

Kings and Captives

Abraham and the Egyptian Empire

When God made a covenant with Abraham, He promised that Abraham's descendants would inherit the Promised Land. However, it wasn't to be immediate, but delayed by 400 years.

Genesis 15:13	Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there.
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The reason for the delay was that the sins of the existing inhabitants of the Promised Land had not yet reached their full measure.

Genesis 15:16	In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure ."
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During the 430 years from the covenant with Abraham until the covenant with Moses, the Israelites were migrant refugees, occupying a land not their own. Even when they were governing lower Egypt, during the time of the Hyksos, they were not the native rulers and were eventually dispossessed, driven out or enslaved. They were strangers in a land not their own. And certainly Ahmose, the Pharaoh who expelled the Hyksos, would agree that Egypt did not belong to the Israelites and they should have no part in it.

During this long period of 430 years Egypt and Canaan appear to have been on trial. God was withholding his hand until their sin had reached its full measure.

At the end of the 430 years, the Israelites departed from Egypt and received the Law (Mosaic Covenant).

Exodus 12:40	Now the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years . In Context Full Chapter Other Translations
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Exodus 12:41	At the end of the 430 years , to the very day, all the LORD's divisions left Egypt. In Context Full Chapter Other Translations
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Galatians 3:17	What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise.
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David and the Kingdom of Israel

After the Israelites departed from Egypt, they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years before entering the Promised Land.

It took until the reign of King David (1055 B.C.) for the Israelites to finally gain control of the Promised Land and establish an empire of their own – a union of the 12 tribes – the Kingdom of Israel. David reigned for 40 years.

At this point God made a covenant with David (the Davidic Covenant) that his descendants would continue to rule and occupy the Promised Land if they kept His commandments. This covenant came into effect with David's descendant Solomon (1015 B.C.) However Solomon and his successors failed to obey God, consequently 430 years later they were taken into captivity by the Babylonians, and removed from the Promised Land.

1 Kings 9:6-7 ▾ New International Version ▾

⁶ "But if you^[a] or your descendants turn away from me and do not observe the commands and decrees I have given you^[a] and go off to serve other gods and worship them, ⁷ then I will cut off Israel from the land I have given them and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my Name. Israel will then become a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples.

A Pattern ?

There might be a pattern here -

- Israel in a land not their own (occupying Egypt and Canaan) → for 430 years
- Israel in the wilderness → for 40 years
- Israel enters the Promised Land
- Israel finally gains control over the Promised Land (King David) → for 40 years
- Apostasy of kings of Israel → for 430 years
- Israel is removed from the Promised Land

One can't help feeling that these numbers are more than a coincidence. The time spans don't seem arbitrary. The rise of Israel seems reflected in its fall.

- The Israelites escaped captivity after 430 years.
- The Israelites entered captivity after 430 years.

Its like the clock only starts ticking when a nation turns away from God.

At the time of the Babylonian Captivity, God showed Ezekiel that the siege of Jerusalem would last 430 days – a day for each year that Israel had sinned which amounted to all the years from Solomon until the Babylonian Captivity (1015 B.C. – 585 B.C.)

This shows that the apostasy of the kings of Israel had lasted 430 years, and was the reason given for their return to captivity.

Ezekiel 4:4-6 ▾ New International Version ▾

⁴ "Then lie on your left side and put the sin of the people of Israel upon yourself. ^[a] You are to bear their sin for the number of days you lie on your side. ⁵ I have assigned you the same number of days as the years of their sin. So for 390 days you will bear the sin of the people of Israel.

⁶ "After you have finished this, lie down again, this time on your right side, and bear the sin of the people of Judah. I have assigned you 40 days, a day for each year.

This timing suggests that God brought to an end an empire and a kingdom – Egypt or Israel. He sets people free, He raises them up, He sends them back into captivity.

Kingdom or captivity are conditional upon obedience to His commands – and it's likely that the same principle applies at a personal level.

Foreign or Israelite, the people were given equal time to repent – suggesting impartiality – as seen in the quote below where Joshua meets the commander of the army of the Lord -

Joshua 5:13-14 ▾ New International Version ▾

The Fall of Jericho

13 Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?"

14 "Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord^[a] have for his servant?"

God respects free choice, so every evil empire is allowed to persist for a period. But a time of judgement and finality is always set, and the persecuted are set free.

Summary

The timing of the rise and fall of Israel are suggestive but not conclusive that God was involved in the genesis and demise of that nation.

God demonstrated His power by taking a captive race and making them a kingdom, then taking a kingdom and making it captive – and timing both events.

However we find additional evidence indicating that God was instrumental in returning the Israelites to captivity - the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel, as referenced below. The timing of the rise and fall of Israel lends support to the evidence of the prophets.

References

[Davidic Covenant](#)

[Prophecies of Daniel](#)

[A Chronology of the Old Testament](#)

Postscript

The numbers 40 and 43 play a part in the passion of Christ. See [Sign of the Son of Man](#). 43 days is the period from Passover to Ascension, and includes the 40 days during which Christ appeared to the apostles.