bethel (35:1). Surely, during the years before the rape and his later coming to permanently care for his aging father, Jacob would often have visited him at Haran (180 year old Isaac died in 1716 BC).





**Possible Scenario for Judah**

Note: the Ages for Er, Onan, Shelah, and Pharez would have to be even younger if Jacob had to work for Laban 7 years before he received for wives both Leah and Rachel. (See Genesis 38)