

The Period The Israelites Were In Mitsrayim (Egypt)?

When we examine the pertinent passages in Scripture we could easily come to the conclusion that within the Scriptures there exist discrepancies,

And He said to Avram, "Know for certain that your seed are to be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years. (Gen.15:13).

And the sojourn of the children of Israel who lived in Mitsrayim was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to be at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, on that same day it came to be that all the divisions of YHWH went out from the land of Mitsrayim. (Exod.12:40-41).

"And Elohim spoke in this way: that his seed would be sojourning in a foreign land, and that they would be enslaved and afflicted four hundred years. (Acts7:6).

Another passage of relevance can be found in Galatians,

Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He said not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Mashiach. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before by Elohim in Mashiach, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. (Gal.3:16-17)

So which is it 400 years or 430 years? If we are only considering the period from when Ya'akov was summoned to Mitsrayim by his son Yoseph to the time Moshe led them out, there is Scriptural evidence it was neither of these periods. Consider the following,

- Gen.46:11 shows that Kohath, the son of Levi and grandfather of Moshe, was born prior to Ya'akov moving to Mitsrayim. Kohath lived 133 years (Exod.6:18). Kohath sired Amram, Moshe's father. Amram lived 137 years (Exod.6:20). Now let's assume the following scenario which provides maximum time spans,
 - Ya'akov had Kohath on the very day he entered Mitsrayim
 - Kohath therefore spent 133 years in Mitsrayim
 - Kohath had Amram the last day of his life
 - Amram spent 137 years in Mitsrayim
 - Amram had Moshe on the last day of his life

When we total the above chronology: 133+1 (allowing for pregnancy) + 137+1 = 272 years, this is the maximum time span from Ya'akov's entry into Mitsrayim to the birth of Moshe, it could not possibly have been any longer. We are told that Moshe was 80 years old when he led the exodus (Exod.7:7) therefore the absolute maximum time the Israelites could have been in Mitsrayim is 352 years; 272+80 years. Clearly the above genealogical record does not support either a 400 or 430 year sojourn in Mitsrayim. So how are we to interpret these two periods? How are we to understand these verses?

We will start with Galatians.

Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He said not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Mashiach. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before by Elohim in Mashiach, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. (Gal.3:16-17)

The apostle says it was 430 years from the confirmation of the covenant to the giving of the Torah at Sinai. Scholars agree that the apostle is referring to the promise of Gen. 12 and it is easily proved that the period from

the time of the promise to Ya'akov entering Mitsrayim is 215 years;

Item	Person & Age	Event	Scripture Ref.	Years From Promise
1	Avraham: 75	YHWH Make a promise to Avraham and he leaves Haran	Gen.12:1-4	0
2	Avraham: 75-85	YHWH tells Avraham his descendants will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there and they will be afflicted for 400 years	Gen.15:13, Acts7:6	0-10
3	Avraham: 85	Avraham has lived in Canaan for 10 years and takes Hagar as his wife and she conceives Ishmael	Gen.16:3-4	10
4	Avraham: 86	Ishmael is born	Gen.16:15-16	11
5	Avraham: 100 Ishmael: 14	Yitzchak is born	Gen.21:5	25
6	Avraham: 105 Yitzchak: 5 Ishmael: 19	Yitzchak is weaned. Ishmael mocks/persecutes Yitzchak ¹	Gen.21:8-9 Gal.4:29	30
7	Avraham:140 Yitzchak: 40	Yitzchak marries Rivkah	Gen.24:1-67 25:20	65
8	Avraham:160 Yitzchak:60	Esav and Ya'akov are born	Gen.25:26	85
9	Avraham: 175 Yitzchak: 75 Ya'akov: 15	Avraham Dies	Gen.25:7	100
10	Yitzchak: 151 Ya'akov:91	Yoseph is born		176
11	Yitzchak: 168 Ya'akov::108 Yoseph:17	Yoseph is sold by his brothers and taken to Mitsrayim	Gen.37	193
12	Yitzchak: 180 Ya'akov:120 Yoseph:29	Yitzchak dies	Gen.35:28-29	205
13	Ya'akov:121 Yoseph:30	Yoseph is made second in command to Pharaoh	Gen41:46	206
14	Ya'akov::130 Yoseph:39	Yoseph reveals himself to his brothers two years into the famine Ya'akov meets Pharaoh	Gen.45:4-6 Gen:47:9	215

¹ Although the Scriptures do not specifically identify the date of this event, it can be established by interpolation based on the passages of Scripture listed: see later comment on the 400 years period.

Going back to Galatians and the period of 430 years: 215 years from the giving of the promise to Ya'akov entering Mitsrayim leaves a balance of 215 (430 – 215) years for the period of the exile. The following are some evidences which support a 215 year exile,

- *Josephus*

In *'Antiquities of the Jews'* Josephus wrote that the Israelites *'Left Egypt in the month of Xanthicus on the fifteenth day of the lunar month; four hundred and thirty years after our forefather Avraham came into Canaan, but two hundred and fifteen years only after Ya'akov removed into Mitsrayim'* (Ant.ii. 15:2)

William Whiston who translated the works of Josephus into English added a footnote accompanying the Josephus passage quoted above and concerning the Israelites' stay in Mitsrayim. Whiston wrote;

'Why our Masorete copy so groundlessly abridges this account in Exod. Xii: 40 so as to ascribe 430 years to the sole peregrination of the Israelites in Egypt when it is clear even by the Masorete chronology elsewhere, as well as from the express text itself, in the Samaritan, Septuagint and Josephus, that they sojourned in Egypt but half that time – and that by consequence the other half of the Peregrination was in the land of Canaan, before they came into Egypt - is hard to say'

- *Dr. Rohl a respected Egyptologist*

Dr. Rohl also an advocate of a 215 year exile in Mitsrayim, in his book *'Pharaohs and Kings'* investigates the possible correlation between Egyptian chronology and archaeological discoveries. He concluded that Israel went down into Mitsrayim circa 1662 BC and was discovered by Elohim through Moshe circa 1447 BC – a span of 215 years (pp. 329-332).

So how is it that Exodus 12:40-41 reads, *'And the sojourn of the children of Israel who lived in Mitsrayim was four hundred and thirty years?'* In most translations this passage is copied from the Masoretic text. However, other reliable sources; the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Septuagint both have the following rendering for this passage, *'Now the sojourning of the children of Israel and their fathers, which they sojourned in the land of Canaan and in the land of Egypt, was 430 years.'*

The original text harmonises completely with what we have established above. Adam Clarke a scholar who has researched the Pentateuch observed the following on Exod.12:40 in his *'Commentary on the Old Testament,'*

*'The Samaritan Pentateuch, by preserving the two passages, **they and their fathers** and in the **land of Canaan**' which are lost out of the present copies of the Hebrew text, has rescued this passage from all obscurity and contradiction. It may be necessary to observe that the Alexandrian copy of the Septuagint has the same reading as that in the Samaritan. The Samaritan Pentateuch is allowed by many learned men to exhibit the most correct copy of the first five books of Moshe.'*

What is more Scripture itself supports the original text,

"And I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their sojournings, in which they have sojourned. (Exod.6:4).

Now let us consider the 400 years period. One fact all Scholars do agree on is that both the 430 and 400 year periods ended at the same time with the giving of the Torah at Sinai. To position the 400 year period we need to examine closely the two verses; Gen.15:13 and Exod.12:40-41,

And He said to Avram, "Know for certain that your seed are to be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years. (Gen.15:13).

And the sojourn of the children of Israel who lived in Mitsrayim was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to be at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, on that same day it came to be that all the divisions of YHWH went out from the land of Mitsrayim. (Exod.12:40-41).

There is a fundamental difference between these two verses: Genesis refers to Avram's seed thereby excluding Avram himself whereas, as we have established, the 430 years period included the sojourning of Avram: this difference in the terminology is the crux of the confusion.

The 400 year period does not just concern sojourning but also affliction/persecution. As we know this period ended when the 430 year period ended, thus the 400 year period had to start 30 years later. What event occurred 30 years after the giving of the promise to Avram? The apostle Paul tells us,

But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him born according to the Spirit, so also now. But what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the female servant and her son, for the son of the female servant shall by no means be heir with the son of the free woman." (Gal.4:29-30).

Scholars agree that the 400 years of affliction/persecution started when Yitzchak was persecuted by Ishmael. It was at this time Yitzchak was acknowledged as the blessed heir of Avraham via the casting out of Hagar and Ishmael. But exactly when was this? As noted in the above tabulation no specific date is given all we have is the superficial reference to the weaning of Yitzchak. I believe it is still a Middle Eastern custom for children to be weaned when they are between 2-3 years old, so we can say that Yitzchak was at least this age. Also we know that there was 25 years from the calling of Avram to the birth of Yitzchak (Items 1- 5 on the tabulation). This leaves 5 years to be filled and as we have just said Yitzchak was at least 2 maybe 3 years old when weaned. Now let us examine closely the wording of Gen.21:8,

And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned.

It says the child was weaned inferring sometime after weaning. Thus the addition of 5 years between items 5 and 6 of the tabulation is reasonable.

Conclusion

Not only does the above resolve an *apparent* ambiguity between verses but also reveals the true cause of the confusion – the abrogation of the original text by man's direct interference. It is gratifying that this article again proves the infallibility of Scripture.

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