

6. If the entire 'earth' was H<sub>2</sub>O water, then why wouldn't God say, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the waters"?"

Also, translating *mayim* as 'liquids' does not eliminate H<sub>2</sub>O because it is a specific, but very common liquid. Thus, 'liquids' is a broader word.

3. Taylor, C., *The First 100 Words*, The Good Book Co, Gosford, NSW, Australia, p. vii, 1996.

## 215-year sojourn still 'short'

The replies of Mike Vicary and David Austin<sup>1</sup> to my defence of Israel's 430-year sojourn in Egypt<sup>2</sup> did not, in my view, satisfactorily address the evidence. On three fronts in particular—the statistical problems, the textual case and the question of consistency—the 'short', 215-year sojourn still fails to measure up.

First, the *statistical problems*. One entire book of the Bible is called Numbers, and it is unfortunate that Mike and David chose to ignore the evidence of Numbers 3:27–28, concerning the Amramites, which my letter addressed. That evidence restated is this: Moses shows, by reasonable inference, that the Amramites just after the Exodus numbered some 2,150 males. If this Amram was the same Amram as Moses' father, this means that Moses must have had '2,147 brothers and brothers' sons', as Keil and Delitzsch point out.<sup>3</sup> Such a proposition, of course, is absurd. Yet it is statistical conundrums like this that compel even a short-sojourn advocate like Nahum Sarna to concede that the population data '*poses intractable problems*' for a two-century sojourn<sup>4</sup> (emphasis added).

Mike appeals to a 'miraculous increase' to explain how 70 people could become some two million in just 215 years. But this amounts to special pleading. Nowhere does the Bible (while certainly setting forth a robust growth rate, Exodus 1:7) describe it as a 'miracle'. In any event, an increase from 'about 600,000 men' at the Exodus to '603,550' at the first census thirteen months later hardly suggests,

even allowing for the approximate nature of the first figure, a growth rate of 'miraculous' proportions! (Exodus 12:37; Num. 1:46).

But why need there be any 'problems' at all when, as we see from Joseph's line in 1 Chron. 7:22–27, there were all of *eleven* adult generations of Israel in Egypt, not just the four which Moses' modest abridgement of his own ancestry (later emulated by Ezra in abbreviating his own family tree<sup>5</sup>), might suggest?

Secondly, the *textual case*. By any *prima facie* reading, Exodus 12:40–41 settles the issue of how long the sojourn in Egypt lasted. Notwithstanding David Austin's denial of the fact, it emphatically states *twice* that the period in Egypt lasted 430 years:

'Now the *length of time* that the Israelite people *lived in Egypt was 430 years*. At the *end of the 430 years*, to the very day, all the LORD's divisions *left Egypt*' (NIV, emphasis added).

David's semantic quibbles about whether 'lasted' means 'dwelt' (for the record, the Hebrew *moshab*, 'living time', is related to *yashab*, 'lived') really miss the obvious. Namely, as *The JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus* observes, that 'the text [i.e. Exodus 12:40–41] *speaks clearly enough only of the Egyptian episode* [emphasis added]'.<sup>6</sup> This reflects the similar admission of *Encyclopaedia Judaica*,<sup>7</sup> noted in my previous letter, concerning the plain meaning of the passage, and makes all the more astonishing Vicary and Austin's attempts to argue around that plain sense. As the *Dictionary of Old Testament Pentateuch* points out, there is no doubt about the duration in Egypt: 'The record takes pains, in fact, to underscore that it *lasted exactly 430 years* [emphasis added]'.<sup>8</sup>

Nor, it seems, has David understood that the Dead Sea Scroll manuscript, 4QExodc, corroborating our text of Exodus 12:40–41, is in *Hebrew*, not 'in Greek' as he claims. My whole point was that the Greek LXX, which the short sojourn is forced to invoke in the absence of any Hebrew textual support, is demonstrably suspect on chronology, as well as coming

more than a thousand years *after* Moses' original Hebrew (discredited liberal assumptions denying Moses' authorship are, of course, totally irrelevant, as Mike and David would agree; cf. John 5:46, 47).

But it is the *sheer inconsistency* of the short-sojourn position that makes it even harder to defend. Historically, its advocates are not even agreed among themselves as to how long Israel's time in Egypt actually lasted. The Talmud puts it at 210 years (and elsewhere at 430 years).<sup>9</sup> Nahmanides/Ramban gives the two figures of 220 years and 227 years.<sup>10</sup> Josephus says in one part that it was 215 years, and in another 400 years.<sup>11</sup> A footnote to Ramban gives 240 years.<sup>12</sup> Midrash Rabbah says it was 210 years,<sup>13</sup> while those Christian scholars who accept it generally plumb for a 215-year period. Such variation—representing *five different short-sojourn periods* (there are others beside)—is understandable when it is recalled that, *if Exodus 12:40–41 is not to be read at face value, there is no passage in the entire Bible that states the length of the Egyptian Sojourn*. Compare this with the far shorter Babylonian Captivity, whose duration of 'seventy years' is spelt out all of six times.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the above inconclusiveness is in stark contrast to the precise 430-year sojourn 'to the very day', also confirmed by the rounded four-century ('400 years') references of Gen. 15:13 and Acts 7:6 to Israel being 'enslaved and mistreated'.

So again, with the utmost respect to short-sojourn advocates, including Mike and David, I believe that the evidence is more than a little partial towards the 430-year sojourn of Israel in Egypt.

Brenton Minge  
Brisbane, Queensland  
AUSTRALIA

### References

1. Mike Vicary replies, *Journal of Creation* 21(3):64–65, 2007; David Austin replies, *Journal of Creation* 21(3):65–66, 2007.
2. Brenton Minge, Short sojourn comes up short, *Journal of Creation* 21(3):62–64, 2007.

3. Keil, C.F. and Delitzsch, F., *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 470, 1978 reprint.
4. Sarna, N.M., *The JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus*, Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, PA, p. 62, 1999.
5. Cf. Ezra 7:1–5, 1 Chron. 6:3–15.
6. Sarna, ref. 4, p. 62.
7. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Keter Publishing, Jerusalem, 6:1045–1046, 1973.
8. Alexander, T.D., and Baker, D.W. eds., *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch*, InterVarsity Press, p. 120, 2003.
9. Strickman, H.N., and Silver, A.M., *Ibn Ezra's Commentary on the Pentateuch: Genesis*, New York, Menorah Publishing, p. 404, fn. 14, 1988; Sanhedrin 91(a), *The Talmud*, Epstein, I. (ed.), Soncino Press, London, 14:609–910, 1935 and 1961.
10. Chavel, C.B., *Ramban: Commentary on the Torah—Exodus*, Shilo Publishing, New York, p. 154 and fn. 317, 1973.
11. Josephus, *Antiquities* 2:15, 2(318); compare this with idem 1:10, 3(185) and 2:9, 1(204).
12. Chavel, ref. 10, p. 153 and fn.315.
13. Freedman, H., Simon, M. and Lehrman, S.M., *Midrash Rabbah III: Exodus*, Soncino, p.176, fn. 9, 1983.
14. 2 Chron. 36:21; Jer. 25:11, 12; 29:10; Dan. 9:2; Zech. 7:5.

### David Austin replies:

Having read Brenton Minge's remarks to my reply I would like to make the following comments.

#### On the statistical problem (Numbers 3:27–28)

In the numbering of the people on the occasion of the second census (the first occasion was to simply count all the people over 20 yrs old and tax them half a shekel each) more details were required, so the people were listed by:

1. Their *houses*, Cf. Numbers 1:18, 'declared their pedigrees after their families, by the house of their fathers', also Gen. 46:27 'all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt were threescore and ten', which included father, sons, grandsons, daughters, granddaughters (Gen. 46:7). Numbers 3:27 refers to the house of Kohath.
2. Their *families* should more appropriately be translated 'clan', or 'extended family' (Hebrew

word = *mispahah*, # Strong 4,940, circle of relatives.). The 'clan' was the main social unit, intermediate in size between a tribe and the father's house.

3. The *families* were made up of *houses* and the *tribes* were made of families. In Joshua 7:14, all 3 'kinds' are mentioned: 'the *tribe* ... shall come according to the *families* ... and the family ... shall come by *households* [emphasis mine].'
4. The house of Kohath at the time of the numbering consisted of 4 families (Num. 3:27). The four sons of Kohath were Amran, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel (1 Chron. 6:2). We do not know how many generations, houses or families descended from each of these sons according to Num. 3:27–28, but it could well be enough to equal 2,147/2,150 souls by the time of such numbering, even if 3–5 generations had died. We start numbering with the house of Kohath, not with Moses.
5. A very real hypothetical problem exists when the 'eight thousand and six hundred, keeping the charge of the sanctuary' (Num. 3:28) is equally divided by four to arrive at Brenton's 2,150 males. If the same method was used to divide the 603,550 (Num. 1:46) by 12 tribes, (Levi not numbered, but 2 tribes from Joseph's children), Judah's number, for example, would be 50,295.833 not the 74,600 of Num. 1:27.
6. Concerning the four sons of Kohath, maybe Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel had larger houses, more clans, and more generations than Amran by the time we reach Num. 3:27–28, so then, the 8,500 of Num. 3:28 could in no way be divided equally. There are also many hypothetical problems with the above (4), e.g. the estimating of 2 million Israelites at the Exodus, so I did not think it helpful to answer when subject to so much presumption. The Lord probably suspended or altered the normal

course of 'nature'. To me, that is a 'miracle' and not 'special pleading'. See Exodus 1:7, 19 and cf. Mark 4:37–41, where normally the billows will continue to roll for a while, surging and subsiding as if unwilling to follow the example of the now subdued air currents above them. But in this instance, winds and waves synchronize in the sublime symphony of a solemn silence. Other writers have come up with 'legitimate' figures to prove the 2 million people anyway.

### Galatians 3:15–17

I spent considerable time and about one page in my previous letter<sup>1</sup> giving what I believe is an 'unanswerable solution' to the above verses, i.e. Exodus 12:40 etc., and summarised it as follows: There were 430 yrs from the 'confirmation' (i.e. the legal ratification of the covenant soon after Abram entered Canaan at 75 yrs (Gen. 15: 8–21) until the giving of the Law. If the AM dates<sup>2</sup> are not 'secular' but come from adding up the years in the Masoretic Text and KJV. These dates also show that 215 yrs exist between Abram's entry into Canaan and Jacob's going down to Egypt at 130 yrs (Gen.47:9), then only 215 yrs are 'left' until the Law. My explanation of Gal. 3:15–17 was not answered by Brenton or even referred to.

### David Down's Unwrapping of the Pharaohs<sup>3</sup>

In totalling the number of approximate years given by David Down for the different reigns of the Pharaohs, the following was found:

1. Sesostri I commenced his reign about 13 yrs before Jacob went down to Egypt (2298 AM). He reigned for 47 yrs, which was 34 yrs reigning of Israel's time in Egypt (approx. dates: c. 2285–2331 AM): 34 yrs.
2. Amenemet II reigned 36 yrs c. 2332–2367 AM: 36 yrs.
3. Sesostri III reigned 20 yrs c. 2368–2387 AM: 20 yrs.

4. Sesostris III reigned 41 yrs c. 2388–2428 AM: 41 yrs.
5. Amenemet III reigned 46 yrs, and Moses born in this period (2433 AM). ‘The most likely contender for the princess who adopted Moses would be Sobekneferu, daughter of Amenemhet III.’<sup>4</sup> c. 2429–2474 AM: 46 yrs.
6. Sobekneferu, Commencement Dynasty 13, Amenemet IV. Moses returns from Midian 80 yrs (2513) after birth to lead the Exodus, not long after ‘the king of Egypt died’ (Exodus 2:23). c. 2475–2503 AM: 29 yrs.
7. Neferhotep I. Mummy never found. Probably at bottom of Red Sea (Exodus 14:28). Succeeded by brother Sabkhotpa IV. First born slain? c. 2504–2513 AM—David allows 12 yrs (I make it 10): 12 yrs.

David Down’s total years reigning of pharaohs during Israel’s time in Egypt as above is approximately 218 years, nowhere near 430 years.

### NIV translation of Exodus 12:40

Please note variant translation in Footnote of NIV on Exodus 12:40 as mentioned in my first reply.<sup>1</sup> This means I cannot build a position with certainty on how long Israel was in Egypt. The KJV on this verse, which was not mentioned by you in all of your references, gives a clearer understanding as previously explained and therefore am not guilty of ‘denial of the fact’.

David Austin  
Brisbane, Queensland  
AUSTRALIA

### References

1. Austin, D., ‘Short’ sojourn comes up short? David Austin replies, *Journal of Creation* 21(3):65–66, 2007.
2. See Austin, D., Chronology of the 430 years of Exodus 12:40, *Journal of Creation* 21(1):67–68, 2007.
3. Down, D. and Ashton, J., *Unwrapping the Pharaohs*, Master Books, Green Forest, AR, pp.78–103, and especially p. 206, 2006.
4. Down and Ashton, ref. 3, p. 92.

### Mike Viccary replies:

In response to Brenton Minge’s further considerations I would like to make the following points:

1. How can he suggest that the details of Exodus 6:20 and Numbers 26:59 do not imply a literal genealogical relationship which I take to be the fulfilment of the prophecy given by the Lord in Genesis 15:16 to Abraham? The text tells us that Jochebed was actually Amram’s father’s sister (his aunt) and that she was born in Egypt!
2. Mr Minge makes much of other genealogical lists having breaks or omissions but he never actually demonstrates that the genealogy in question (i.e. the line of Levi to Moses) actually has any break. The texts referred to seem to make this impossible. His appeal to other known breaks for example in the line of Ezra does not necessarily imply a break in the line from Levi to Moses. It is interesting to note that in the Levi to Moses line there is information about the ages of the important people involved. It seems to me that wherever this type of information as provided (together with such details as family relationships and places of birth) the line is as unbroken as those in Genesis 5 and 11.
3. Mr Minge insists that Exodus 12:40–41 can only mean that the Israelites were living in Egypt for a period of 430 years. However this is not the only interpretation. It tells us where they were ‘sojourning’ at the time of their exit and it mentions 430 years of sojourning. A detailed read of the Genesis account informs us that Abraham and his offspring all sojourned in the land that is referred to as ‘the land of Ham’ and would appear to have been under Egypt’s control. It would appear then that the reference is to the length of ‘sojourn’ and not to the length of stay in Egypt.
4. It is vital that Galatians 3:16–17 and Genesis 15 be also considered and I am not convinced that Mr Minge has done this. In Genesis 15 two other time periods are mentioned.

The 400 years of affliction and the return ‘in the fourth generation’. It is common to hear writers dismiss these as approximations of each other. However I contend that the Holy Spirit never wastes breath or effort and intends definite time periods for these three references of 400 years, 430 years and four generations. Further I would like to state that it is my contention that the ancient Hebrews were not ‘primitive’ slap-dash recorders of time, but were rather careful about what they recorded. The only way it seems to me to reconcile these three time references is to agree with Paul’s understanding that the 430 years started in Genesis 12:7, the 400 years started when Ishamel opposed Isaac at his weaning party and the fourth generation goes from Jacob to Levi to Kohath to Amram to Moses.

5. Mr Minge’s appeal to statistical problems is vacuous. His appeal to Numbers 3:27–28 is odd. Whilst an increase from 2 to 2000 would take about 409 years for a growth rate of 1.7%, (current growth rates), it is perfectly feasible given a double current population growth rate (~3.5%) to produce 2000 people from 2 originals in about 200 years. Given the textual constraints I have outlined above, this type of growth is indeed stupendous if not miraculous as the Genesis promises of increase and the fulfilments recorded elsewhere in the Pentateuch readily demonstrate.
6. Finally Mr Minge’s comments about disagreements amongst ‘short-sojourn’ advocates is a tedious point to refute. I reject his statement that I am not taking the Scriptures ‘at face value’. It is easy to lump those you disagree with into a group which is easily discredited. I prefer to consider the facts of Scripture. It is my contention that given all the facts (i.e. all the texts) then there is no evidence for a 430 year sojourn in Egypt.

Dr Mike Viccary  
Cross Hills, North Yorkshire  
UNITED KINGDOM