

# How Long Was It?

Looking at what we know from Genesis and Exodus about Israel's timeline.

# How Long Was It?

- How many years did the people of Israel live in Egypt prior to the Exodus?
- Where do we find answers to this question in the Scriptures?

# How Long Was It?

- Exodus 12:40-41 seemingly answers the question—
- “The time that the people of Israel lived in Egypt was 430 years. At the end of 430 years, on that very day, all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.”
- However, there are difficulties with that rendering of the text.
- Apostle Paul reveals the time-frame of the 430 years

# How Long Was It?

- “To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified. Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ. This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void.” Galatians 3:15-17

# How Long Was It?

- Galatians 3:15-17 clearly teaches that the 430 years began with the Abrahamic Covenant and ended with the inauguration of the Law Covenant at Mount Sinai
- Let's look at the events that comprise this 430 year period

# How Long Was It?

- The first building block – The covenant was made with Abraham when he was 75 years old
- “Now the LORD said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’ So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.” Genesis 12:1-4 ESV

# How Long Was It?

- The 430 years began when Abram left Haran
- The next step in Scriptural chronology is the 25 years that passed between the making of the covenant until the birth of Isaac, when Abraham was 100 years of age
- “And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him. Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.” Genesis 21:2-5

# How Long Was It?

- So... 25 subtracted from 430 leaves a remainder of 405 years
- Regarding that period, we read in Genesis 15 “Then the LORD said to Abram, “Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions.” Genesis 15:13,14

# How Long Was It?

- 405 minus 400 leaves 5 years. 30 years has gone by since the Covenant was made with Abram. This has been proposed by many Bible students to be the age (5) at which Isaac was weaned and his affliction at the hand of Ishmael began.
- “Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. But what does the Scripture say? ‘Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman.’” Galatians 4:28-30

# How Long Was It? (back to the 430 years)

- The next significant time period from the birth of Isaac is the birth of Jacob and Esau when Isaac was 60 years old.
- The math is simple: 405 minus 60 is 345. So, 345 years remain until the day when Israel left Egypt.

# How Long Was It?

- Genesis 47:7-9 provides the next piece of the puzzle:
- “Then Joseph brought in Jacob his father and stood him before Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said to Jacob, ‘How many are the days of the years of your life?’ And Jacob said to Pharaoh, ‘The days of the years of my sojourning are 130 years. Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their sojourning.’”

# How Long Was It?

- Taking Jacob's 130 years and subtracting them from the 345 years that remain, leaves 215 years until the day Israel left Egypt.
- It is very interesting that the meeting between Jacob and Pharaoh is exactly in the middle of the 430-year time period. ( $215 + 215 = 430$ )
- What comes next?
- Let's first take a moment to look at the precision of God's timekeeping, as illustrated in the ages of the patriarchs.

# How Long Was It? (The amazing math of God)

Patriarch	Years of age at death
Abraham	175
Isaac	180
Jacob	147
Joseph	110

There are marvelous mathematical properties found in the ages of the patriarchs!

# How Long Was It? (The amazing math of God)

Patriarch	Mathematical Components of Age	Years of age at death
Abraham	$5^2 \times 7$ (i.e. $25 \times 7$ ) =	175
Isaac	$6^2 \times 5$ (i.e. $36 \times 5$ ) =	180
Jacob	$7^2 \times 3$ (i.e. $49 \times 3$ ) =	147
Joseph	$5^2 + 6^2 + 7^2$ (i.e. $25 + 36 + 49$ ) =	110

Our Heavenly Father is incalculably wise. His mathematics are extremely precise. He knows when His Kingdom will be set up in power and glory. Examples like the numbers above strengthen our faith. He has not forgotten His purpose for mankind's salvation.

# How Long Was It?

- Undertaking the division of the remaining 215 years—
- Joseph was 30 when he rose to power. Genesis 41:46
- There were 7 years of plenty after that.
- Then, 7 years of famine occurred and Jacob and his family moved to Egypt in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of famine. “For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not tarry. You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, and your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. There I will provide for you, for there are yet five years of famine to come, so that you and your household, and all that you have, do not come to poverty.” Genesis 45:7-11

# How Long Was It?

- $30+7+2=39$ . Joseph was 39 years old when his family joined him in Egypt and 215 years of the 430 years had passed. The people of Israel lived in Egypt for only 215 years from that point until the Exodus.

# How Long Was It?

- The next step in dividing up the 430 years follows:
- Joseph lived to 110 years of age and was 39 when Israel moved to be with him in Egypt.
- 110 minus 39 is 71.
- Subtracting 71 from 215 leaves a remainder of 144. There are 144 years remaining of the 430, from Joseph's death until the covenant at Mount Sinai.

# How Long Was It?

- We don't have a connection through a patriarch's age or a time period specified to take us from Joseph's death to Sinai. But the Lord provided a way to connect.
- Back-extrapolating, using the age of Moses at the time of the Exodus, is the key!
- “Exo 7:5 The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them.’ Moses and Aaron did so; they did just as the LORD commanded them. Now Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron eighty-three years old, when they spoke to Pharaoh.” Exodus 7:5-7

# How Long Was It?

- Subtracting Moses' age from the 144 years (that remain from the 430 years) leaves 64 years
- From the death of Joseph to the birth of Moses was only 64 years.
- This adds much greater force to the declaration of Scripture, “Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, ‘Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.’ Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses.” Exodus 1:8-11

# How Long Was It?

- It was during this 64-year period that the good Joseph had done was disregarded and the people of Israel were enslaved.
- Perhaps, at the death of Joseph, there was a power vacuum in Egypt which led to the ascent of an evil Pharaoh “which knew not Joseph.”

# How Long Was It?

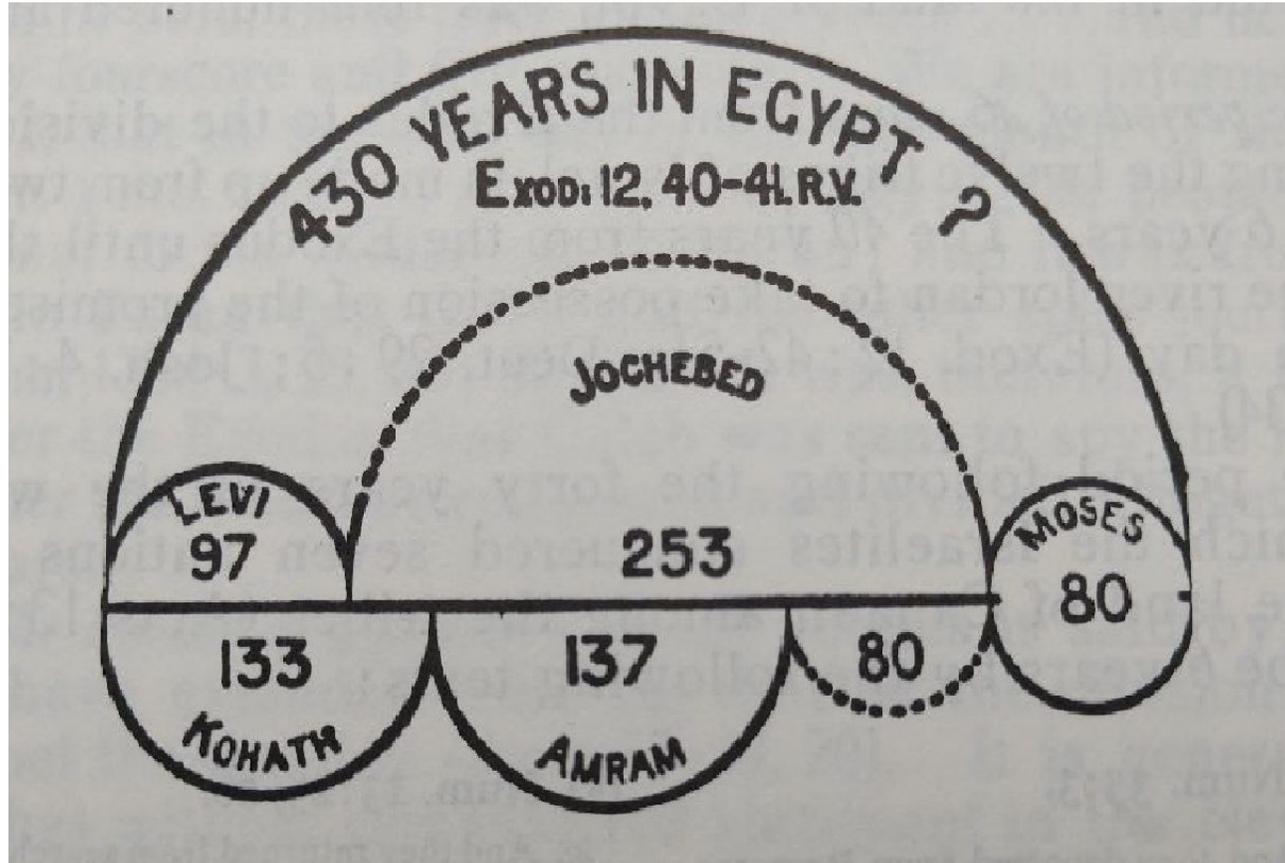
- From Clarke's Commentary:
- **Which knew not Joseph** - The verb **יָדָע** *yada*, which we translate to know, often signifies to acknowledge or approve. See Jdg 2:10; Psa 1:6; Psa 31:7; Hos 2:8; Amo 3:2. The Greek verbs **εἶδω** and **γινώσκω** are used precisely in the same sense in the New Testament. See Mat 25:12, and 1Jo 3:1. We may therefore understand by the new king's not knowing Joseph, his disapproving of that system of government which Joseph had established, as well as his haughtily refusing to acknowledge the obligations under which the whole land of Egypt was laid to this eminent prime minister of one of his predecessors.
- **"Yada, yada, yada," Pharaoh.**

# How Long Was It?

- Another difficulty with the thought that Israel dwelt in Egypt for 430 years is found in tracing the genealogy of Moses.
- “These are the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari, the years of the life of Levi being 137 years. The sons of Gershon: Libni and Shimei, by their clans. The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel, the years of the life of Kohath being 133 years. The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These are the clans of the Levites according to their generations. Amram took as his wife Jochebed his father's sister, and she bore him Aaron and Moses, the years of the life of Amram being 137 years.” Exodus 6:16-20

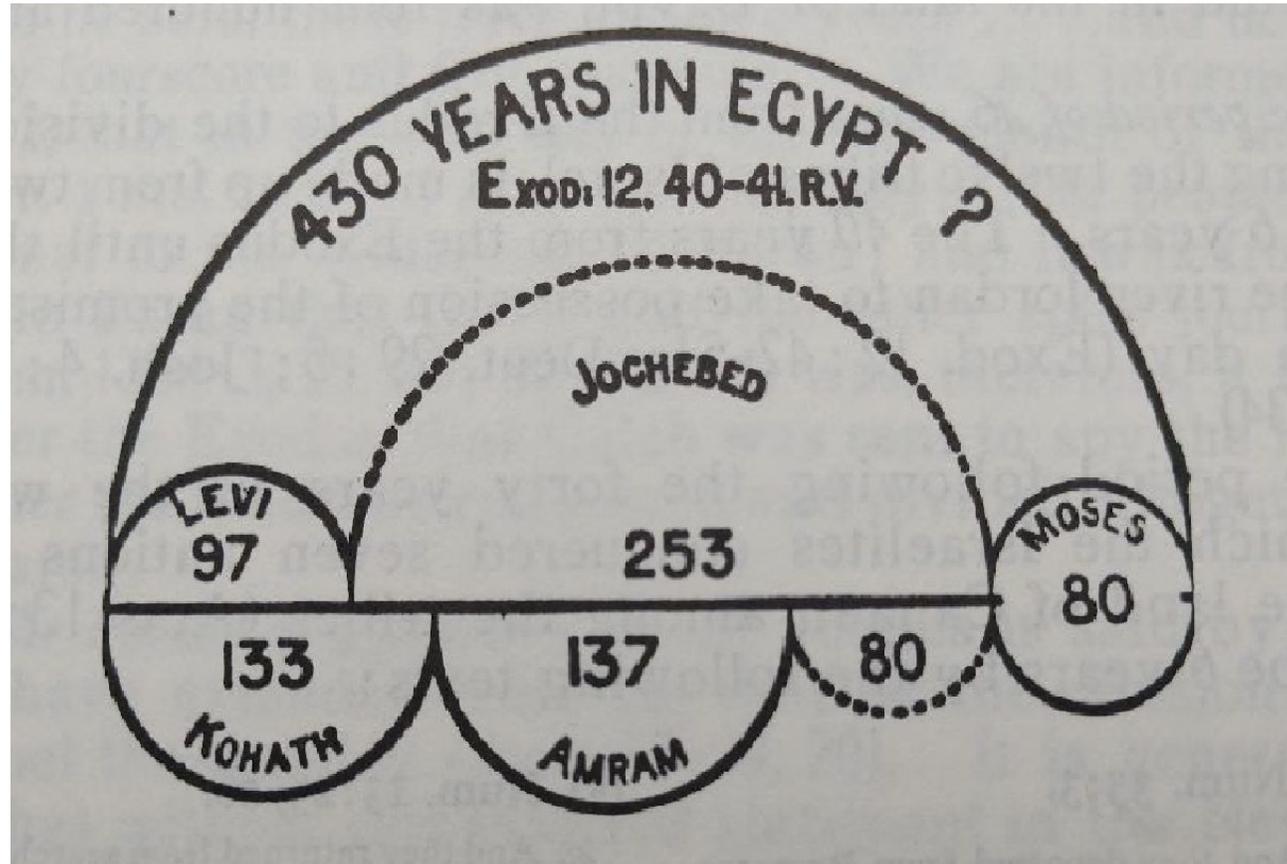
# How Long Was It?

- This chart by the Edgar brothers from Great Pyramid Passages illustrates the difficulty contained in this thought.



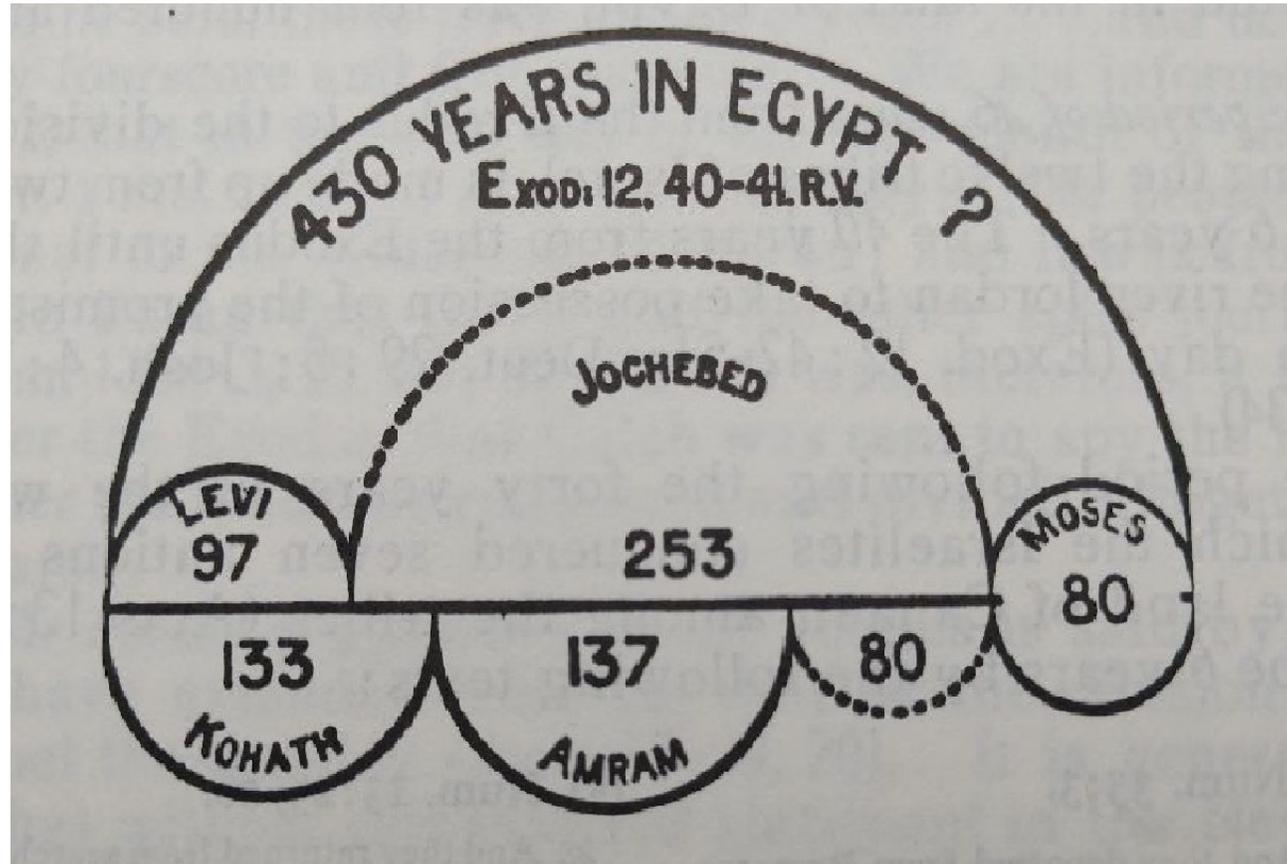
# How Long Was It?

- We trace Moses' genealogy through both his mother and his father.



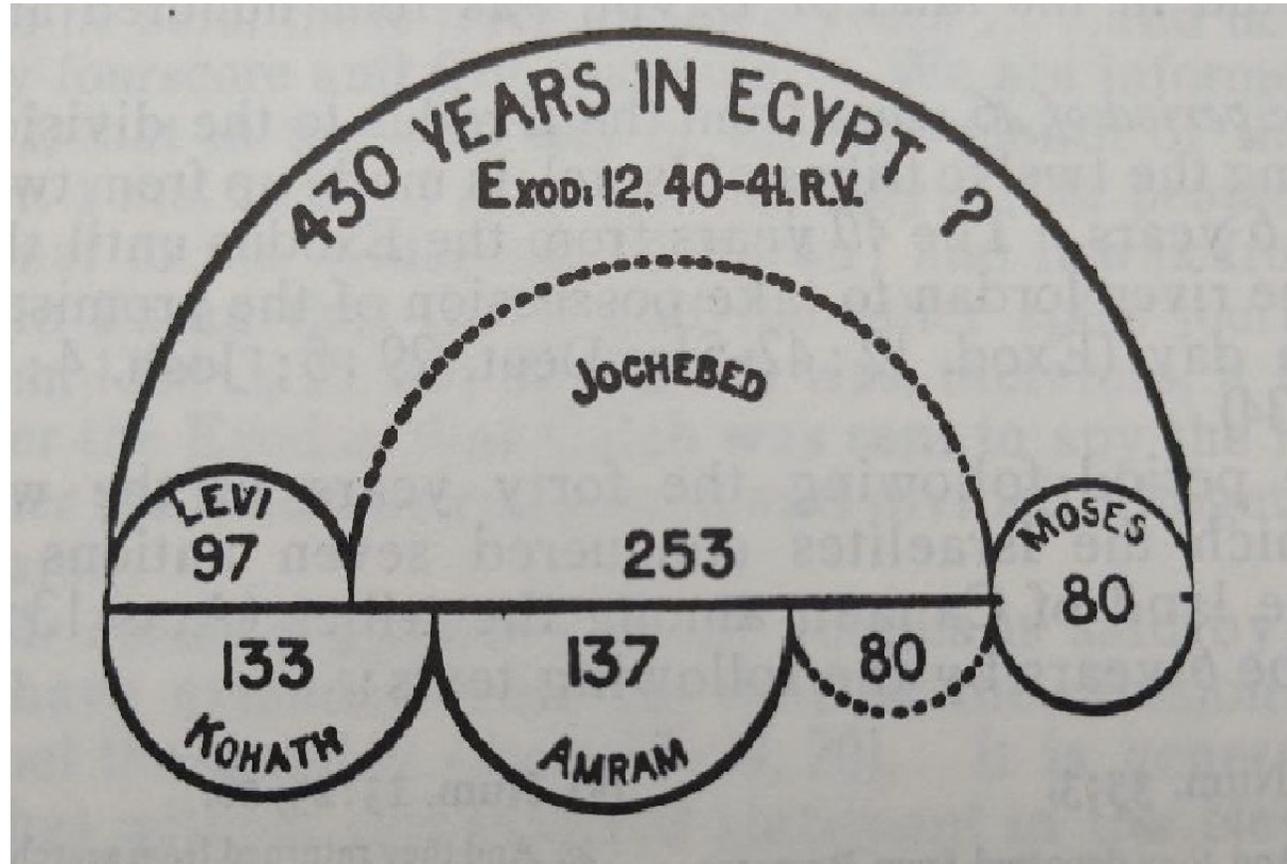
# How Long Was It?

- Levi was older than Joseph and lived to be 137. Joseph was 39 so perhaps Levi was 46. That leaves him 90+ years in Egypt.



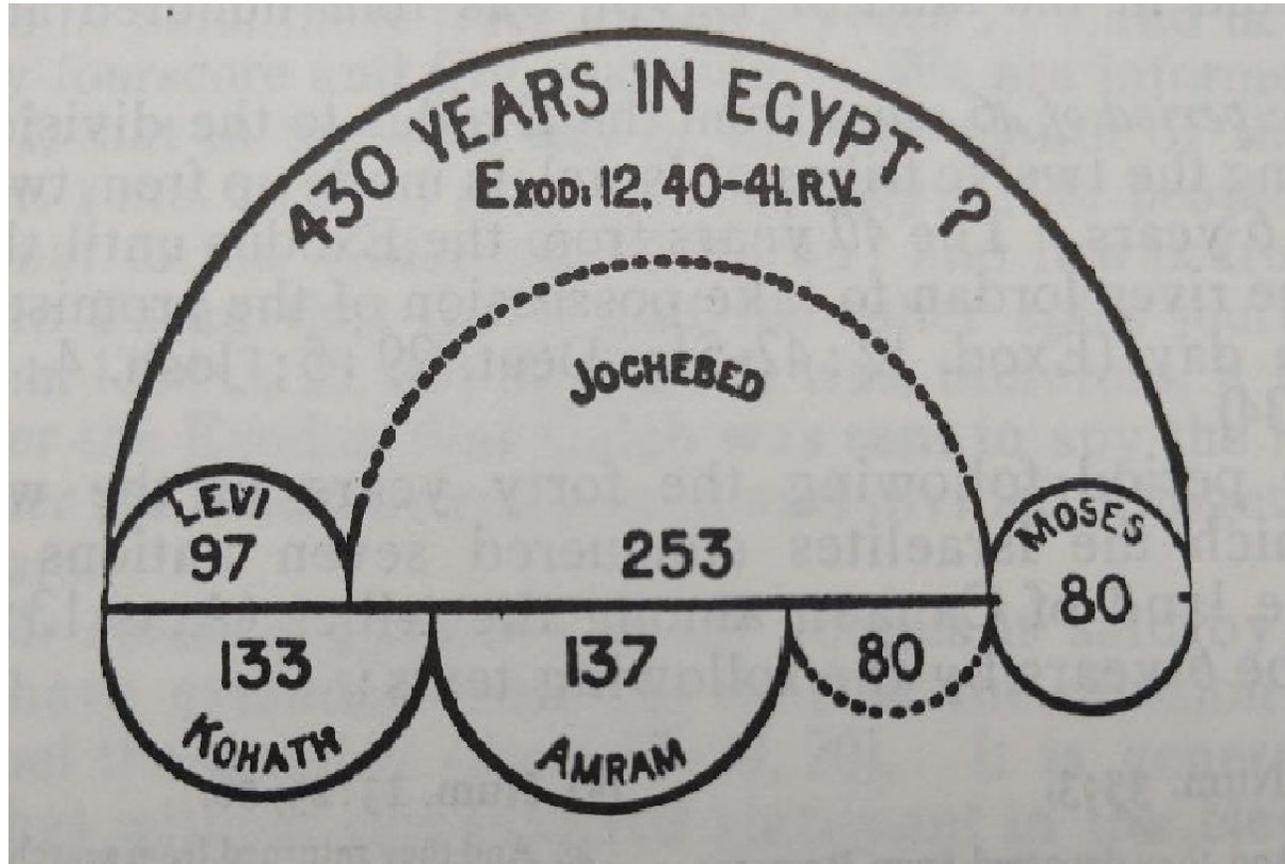
# How Long Was It?

- $97 + 80 = 177$ . If Israel dwelled in Egypt 430 years then Moses' mother, Jochebed, gave birth to him at the age of 253!



# How Long Was It?

- Also, if we add the lifespan of Kohath and Amram (Moses' paternal grandfather and father) and 80 years of Moses—there remains an 80-year gap in the 430.



# How Long Was It?

- An interesting consequence of this relates to Exodus 1:6-8
- “Then Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them. Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.” Exodus 1:6-8
- Levi outlived Joseph by approximately 21 years. It was after Joseph and his brethren died that the evil Pharaoh rose to power. So. . .

# How Long Was It?

- We may properly subtract another 21 years from the remaining 64 years and conclude that the period during which Pharaoh enslaved Israel was of a much shorter duration than we formerly thought. At most it was 43 years, assuming that Levi was the last of the sons of Jacob to die.
- From the death of Levi to the covenant at Mount Sinai was 123 years. (43 years + Moses' age of 80 at the Exodus =123 years.)

# How Long Was It? (Further confirmation)

- “Then the LORD said to Abram, ‘Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.’” Genesis 15:13-16

# How Long Was It? (Further confirmation)

- “These are the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari, the years of the life of Levi being 137 years. The sons of Gershon: Libni and Shimei, by their clans. The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel, the years of the life of Kohath being 133 years. The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These are the clans of the Levites according to their generations. Amram took as his wife Jochebed his father's sister, and she bore him Aaron and Moses, the years of the life of Amram being 137 years.” Exodus 6:16-20

# How Long Was It? (Further confirmation)

- “These are the names of the sons of **Levi** according to their generations: Gershon, **Kohath**, and Merari, the years of the life of Levi being 137 years. The sons of Gershon: Libni and Shimei, by their clans. The sons of Kohath: **Amram**, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel, the years of the life of Kohath being 133 years. The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These are the clans of the Levites according to their generations. Amram took as his wife Jochebed his father's sister, and she bore him Aaron and **Moses**, the years of the life of Amram being 137 years.” Exodus 6:16-20

# How Long Was It? (Further confirmation)

- The four generations that fulfill Genesis 15:13-16 are:
  - Levi
  - Kohath
  - Amram
  - Moses

# How Long Was It? (Was it long enough?)

- “All the descendants of Jacob were seventy persons; Joseph was already in Egypt.” Exodus 1:5
- “And the people of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children.” Exodus 12:37
- Estimates based on “600,000 men on foot” range about 2.2 million people.
- Was 215 years enough time to grow from 70 to 2.2 million?

# How Long Was It? (Was it long enough?)

- We must remember that Jehovah blessed Israel exceedingly in the fruit of their bodies.
- Their growth, as a people, was miraculous.

# How Long Was It? (Was it long enough?)

- “Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, ‘Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.’ Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. . . .But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel. So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves

# How Long Was It? (Was it long enough?)

- Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, ‘When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter, she shall live.’ But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live. So the king of Egypt called the midwives and said to them, ‘Why have you done this, and let the male children live?’ The midwives said to Pharaoh, ‘Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them.’ So God dealt well with the midwives. And the people multiplied and grew very strong.” Exodus 1:8-20

# How Long Was It? (Was it long enough?)

- “Then Israel came to Egypt; Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham. And the LORD made his people very fruitful and made them stronger than their foes.” Psalm 105:23, 24

# How Long Was It? (Revisiting Exodus 12:40)

- Revisiting Exodus 12:40-41—“The time that the people of Israel lived in Egypt was 430 years. At the end of 430 years, on that very day, all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.”
- Let’s compare the Masoretic Hebrew text, from which our translations come, with the Septuagint and the Samaritan Pentateuch

# How Long Was It? (The Samaritan Pentatuch)

- The Samaritan Pentatuch, in all its manuscripts and printed copies, reads thus: -
- “Umoshab beney Yishrael veabotham asher yashebu baarets Cenaan, ubaarets mitsraim sheloshim shanah vearba meoth shanah.”
- “Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, and of their fathers, which they sojourned in the land of Canaan and in the land of Egypt, was 430 years.”

# How Long Was It? (The Septuagint)

- The Septuagint is in harmony with the Samaritan Pentateuch.

not been leavened; for the Egyptians drove them out, and they could not remain, neither did they prepare provision for themselves for the journey. <sup>40</sup> And the sojourning of the children of Israel, <sup>δ</sup> while they sojourned in the land of Egypt and the land of Chanaan, *was* four hundred and thirty years. <sup>41</sup> And it came to pass after the four hundred and thirty years, all the forces of the Lord came forth out of the land of Egypt by night. <sup>42</sup> *It is a watch kept to the Lord, so that he should bring them out of the land of Egypt; that very night is a watch kept to the Lord, so that it should be to all the children of Israel to their generations.* <sup>43</sup> And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, This is the law of the passover: no stranger shall eat of it. <sup>44</sup> And every slave or servant

ἐξήνεγκαν ἐξ Αἴγυπτος  
ἐξέβαλον γὰρ αὐτοὺς  
ναί, οὐδὲ ἐπισιτισμ  
κατοίκησις τῶν υἱῶν  
καὶ ἐν γῆ Χαναάν  
μετὰ τὰ τετρακόσια  
Κυρίου ἐκ γῆς Αἴγυπτος  
ὥστε ἐξαγαγεῖν αὐτοὺς  
προφυλακὴ Κυρίου  
γενεὰς αὐτῶν. Ἔστι  
οὗτος ὁ νόμος τῆς  
αὐτοῦ. Καὶ πάντες

# How Long Was It? (The Septuagint)

- The Septuagint affirms the Samaritan Pentateuch rendering:
- “And the sojourning of the children of Israel, while they sojourned in the land of Egypt and the land of Chanaan, *was* four hundred and thirty years.” Exodus 12:40 Septuagint

# How Long Was It? (Revisiting Exodus 12:40)

- The detail and harmony of the Scriptures is awe-inspiring.
- Seeing the relatively short time that Israel was oppressed adds much greater force to the account of Pharaoh's persecution of them. It comes as more of a shock that he said (to paraphrase), "Who is Joseph to me? Yada, yada, yada."
- Jehovah is in control of all the affairs of all of His people and the timing of His plans. We therefore trust Him in fulness of faith.

# How Long Was It?

Looking at what we know from Genesis and Exodus about Israel's timeline.