How Long Were the Children of Israel in Egypt?

March 20, 2025 · PM · https://letgodbetrue.com/sermons/2025/how-long-were-the-children-of-israel-in-egypt/

Galatians 3:17 and Exodus 12:40 and Related Verses

13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that 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;**
14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.
Genesis 15:13-14

40 Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was **four hundred and thirty years.**
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.
Exodus 12:40-41

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.**
7 And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place.
Acts 7:6-7

3.And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was f**our hundred and thirty years** after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.
Galatians 3:17

Analysis and Conclusions

1. Paul in Galatians 3:14-18 taught the law of Moses was given to Israel 430 years after God's promise of Gentile blessing of justification by faith was given t Abraham.

2. The promise to Abraham of Gentile blessing of justification by faith in Christ, which is found in the blessing of all families of the earth in Abraham (Gal 3:8), was made in conjunction with Abraham's call from Haran at the age of seventy-five (Gen 12:1-4).

3. Stephen taught in his sermon before being stoned, quoting Genesis 15:13-14, that the seed of Abraham would sojourn, be brought into bondage, and be evilly treated, 400 years (Acts 7:6-7).

4. The seed of Abraham, by God's reckoning out of his eight sons, was Isaac (Matt 1:1-2; Acts 7:8; Rom 9:7; Gal 4:28), though Abraham wanted it to be Ishmael at times (Gen 17:18).

5. Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah when Abraham was 100 years old (Gen 21:5; Rom 4:19), or twenty-five (25) years after God's covenant promise made to him at 75.

6. However, Isaac was not formally or officially recognized as the promised and true seed of Abraham until his

weaning and the rejection of Ishmael (Gen 21:8-12; Gal 4:28-30).

7. The children of Israel departed from Egypt before the giving of the law at Sinai by about two months (Num 33:3 compared to Ex 16:1; 19:1), so when measuring by years we may accurately and confidently say that both events occurred the same year.

8. If the call of Abram occurred 430 years before the law, and the weaning of Isacc occurred 400 years before Israel departed Egypt, the two end events being only two months apart, then Isaac was weaned when five years old, for there were only twenty-five (25) years from Abram's call to the birth of Isaac.

9. Weaning, or at least its celebration, at five years of age is very reasonable: (a) it must be so by the history and math, (b) some cultures nurse up to seven years of age with ending ages of 3-4 being very common, (c) Sarah had thought she would never nurse, and then did so by supernatural blessing, so she would not have cut it short (Gen 18:11- 12; 21:7), (d) compare Hannah taking Samuel to Shiloh after weaning (I Sam 1:22-24); and (e) God counted age 0-5 as infancy (Lev 27:6).

10. Moses wrote in Exodus 12:40 that the children of Israel sojourned for 430 years. Sojourn. 1. intr. To make a temporary stay in a place; to remain or reside for a time. To live temporarily as a stranger or pilgrim in a place that is not yours (Gen 12:10; 37:1; 47:4; Ex 6:4; Acts 13:17; Heb 11:8-10).

11. The name "children of Israel," from Exodus 12:40 above, may/must be applied to more than Jacob's children: (a) Bible history and math require it, and context is our master; (b) Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are included by simple synecdoche (Bullinger); (c) Levi is said to do things Abraham did (Heb 7:9); (d) Abraham is said to do things Abram did (Heb 7:1-9); (e) Abram, Isaac, Jacob all clearly sojourned, though none were literally the children of Israel (Gen 12:10; 20:1; 21:34; 26:3; 32:4; 35:27; 47:9).

12. The period of sojourning must begin with Abram's departure from Haran, when he forfeited any permanent dwelling place, for the 430 years of Galatians 3:17 must match that of Exodus 12:40-41, for they both have the same ending year. Many references have already been given to prove Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob sojourned.

13. The grammatical construction of Exodus 12:40 proves that the children of Israel sojourned for 430 years, but it does not state how long they dwelt in Egypt The clause "who dwelt in Egypt" is enclosed by commas, which makes it a nonrestrictive clause: a clause of additional information that does not affect the rest of the sentence and may be removed without changing the meaning of the main clause. Nonrestrictive clauses may be set off by either commas (as here) or by parentheses.

14. The children of Israel could not have sojourned in Egypt more than 215 years, as the patriarchs had already lived 215 of the 430 years in Canaan before Jacob entered Egypt, for Abraham sojourned 25 years before Isaac was born, Isaac sojourned 60 years before Jacob was born (Gen 25:26), and Jacob sojourned 130 years before entering Egypt (Gen 47:9), so we conclude that 215 years of the 430 had expired before they arrived in Egypt.

15. Modern Bible versions remove sojourning as a separate element from Exodus 12:40 and force Israel to have lived in Egypt for 430 years (EL), contradicting Bible history in general and their own time limitation of Galatians 3:17. This egregious error is one more kindness of God to expose them for us (Jn 10:35; I Cor 1:19-20; 3:18-20).

16. The New King James Version, corrupt as it is for stealing our public domain Bible and its famous name

while making just enough changes to justify its own copyright (IL), removes the two commas in Exodus 12:40), which reduces the strength of the KJV in that text and thus reduces its help for more obscure texts as follows.

17. A harder task is diagramming Genesis 15:13 and Acts 7:6, for their nonrestrictive clauses are not clear like in Exodus 12:40. But we are not moved, for both verses cannot contradict 215 years in Egypt. Rather than using commas, Jones calls the structural figure an introversion, Bullinger calls it an Epitrechon,Anstey does not name the structural figure, but diagrams it just like the other two chronologers.

Genesis 15:13

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.

Acts 7:6

his seed should sojourn in a strange land
and they should bring them into bondage,
and entreat them evil
four hundred years.

18. For further help with Genesis 15:13 and Acts 7:6, we may also appeal to the following verse in each case for its indication Egypt is a subset of the 400 years, for the next verses isolate Egypt within the time frame and attach it to the nonrestrictive phrases (Gen 15:13-14; Acts 7:6-7). Thus, the KJV's internal integrity uses the clarity of Exodus 12:40 to diagram the obscure structure of Genesis 15:13 and Acts 7:6.

19. For Exodus 12:40, the Septuagint and Samaritan versions add, and of their fathers, and, and in the land of Canaan, but we do not need their help, for our KJV commas are more than sufficient, and the original edition of the KJV in 1611 had those key commas to show how we are to fit all the verses together into a consistent whole.

20. Josephus, in his Antiquities of the Jews (Book II; Chapter 15; Paragraph 2), confirms both the 430 years from Abraham entering Canaan to the Exodus and the 215 yearsof Israel in Egypt, but we do not need his help, for we trust our KJV Bible without him.

21. Sources used here for comfort and confirmation, since the Bible texts that control the interpretation, Galatians 3:17and Exodus 12:40, are clear enough, were the three chronologers Martin Anstey, Philip Mauro, and Floyd Nolen Jones. Philip Mauro wrote that all chronologers from Ussher down to his day agreed with the above. Henry Bullinger's, Figures of Speech Used in the Bible, also confirmed our conclusions.