

THE DURATION OF THE ISRAELITE SOJOURN IN EGYPT

PAUL J. RAY, JR.
Berrien Springs, Michigan 49103

From possibly as early as the LXX (ca. 250-150 B.C.¹), there has been a tradition that the 430 years in Exod 12:40 (or apparently rounded to the 400 years of Gen 15:13) represent only 215 actual years of Israelite sojourn in Egypt, with the other 215 years representing the sojourn in Canaan. The Hebrew MT of both of the above verses, however, appears to indicate that the total years constituted the full period of time of the sojourn in Egypt prior to the Exodus.

The Jewish historian Josephus (first century A.D.) provides a divided testimony--one time apparently following the LXX, and thus associating the rise of Joseph to power as vizier of Egypt with the Hyksos (Dynasties 15-16, ca. 1730-1575 B.C.²), and another time following the MT.³ Rabbinic tradition as reflected in *Seder 'Olam* (second century A.D.)⁴ and Rashi (eleventh century A.D.)⁵ allows but 210 years for the sojourn in Egypt. The Midrash is more vague.⁶

The NT also appears to be divided on the subject. In Acts 7:6-7, Stephen uses essentially the same wording as the Genesis passage, which appears to allocate a full and literal 400 years to the Israelite sojourn in Egypt. In Gal 3:17, however, Paul seems to indicate that the 430 years extended from Abraham to the giving of the Law,⁷

¹ I.e., if MSS B and h, which carry this tradition, reflect that early a form of the text.

² Josephus, *Ant.* 2.15.2; and *Ag. Apion* 1.14 (trans. Thackeray, in LCL).

³ Josephus, *Ant.* 2.9.1.

⁴ Edgar Frank, *Talmudic and Rabbinical Chronology* (New York, 1956), pp. 11, 19. For a list of those who hold this position in rabbinic tradition, cf. H. H. Rowley, *From Josephus to Joshua* (London, 1950), pp. 67-69.

⁵ Rashi, *Pentateuch with Rashi's Commentary*, vol. I, ed. A. M. Silbermann and trans. M. Rosenbaum and A. M. Silbermann, (London, 1945), Part I, pp. 61-62, and 2, p. 61.

⁶ *Midrash Rabbah*, trans. H. Freedman and M. Simon (London, 1939), I: 373.

⁷ Leon Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1970), p. 88, points out that Gal 3:16 says it was "not only to Abraham but to 'his seed'" which the

rather than representing the totality of the sojourn in Egypt. In this, he appears to be following the LXX of Exod 12:40.⁸ Acts 13:17-20 is a further NT passage that is sometimes seen as having a bearing on this question though its reference to "about 450 years till Samuel the prophet pertains to a period of time subsequent to the Sojourn."⁹

Among the Early-Church Fathers there is also division of opinion on the interpretation of the chronology in these biblical references. For instance, Tertullian supports the short chronology, whereas Hippolytus favors the long one.¹¹

Since different versions of the OT have carried these two traditions, and commentators have aligned themselves accordingly to one tradition or the other, it is necessary to examine the various ancient texts, in order to discover the preferable reading. It is also necessary to take a look at the history, archaeology, and other biblical data which may have some bearing on the text, so as to ascertain the best setting for the events dealt with in Gen 15:13-21 and Exod 12:40.

Depending on the interpretation given to the 400 (430) years, the events of Gen 15 happened either during Middle Bronze Age I (2200-1950 B.C.) or during Middle Bronze Age IIA (1950-1800 B.C.)--or more specifically, about 2095 B.C. or 1880 B. C., respectively. Therefore, Abraham came to Canaan either during the Ur III Dynasty (ca. 2112-2004 B.C.) or during the First Dynasty of Babylon (ca. 1894-1595 B.C.).¹² (Through the years considerable attention has

covenant promises were spoken; and indeed, just before Jacob went down into Egypt, they were spoken to him for the last time (Gen 46:2-4)--exactly 430 years before the Law was given, if the long chronology is allowed.

⁸ This is disputed by Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1953), p. 136, n. 8.

⁹ Harold w. Hoehner, "The Duration of the Egyptian Bondage," *BSac* 126 (1969): 313-314; Jack R. Riggs, "The Length of Israel's Sojourn in Egypt," *Grace Theological Journal* 12 (1972): 29-30; James R. Battenfield, "A Consideration of the Identity of the Pharaoh of Genesis 47," *JETS* 15 (1972): 79. On the basis of MSS B, **Ⲁ**: A, and C, the text should indicate, according to B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort a, period of "about 450 years" (or more precisely 447 years)--i.e., 400 years of bondage in Egypt, 40 years in the wilderness, and 7 years of conquest of Canaan. See Westcott and Hort, *The New Testament in Original Greek* (New York, 1948), p. 276.

¹⁰ Tertullian, *An Answer to the Jews* 2 (ANF, 3:153).

¹¹ Hippolytus, *Expository Treatise Against the Jews* 6 (ANF, 5:220).

¹² The foregoing dates are based on the Middle chronology for the beginning of Hammurabi's reign (i.e., 1792 B.C.), and follow J. A. Brinkman, "Mesopotamian

been devoted to the date of the Exodus, and I have obviously opted for an early dating. On this point, see my further discussion in "Excursus A" at the end of this article.)

It will be pertinent to begin our analysis with the two OT passages which are the most relevant to our discussion, Exod 12:40 and Gen 15:13-21, noted at the outset of this article. The former is given within a chronological statement in the context of the account of the Exodus itself, and the latter is in the setting of God's ratification of his covenant with Abram, which included both the confirming of the promises of the seed (vss. 13-17) and the land grant (vss. 18-21).¹⁵

I. Textual Evidence on Exodus 12:40

In Exod 12:40, the extent of Israel's sojourn in Egypt is given in the MT as 430 years (the more exact amount for the round number of Gen 15:13).¹⁴ The major manuscript evidence for the LXX,¹⁵ plus the Samaritan Pentateuch,¹⁶ supports the addition of "and their fathers" to the phrase "the children of Israel," as do a number of other ancient versions.¹⁷

As for the time period itself, the 430 years are divided between Canaan and Egypt in at least two manuscripts of the LXX (LXX^{Bh}) and in an obelus of the Syro-Hexapla, as well as in all known manuscripts of the Samaritan Pentateuch. The Vulgate, Peshitta, and the Targum follow the MT. Although when the Samaritan

Chronology of the Historical Period" in A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia* (Chicago, 1964), pp. 336-337.

¹³Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Meaning of the Animal Rite in Genesis 15," *JSOT* 19 (1981): 67-70. See also M. Weinfeld, "B^erith," *TDOT* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1975), 2: 9-260; and "The Covenant of Grant in the OT in the Ancient Near East," *JAOS* 90 (1970): 196-200.

¹⁴The ancient versions follow the MT for the most part in Gen 15:13-21. However, the LXX (all MSS except 82*) adds the phrase "and humble them," to the list of things that will happen to Abram's seed during the 400 years (300 years, MS 79*). There are a few other minor variations that also affect the meaning of this passage very little, if at all. In essence, it is only Exod 12:40 that has a bearing textually on the problem under consideration.

¹⁵MSS AFM a-tv-c₂. The fact that the various manuscripts place this phrase in two different locations in this verse would seem to indicate its secondary character.

¹⁶MSS ABCD⁴EFG¹HINPQW³X¹BDCF (=) dln.

¹⁷Armenian, Bohairic, Ethiopic, Syro-Hexapla, Eusebius-Chron.

Pentateuch and the LXX coincide they are usually considered to be preferable to the MT, the manuscripts in this case do not reflect the exact same original. They are divided in terms of their order of elements, with LXX^B reading "in the land of Egypt and in the land; of Canaan," whereas LXX^h reads "in the land of Canaan and Egypt. It is the latter reading (but with a second "the land of") which occurs in all known manuscripts of the Samaritan Pentateuch.

Interestingly, LXX^B also originally added an extra five years to, the sojourn, here and in vs. 41, whereas the other LXX manuscripts, as well as the other ancient versions, are agreed on 430 years. This deviation of LXX^B and the afore-mentioned one suggest that LXX^B is evidently not to be taken as the original and better reading of this verse. Table 1 gives an overview of the textual data on Exod 12:40:

TABLE 1

Summary of Textual Data on Exod 12:40

Variant	MT	Samaritan	Josephus	LXX	Other Ancient Versions
Egypt (only)	All known MSS	--	Ant. 2.9.1	AFM a-gi- tv-c ₂	Arm, Bo, Aeth, O. Lat ^z Tg, Pesh
Canaan & Egypt	--	All known MSS	--	h	--
Egypt & Canaan	--	--	Ant. 2.15.2	B	Syro- Hexapla (obelus)

As can be seen from these data in Table 1, the majority of the ancient texts lend support to the long chronology (for the sojourn in Egypt alone). While this fact does not, of course, provide conclusive support for that chronology, it does indicate a direction of probability as to the original. The LXX^{Bh} and Samaritan Pentateuch, readings seem, therefore, to be Midrashic exegesis, as is Rashi.¹⁸

¹⁸ U. Cassuto. *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem. 1967). pp. 85-86. Indeed, Rashi is somewhat dependent on the LXX (cf.

2. *Interpretational Problems in Genesis 15:13-21*

With regard to Gen 15:13-21, there are two interpretational matters that have a specific bearing on this investigation; namely, (1) the question of who is the oppressor of the descendants of Abraham for the "400 years" (vs. 13); and (2) the significance of the term "fourth generation" in designating the time of return from captivity (vs. 16).

Who Oppresses Whom?

Although Abraham and his descendants were sojourners (*ger*) in both Canaan and Egypt (Gen 21:34; 26:3; Ps 105:23), there is no record of their being servants to the Canaanites, or being in any way oppressed by them. In fact, these patriarchs were treated well and were allowed to travel freely throughout the land.

It has been pointed out by those favoring the short chronology for the Egyptian sojourn (i.e., 215 years, with the previous 215 years in Canaan) that Isaac was "persecuted" by Ishmael, that Jacob fled from Esau, and that Joseph was sold as a slave by his brothers.¹⁹ However, these events or situations were intra-family quarrels and hardly qualify for the expression "they will oppress them." That expression requires an entirely different entity as the oppressor (cf. the inverted parallelism of vs. 13). The Egyptians are the only ones who would appear truly to qualify for this role.

A further indication that the oppression must relate to the Egyptian sojourn emerges from the fact of God's promise to Abraham in vs. 15 that Abraham would not be involved in these tragedies, but would die in peace. Abraham lived for a century after the events described in Gen 15, Jacob and Esau being 15 years old when he died (Gen 25:7, 26). Oppression to the patriarch's descendants would

Rashi, 2:61). It is also interesting to note that it is an anachronism to call Abraham, Isaac, and even Jacob himself "children of Israel and their fathers" (as in the LXX and Samaritan Pentateuch) before Jacob had sons at Haran or had received his new name on his way back to Canaan. This could, however, have added only about 33 years (1913-1880 B.C.)--or the time of Jacob's return to Canaan until the time when he went down to Egypt--if their sojourn was also "in Canaan." (The writer is indebted to William H. Shea for this observation.)

¹⁹ Cf. Martin Anstey, *The Romance of Bible Chronology* (London, 1913), 1:114, 117; also Francis D. Nichol, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 1 (Washington, D.C., 1953): 314.

have been oppression to the patriarch himself; and thus, whether oppression had come from his own family or from outsiders Abraham would have had a difficult time dying in peace if, indeed, as the short chronology necessitates, there was already oppression to the patriarch's descendants during his own lifetime.

Problem of the Four Generations

"And in the fourth generation they will return here" (Gen 15:16). The time reference in vs. 13 is the "400 years"; therefore, the meaning in vs. 16 appears to be four generations of 100 years each. This length for a generation does not occur elsewhere in the OT, but this is possibly so because people in patriarchal times were recognized as living to be 100 years of age and older, as a general rule.²⁰ However, there is a more simple solution to this matter. The Hebrews, like other ancient peoples, dated long periods of time in terms of lifetimes,²¹ or the cycle of a person's lifetime,²² the word *dor* coming from a root meaning "to go in a circle."²³ This is to be contrasted with the word *toledot* which is also translated as "generations," but in the biological sense of descendants.²⁴ Therefore, *dor* should be seen as a circle or cycle of time, rather than generation(s), as both etymology and context would suggest.²⁵

Starting from at least the time of Rashi,²⁶ and using the traditional definition of a generation to mean from the time of a man's birth to the birth of his offspring, those who have favored the short

²⁰ K. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, vol. I, trans. James Martin, in *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1952), p. 216.

²¹ D. N. Freedman and J. Lundbom, "dor," *TDOT* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1978). 3:170, 174; W. F. Albright, "Abram the Hebrew: A New Archaeological Interpretation," *BASOR*, no. 163 (1961), p.p. 50-51; and Robert Baker Girdlestone, *Synonyms the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1948), p. 315.

²² R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., "Dor," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago, 1980), 1:186.

²³ William Gesenius, *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*, trans. Samuel P. Tregelles (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1982), p. 193.

²⁴ William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1971), p. 387.

²⁵ Cognates in Akkadian (*daru*) and Arabic (*dara*) also bear this out (cf. Freedman and Lundbom, pp. 170, 172).

²⁶ Rashi, 1:61.

chronology have pointed to Exod 6:16-27, which would indicate four generations from Levi to Moses.²⁷ Furthermore, a comparison with another four-generation genealogy in Num 26:57-62 would seem to strengthen their case. On the basis of these two apparently rather weighty pieces of evidence, it would seem that 400 (430) years would be far too long a period of time between Jacob's descent into Egypt and the Exodus, or the time or number of generations between the leaving of Canaan (obviously into Egypt, by either interpretation) and the return into Canaan.

There are indications, on the other hand, that both of the above four-generation genealogies of Moses are stylized and incomplete. Exod 6:14-27, which gives genealogies for Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, begins by saying, "These are the heads of their fathers' houses," a technical term for a collection of families (or more accurately, kin-groups) denominated by a common ancestor, i.e., a lineage.²⁸ Also included are the names of such sons as were founders of families: *mispahot* (i.e., lineage segments). Thus, stated in another way, the names included in this genealogy are "the heads [*ra'se*] of the father's-houses of the Levites according to their families" (vs. 25b--not each individual. The heads of families, thus, are: Levi (actually the tribal or lineage founder), the first generation; Kohath (with his brothers Gershon and Merari), the second generation; and Amram (and his brothers Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel), the third generation. However, this is where the heads of families conclude. The name Amram of vs. 20 may be a conflation of the name of the Amram who was the head of one of the third-generation families of Levi, with the name of a later Amram who was the father of Moses "and Aaron."²⁹ There was a tendency among the Levites to name their sons after their forefathers (cf. 1 Chr 6:7-13; Luke 1:5, 59-61). Thus, several generations appear to have been telescoped here, with

²⁷ This assumes the validity of basing the fulfillment of this verse on Levi's genealogy.

²⁸ Keil and Delitzsch, 1:469.

²⁹ Those listed as sons of Izhar and Uzziel, vss. 21-22, are possibly several generations later, the term "son" thus indicating a later descendant, with the most important names listed first in that they appear in current events surrounding the Exodus (cf. Lev 10:4; Num 3:30; 16:1). For examples of this phenomenon elsewhere, cf. Gen 11:26,32; 12:4; 46:16-18, 24-25.

Amram, the father of Moses and Aaron, probably being at least the grandson of the original Amram, if not even a later descendant.³⁰ (See Table 2.) According to Num 3:27-28, after the numbering of people in the wilderness in the second year after the Exodus, the Kohathites were divided into four families (*mispahot*). These families of the Amramites, Izharites, Hebronites, and Uzzielites consisted of 8600 men and boys (not including women and girls), of which about a fourth (or 2150) were Amramites. This would have given Moses and Aaron that incredibly large a number of brothers and brothers' sons (brothers' daughters, sisters, and their daughters not being reckoned), if the same Amram, the son of Kohath, were both the head of the family of the Amramites and their own father.³¹ Obviously, such could not have been the case.

The genealogy of Num 26:57-62 is also incomplete (possibly representing a harmonization with Exod 6). After the list of eight families (*mispahot*), there is a break at vs. 58. Again Levi, Kohath, and Amram are first-through-third generations, respectively. Jochebed is not the daughter of Levi, but rather a daughter of Levi--that is, "Levite" (cf. Exod 2:1; the Hebrew of the two verses is the same *bat Levi*).

Further evidence pertinent to the Levi genealogies may be found in the fact that the genealogies of Judah (1 Chr 2:1-20) and Ephraim (Num 26:35-36; 1 Chr 7:20-27) indicate seven and eight generations, respectively, 52 for the same or a slightly lesser time period than that encompassed in the four-generation genealogies of Levi in Exod 6:16-27 and Num 26:57-62. At the very end of each of these other genealogies, we find reference to several contemporaneous individuals from the three tribes. Thus, these more-extended genealogies of Judah and Ephraim would seem to indicate incompleteness in the Levi genealogies.

³⁰ An alternative view is that there is only one Amram, thus leaving the parents of Moses and Aaron unnamed; cf. W. H. Green, "Primeval Chronology," *BSac* 47 (1890): 293.

³¹ Keil and Delitzsch, 1:470.

³² The genealogical comparisons of this section of the paper (including Table 2) reflect only the data given in the biblical text. I am not attempting here to do a thorough historical reconstruction of these genealogies, which would of necessity include all instances of genealogical fluidity; cf. Robert R. Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World* (New Haven, 1977), pp. 27-36.

My reconstruction of the genealogical data is summarized in Table 2, and further elaboration is provided in Excursus B at the end of this article.

TABLE 2
Summary of Genealogical Data

Gen., Num26:35-36 and I Chr 7:20-27	Exod 6:16-27	I Chr 2:1-20
1 Joseph	Levi	Judah
2 Ephraim	<i>Kohath</i>	<i>Perez</i>
3 <i>Shuthelah Becher Tahan</i> (Bered)	<i>Amram</i>	<i>Hezron</i>
4 Eran & Tahath Laadan	?	Ram <i>Caleb</i>
5 Eleadah Ammihud	Amram = Jochebed	Amminadab <i>Hur</i>
6 Tahath Elishamat*	Aaron* = Elisheba	Nahshon* Uri
7 Zabad Nun*		Bezaleel*
8 Shuthelah Joshua*		
9 Ephraim		
10 Ezer & Elead & Beriah		
11 Rephah & Resheph		
12 Telah		

*Contemporaries during the Exodus and after.

Italics indicate founders of families.

3. *Historical Setting*

In the previous two sections, we have dealt with the biblical and textual data as well as the interpretational problems which accompany them in presenting a case for the long chronology. It was found that these data allow for such a reconstruction. In the present section we deal briefly with historical and archaeological data that have significant implications for the "long-chronology" view presented here. These relate to the historical setting for Abraham and for Joseph, and to the time of the oppression of the Israelites in Egypt prior to the Exodus.

Abraham

The long chronology for the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt would place the birth of Abraham ca. 2170 B.C., and thus would locate the events of his first year in Canaan, his visit to Egypt, and the events of Gen 15 ca. 2095 B.C. The basic question to be asked here

is this: Are the conditions in Canaan and Egypt at that time compatible with the narratives in Genesis? Indeed, the case seems to be such that we can answer in the affirmative.

Both Ur and Haran were flourishing at the time. Shechem and Bethel were uninhabited,³³ but the Jordan valley was well populated.³⁴ In the Negev, there was settlement from the twenty-first to the nineteenth centuries B.C., but not before or afterwards (cf. Gen 20:1, 24:62; 28:20).³⁵ However, in the central hill country there was apparently a sparseness of population, reflected by the fact that Abraham could move freely between Shechem and Beersheba,³⁶ where he could pitch his tent and graze his flock as he pleased, as did Isaac and Jacob. Archaeological findings reveal the same condition particularly in the interior of Canaan, and further indicate that during the nineteenth century the cities west of the Jordan were again occupied.³⁷ It is interesting, moreover, that Asiatics during Egypt's First Intermediate Period (ca. 2181-2022 B.C.) entered the Delta

³³ On Shechem, see G. Ernest Wright, *Shechem: The Biography of a Biblical City*, (New York, 1964), pp. 110-112; and William H. Shea, "Famines in the Early History of Egypt and Syro-Palestine" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1976), pp. 151-152. On Bethel, see W. F. Albright and James L. Kelso, "The Excavation of Bethel (1934-1960)," *AASOR* 39 (1968): 10, 21, 45. The conclusion is valid if indeed Bethel is Beitin: cf. David Livingston, "Location of Biblical Bethel and Ai Reconsidered," *WTJ* 33 (1970): 20-44, and "Traditional Site of Bethel Questioned," *WTJ* 34 (1971): 39-50.

³⁴ M. Ibrahim, James A. Sauer, K. Yassine, "The East Jordan Valley Survey, 1975," *BASOR*, no. 222 (1976): 51-54.

³⁵ Nelson Glueck, "The Age of Abraham in the Negev," *BA* 18 (1955): 6-9; "Exploring Southern Palestine (The Negev)," *BAR* 1 (1959): 4-5; and *Rivers in the Desert* (New York, 1959), pp. 60-101. Cf. William G. Dever, "The EB IV-MB I Horizon in Transjordan and Southern Palestine," *BASOR*, no. 210 (1973), pp. 37-63; also R. Cohen and W. G. Dever, "Preliminary Report of the Second Season of the 'Central Negev Highlands Project,'" *BASOR*, no. 236 (1979), pp. 42, 57-58; and "Preliminary Report of the Third and Final Season of the 'Central Negev Highlands Project,'" *BASOR*, no. 243 (1981), p. 61.

³⁶ Both Gen 12:6 and 21:31 use the term *maqom* ("place") rather than *'ir* ("city") for these sites, as does Gen 28:19 for Bethel at the time Jacob went through on his way to Haran. This terminology indicates that there was no inhabited city at these sites at those particular times (i.e., MBI for the former, and MBIIA for the latter).

³⁷ G. Ernest Wright, *Biblical Archaeology* (Philadelphia, 1962), p. 47, and Yohanan Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography*, trans. A. F. Rainey (Philadelphia, 1979), pp. 144-147

region with relative ease.³⁸ Thus, it would not have been difficult for Abraham to enter the unguarded borders of Egypt at that time.

Joseph

If the long chronology puts Abraham in Canaan ca. 2095 B.C., then it also puts Joseph in Egypt during the Twelfth Dynasty (ca. 1991-1782 B.C.), instead of (as with Josephus and tradition) during the Hyksos Period. Likewise, it brings Jacob into Egypt ca. 1880 B.C. Again, it is necessary to see if this period correlates with what we know from the narratives in Genesis and Exodus.

From this point of view, the Beni-Hasan Asiatics (depicted on a wall of the tomb of the nomarch Khnum-hotep III) reflect the time of Jacob and Joseph, rather than that of Abraham.³⁹ There is also mention of famine during the Twelfth Dynasty.⁴⁰ These circumstances correlate with the biblical evidence.

According to Gen 37:2, Joseph was sold into slavery and brought down into Egypt when he was 17 years old; this would be, according to my suggested reconstruction, in 1902 B.C., or late in the reign of Amenemhat II (1929-1895 B.C.). There is concurrence with Egyptian history in that during the Twelfth Dynasty slavery of Syro-Palestinians was growing.⁴¹ Joseph was purchased by an Egyptian official named Potiphar (Gen 37:36), and was made a domestic servant or steward, something which was quite common during the Middle Kingdom (Dynasties XI-XII, ca. 2022-1782 B.C.).⁴²

When Joseph became vizier to Pharaoh,⁴³ he was given Pharaoh's second chariot (Gen 41:43; cf. 46:29). This fact may seem to pose a problem in that the Hyksos brought the horse (cf. Gen 47:17) and chariot to Egypt for use in war.⁴⁴ However, a horse burial

³⁸ Alan Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs* (Oxford, 1961), pp. 109-110.

³⁹ Percy E. Newberry; *Beni Hasan*, Part 1 (London, 1893), pp. 2-3.

⁴⁰ Shea, "Famines," pp. 69-71, 171-173; Gardiner, p. 129.

⁴¹ William C. Hayes, ed., *A Papyrus of the Late Middle Kingdom in the Brooklyn Museum* (Brooklyn, 1972), pp. 87, 92 and passim; *ANET*, pp. 553-554.

⁴² Charles F. Aling, *Egypt and Bible History* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1981), pp. 30-34-36.

⁴³ See J. Vergote, *Joseph en Egypte* (Louvain, 1959), p. 102.

⁴⁴ J. A. Thompson, *The Bible and Archaeology*, 3d ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1982), p. 44. For doubts concerning this longstanding argument, cf. John Van Seters,

antedating the Hyksos Period has been found at Buhen in Nubia from ca. 1875 B.C.⁴⁵ The wording "second chariot" in Gen 41:43 may suggest, of course, that chariots were uncommon.⁴⁶

Joseph's marriage to the daughter of a priest of On (Heliopolis) as arranged by the Pharaoh (Gen 41:45), is also significant. On was the center of worship of the sun-god Re, and Joseph's father-in-law was no doubt a priest of Re. Although the Hyksos did not suppress the worship of Re, they venerated Seth, who was their primary deity. If Joseph had lived during the Hyksos Period, he probably would have received a wife from the family of a priest of Seth, rather than of Re.⁴⁷ It is also possible that Joseph's land reforms during the famine (Gen 47:20-26) may be connected with the breaking of the dominance of the great nomarchs of the land by Pharaoh Sesostris III (ca. 1878-1843 B.C.) at this very time.⁴⁸

A further argument put forward for the view that Joseph was ruler of Egypt during the Hyksos Period is that the Hyksos capital Avaris was in the Delta, and this is coupled with the fact that Joseph told his father to dwell in the land of Goshen so that he could be near him (Gen 45:10).⁴⁹ However, the land of Goshen is spoken of as if it were in a part of Egypt other than where the Pharaoh and Joseph resided (see especially Gen 46:29, 31, telling of Joseph's going to Goshen to meet his father, and then going elsewhere to Pharaoh). During the Twelfth Dynasty, the capital was at It-towy (Lisht), a site compatible with the conditions of the narrative, which require a capital neither too near to, nor too far from, Goshen.⁵⁰ There was also a secondary capital, possibly at Qantir.⁵¹ (Both the "land of Ramses" [Gen 47:11] and the storage cities of Pithom

The Hyksos: A New Investigation (New Haven, 1966), p. 185, and T. Save-Soderbergh, "The Hyksos Rule in Egypt," *JEA* 37 (1951): 59-60.

⁴⁵ Walter B. Emery, *Egypt in Nubia* (London, 1965), p. 107.

⁴⁶ Aling, p. 45. However, a viable alternative is "second" in the order of procession.

⁴⁷ Aling, pp. 45-46; d. also Wood, p. 38, n. 45.

⁴⁸ Battenfield, pp. 82-84.

⁴⁹ Nichol, 1:462.

⁵⁰ Battenfield, p. 81.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82. See also Manfred Bietak, *Avaris and Piramesse: Archaeological Exploration in the Eastern Nile Delta* (London, 1979), pp. 228, 237-241.

[probably Tell er-Retabeh]⁵² and Per Ramses [probably Qantir],⁵³ which were built well before the birth of Moses,⁵⁴ are probably insertions of later names by a copyist to identify Goshen and the storage cities to readers who would not know the original locations.⁵⁵)

As can be seen from the above reconstruction, the Israelite Patriarchal period spans the transition between MBI and MBII. When MBI came to be recognized as a discrete historical period, it was suggested by Nelson Glueck and W. F. Albright that this was the period of the Patriarchs.⁵⁶ Since then, this conclusion has been disputed by Thomas L. Thompson and J. Van Seters.⁵⁷ A recent survey of the archaeological data,⁵⁸ however, supports the position of those initial conclusions for MBI as the period of settlement in the Negev by Abraham and Isaac, but it also suggests, further, that the Jacob narratives belong to MBIIA. It would seem, then, that these archaeological data support a biblical chronological framework based on the long chronology.

The Time of Oppression

We turn our attention next to the time of the Oppression of the Israelites after the death of Joseph, when there arose over Egypt a new king who "did not know Joseph" (Exod 1:8). In Hebrew, the verb *qwm* plus the preposition 'al often means "to rise against" (cf. Deut 19:11; 28:7; Judg 9:18; et al.), and as such would not indicate a

⁵² Alan Gardiner, "The Delta Residence of the Ramessides," *JEA* 5 (1918): 268. T. Eric Peet, *Egypt and the Old Testament* (Liverpool, 1924), pp. 87-91.

⁵³ Bietak, pp. 230, 268-271, 273, 278-283.

⁵⁴ John Rea, "The Time of the Oppression and the Exodus," *JETS* 3 (1960): 62.

⁵⁵ Nichol, 1:473, 497-498; Aling, p. 95.

⁵⁶ Nelson Glueck, "The Age of Abraham in the Negev," pp. 6-9; *Rivers in the Desert*, p. 68; W. F. Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine* (Gloucester, 1971), pp. 82-83; "Abraham the Hebrew," pp. 36-54.

⁵⁷ Thomas L. Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives* (New York, 1974), pp. 182-183; and John Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven, 1975), pp. 104-112.

⁵⁸ J. J. Bimson, "Archaeological Data and the Dating of the Patriarchs," in *Essays the Patriarchal Narratives*, ed. A. R. Millard and D. J. Wiseman (Winona Lake, Ind., 1980), pp. 53-89.

peaceable accession to the throne of a nation. This statement would, therefore, fit more precisely with a situation in which the Hyksos or other outsiders were taking over the Egyptian throne than it would with the rise of a native Egyptian Dynasty.⁵⁹ Although possibly, as is sometimes suggested, it could refer to Ahmose I (ca. 1575-1553 B.C.), the first king of the Eighteenth Dynasty (ca. 1575-1318 B.C.), in taking back a throne that was rightfully his, other considerations seem to go contrary to this. For instance, in Exod 1:9-10, the new king says: "Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they also join themselves unto our enemies and fight against us, and go up from the land."

This statement may well have been made long before Israel finished multiplying to the population peak which they reached just prior to the Exodus. The Israelites were, in fact, never more numerous and mighty than the native Egyptians; but they were indeed so, in comparison to the Hyksos, who were never very numerous in Egypt, and who ruled by holding key positions rather than by numbers. If the new Pharaoh "who knew not Joseph" was a Hyksos ruler, he could expect war with the Egyptians at any time; and since Joseph and the Hebrews had been on friendly terms with the Egyptians, he could also expect the Hebrews to join themselves to the Egyptians.⁶⁰

There are other reasons which support the suggestion that it was the Hyksos who began the oppression of Israel. For instance, if Ahmose had been the Pharaoh of the oppression, it would seem illogical that the Egyptians would fear the Israelites after the Egyptians' successful expulsion of the Hyksos, pushing them back into Palestine and even besieging them there. Moreover, if the Hyksos had enslaved the Hebrews, the latter would certainly have had no desire to leave with the Hyksos; and since the Jews were on friendly terms with the Egyptians, a clear distinction would be made.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Rea, p. 60.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 61.

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 60-61.

It seems, therefore, that the Hyksos were the ones who enslaved the Hebrews.⁶² They forced them to build the storage cities Pithom and Per-Ramses (cf. Exod 1:11), the latter of which (if at Qantir) has finds from the Hyksos Period and earlier (associating it with Avaris) and which also has finds from the Nineteenth Dynasty (ca. 1318-1209 B.C.), including bricks with the name "Ramses," as well as ostraca which have the name "Per-Ramses." These finds correlate well with the literary sources concerning Per-Ramses.⁶³

There is no need, then, to try to circumvent the lack of Eighteenth-Dynasty remains at Qantir,⁶⁴ for it was not during this period, but rather during the Hyksos Period, that the Hebrews were forced to build these cities. The Hyksos oppression, therefore, probably began about 1730 B.C.⁶⁵ The difference between that date and 1450 B.C., the date of the Exodus, is 280 years. When 40 years for the wilderness wanderings are added, the time is 320 years--or "in the fourth generation or cycle of time" (cf. Gen 15:16), when Israel turned to Canaan.

Indeed, an even earlier, but lesser period of oppression can be seen as existing at the beginning of the reign of Amenemhat III (1842-1797 B.C.), or during a possible coregency between him and his father Sesostri III,⁶⁶ since this was the approximate time that Asiatic slaves appeared in Egypt.⁶⁷ This oppression may be dated to ca. 1850 B.C., in fulfillment of the 400 years of Gen 15:13,⁶⁸ with a more intense period of oppression during the Hyksos domination, as mentioned above. Subsequent to the Hyksos domination, the

⁶² If the tradition in Josephus is correct, the Hyksos did make some people slaves; cf. *Ag. Apion* 1.14.

⁶³ Aling, pp. 66-69; d. Shea, "Exodus," pp. 231-232.

⁶⁴ Bietak, pp. 236, 268.

⁶⁵ Rea, p. 61. Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, p. 165; ANET, pp. 252-253.

⁶⁶ G. Goyon, *Nouvelles Inscriptions rupestres du Wadi Hammamat* (Paris, 1957), p. 22; James Henry Breasted, *A History of the Ancient Egyptians* (London, 1908), p.160; and W. K. Simpson, "Historical and Lexical Notes on the New Series of Hammamat Inscriptions," *JNES* 18 (1959): 20-37; and William J. Murnane, *Ancient Egyptian Coregencies* (Chicago, 1977), pp. 9-13, 228-229.

⁶⁷ Georges Posener, "Les Asiatiques in Egypte sous les XII^e et XIII^e dynasties," *Syria* 34 (1957): 146; Hayes, "Papyrus," pp. 87 and passim; ANET, pp. 553-554.

⁶⁸ Battenfield, p. 84.

Egyptian rulers of the Eighteenth Dynasty, evidently after a brief period of relaxation from the Hyksos oppression, found it to their advantage to oppress the Hebrews.⁶⁹ Thutmose I (ca. 1532-1518 B.C.) who acceded to the throne in 1532 B.C., would be a likely candidate for the Pharaoh of the death decree,⁷⁰ If we reckon an Exodus of ca. 1450 B.C. According to Exod 1:15-22 and 7:7, this decree was probably issued about half way between the birth of Aaron and the birth of Moses.

4. *Summary and Conclusion*

Ever since the appearance of LXX^{Bh}, with variant translations of Exod 12:40, there has been a division among scholars as whether the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt was 215 (or 210) years long, as the variant reading claims, or 430 years long, as the Hebrew text gives the time period. Although, along with Gen 15:13-21, Exod 12:40 is our primary source, evidences other than the variants of the ancient translations of the Scriptures are needed in order to reach decision with respect to whether the long chronology or the short one for the Israelite sojourn in Egypt is to be preferred.

A comparison of various genealogical data reveals that while on two sons of Joseph, reveal six, seven, and eight generations for the same time period, evidencing that there are some missing generations in the genealogy of Moses. Thus, this genealogy in Exod 6:16-27 should not be taken as support for the 215-year view. The genealogical data favor, instead, a longer time period.

The historical and archaeological evidence also seems to have closer correlation with the biblical data if the 430 years are taken to be the length of the Israelite sojourn in Egypt alone. Especially does the career of Joseph seem to fit well into the Twelfth-Dynasty circumstances in Egypt, with the sojourn and the oppressions varying intensities bridging the reign of Amenemhat III, the Hyksos Period, and the Eighteenth Dynasty. Also, Abraham appears to fit just as well, if not better, into the twenty-first century, than into the nineteenth century. Moreover, not only are the evidences from these various directions compatible with Palestinian and Egyptian

⁶⁹ Rea, p. 61.

⁷⁰ Shea, Exodus, p. 233.

history, but they also seem to provide preferable explanations for--or, at least, to avert--some of the problems that arise in connection with the short chronology (such as the lack of Eighteenth-Dynasty remains at Qantir, and the reference in Num 3:27-28 to 8,600 brothers and cousins of Moses and Aaron).

In short, the various lines of evidence would seem to indicate that the 430 years should be taken at face value for the Israelite sojourn in Egypt. In any event, it seems to me that the case for this particular reconstruction is tenable and defensible, and that it deserves attention as an alternative to the "short-chronology" interpretation.

EXCURSUS A DATE OF THE EXODUS

The dating of the Exodus is very controversial. There are two main periods which have been suggested as fitting best the evidence for this event--one at the end of the Late Bronze Age I, and the other at the end of the Late Bronze Age II. A thirteenth-century date has been favored by most of the scholarly world, with either a low date of ca. 1220 B.C. (cf. W. M. F. Petrie, *Egypt and Israel* [London, Eng., 1911], p. 53) or a high date of ca. 1280 B.C. (cf. W. F. Albright, *From Stone Age to Christianity* [Garden City, N.Y., 1957], p. 256).

However, a fifteenth-century-B.C. date is preferred by other scholars. These scholars, too, hold either to a high date of ca. 1470 B.C. (cf. J. Bimson, "Redating the Exodus and Conquest," *JSOT* 5 [1978]: 144) or a low date of ca. 1445 B.C. (cf. J. W. Jack, *The Date of the Exodus* [Edinburgh, 1925], p. 199).

I have opted for the fifteenth-century "low date," as recently modified to ca. 1450 B.C. by W. H. Shea, "Exodus, Date of the," *ISBE*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1982), 2: 230-238. The dates found throughout my foregoing article are based on this date for the Exodus.

EXCURSUS B THE GENEALOGIES OF EPHRAIM, LEVI, AND JUDAH

In Table 2 in the preceding main article, I have summarized my reconstruction of data from several genealogical lists: for Ephraim (beginning with his father, Joseph) in Num 26:35-36 and I Chr 7:20-27; for Levi in Exod 6:16-27; and for Judah in I Chr 2:1-20. Although it is not my purpose

to provide a detailed analysis, a few of the specifics deserve mention, and this excursus is devoted to them.

Nahshon, the sixth generation from Judah, was still alive in the second year after the Exodus and was at that time the prince or leader (*nasi*; cf. Num 2:3; 7:12) of the tribe of Judah. Aaron married Nahshon's sister Elisheba (Exod 6:23). Since Levi was Jacob's third son (Gen 29:34) and at least presumably married before Judah⁷¹ (who took a long time to have a surviving male offspring in Perez [Gen 38]), it is unlikely that Aaron would be the fourth generation of Levi while taking a wife from the sixth generation of Judah. It would seem more probable that Aaron, too, was at least the sixth generation from the sons of Jacob. It may be noted also that Bezaleel (Exod 31:2), one of the builders of the Tabernacle and a contemporary of Moses and Aaron, was of the seventh generation of Judah.

Ephraim was the second son of Joseph (Gen 41:52). Taken together, Num 26:35-36 and 1 Chr 7:20-27 indicate four family lines for this tribe, two of which are treated in detail.⁷² The family of Shuthelah is carried down for twelve generations into the days of the Judges (1 Chr 7:21b-24), whereas the family of Tahan is traced eight generations up through Joshua, who was also contemporary with Moses and Aaron. The sixth generation from Ephraim is indicated as Elishama (Num 7:48), who was the leader (*nasi*) of the tribe of Ephraim at that time. Indeed, it is possible that the high number of generations for Ephraim might be explained by the population explosion toward the end of the 430 years, or that some of the names represent the sons of one and the same individual. In any case, however, the first generation of Ephraim himself and the last four generations are clearly continuous (Num 7:48; 13:16), reducing Ephraim to six generations, at the most.⁷³ This is consistent with what we have seen for the genealogy of Judah, and thus seems to be the case for Levi also.

On the basis of the above evidence, it would seem plausible that the genealogies of Levi in Exod 6 and Num 26 are incomplete. As such, they are consistent with a view that the 400 (430) years could refer to the Israelite sojourn in Egypt alone. A period of only 215 years would be too small to accommodate the above data; however, 400 (430) years would accommodate those data rather well. It would seem, then, that the expression "in the fourth generation [*dor*]" should be understood as "in the fourth cycle of time," as suggested in Section 2 of the main article.

⁷¹ Levi and Judah were probably only about 1 year apart in age. In fact, it would seem that all eleven sons born to Jacob in his exile, exclusive of Benjamin, were born within a seven-year period (Gen 29:28-30:28; 31:38).

⁷² Keil and Delitzsch, *The Books of Chronicles*, trans. Andrew Harper, in *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1952), pp. 139-142.

⁷³ Before he died, Jacob prophesied that Joseph's descendants would be fruitful (Gen 49:22). There are also six generations from Joseph to Zelophehad for the tribe of Manasseh (cf. Num 26: 28-33, 21:1, and Josh 11:3).

This material is cited with gracious permission from:

Andrews University Seminary Studies

SDA Theological Seminary

Berrien Springs, MI 49104-1500

<http://www.andrews.edu/SEM/>

Please report any errors to Ted Hildebrandt at: thildebrandt@gordon.edu