

EGYPTIAN BONDAGE SOJOURN

How Long was Israel in Egypt?

How long were the children of Israel in Egypt? Four hundred years? Or less? It is commonly believed that the children of Israel were in Egypt for 400 years. Some say 430 years was the length of their stay. Both numbers are found in the Scriptures. The children of Israel sojourning in Egypt and their afflictions are synonymous with each other, so one would think the 430 years would refer to sojourning, while the 400 years would deal with affliction or bondage.

In Gen. 15:13, we read: And He said unto Abram, Know of a surety thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years.

Does this teach they were in Egypt for 400 years? Certainly not! It only teaches of 400 years of affliction.

In Exodus 12:40, we read: Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years.

This text could be taken two ways: 1) the sojourning was 430 years; or 2) they were in Egypt 430 years. Stephen makes reference to this in Acts 7:6: And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land: and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years.

Doesn't the text teach 400 years of evil rather than 400 years of sojourning? We attempt to prove the sojourning started with Abram in Mesopotamia and ended in the Exodus, while the affliction began with Isaac's feast (Gen. 21:8). The Apostle Paul writes in Galatians 3:17 that it was 430 years from the promise to the law: And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God In Christ, the law, which was four

hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

We now read Exodus 12:41: And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.

From this let's do some math. In Genesis 12:1-4, we find that Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran with the promise of God, our starting point. Isaac was born 25 years later when Abraham was 100 years old (Genesis 21:5), this being 25 years after the promise. In Genesis 25:26, Isaac was 60 years old when Jacob was born, this being 85 years after the promise. Jacob was 130 years old when the journey was made into Egypt (Genesis 47:8-9), which totals 215 years from the promise to the entering into Egypt. Now subtract 215 from 430, which equals 215, this being their stay in Egypt.

We will now look at our subject from another direction. In Genesis 46:8-26, we find who went down into Egypt with Jacob. In verse 11, Kohath is listed in the group, but Kohath's age is not given. Exodus 6:18 states that Kohath begot Amram, and Kohath lived 133 years. The 20th verse of the same chapter reveals in part that Amram begot Moses and lived 137 years. Moses was about 80 years old when the Exodus occurred (Exodus 7:7). We now add these numbers up: $133 + 137 + 80 = 350$. This is far short of 400 years. Also, these years don't consider a maturing in order to father an offspring. If Kohath and Amram were both 60 years old, as Isaac was, we could subtract 120 from 350, leaving 230 years, which is very close to the 215 years.

God told Abram in Genesis 15:16, But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again....

In a spiritual sense, this prophecy was fulfilled in Joseph (Jos. 24:32), but in a natural sense, the fulfillment was in Moses. From Genesis 50:23, we

can conclude that Joseph saw his descendants that would exit Egypt. Joseph was 110 years old at death (Genesis 50:26), and he was 39 when Jacob came down (Genesis 41:46; 45:6), which leaves 71 years of Joseph's life with his brethren in Egypt. Seventy-one from 215 leaves 144 years, this being a minimum age for the fourth generation, which is reasonable. Seventy-one from 400 leaves 329 years. This also would be a minimum age for the fourth generation, which is not reasonable. Eber lived 460 years (Genesis 11:16-17), an age comparable to 329 which was some 13 generations before.

Now, to the affliction. When Isaacs was weaned, Abraham made a feast, and Sarah saw Ishmael mocking her son (Genesis 21:8-9). In Galatians 4:22-31, we read about these two sons. Notice the words *bondage* and *affliction*. How old was Isaac at the feast? We don't know! Would 5 years be reasonable? If so, this would make 30 years from the promise to the affliction.

In 1 Samuel 1:24; 2:11, we read how Hannah left Samuel with Eli when he was weaned. How old do you suppose Samuel was when his mother left him with Eli? Another thought: Who took Joseph to Egypt? (See Genesis 37:28). Did not our personal Egyptian affliction begin when God weaned us from the flesh and gave us grace to eat at His table?

--Elder Sam Whittington

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