

being a young man at the Exodus and Gershom apparently still a child (Ex. 4:20).

I have not here addressed the objections in regard to the numbers involved in the Exodus. This is a very large and complicated subject, which needs separate treatment (see p. 402).

I find Brother Form's strongest point to be in the matter of definition, when he points out that the term 'sons of Israel', *bne yisrael* (Ex. 12:40), could not include the founders of the nation, Abraham, Isaac (and Jacob). I find this objection, though pertinent, not strong enough in itself to overthrow all the other indicators as outlined in earlier correspondence and above. I surmise that the term 'sons of Israel' was used of the 'nation of promise' in general, and distinguished them from the Arabian tribes in a way that the terms 'sons of Abraham', 'sons of Isaac' or even 'Hebrews' could not. In the same way we often speak broadly of the history of 'the Jews', by which term, technically, all tribes but Judah should have been excluded.

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Brother Bill Form raises a question about the length of time Israel sojourned in Egypt ([Aug. 2001, p. 323](#)). His arguments are against the likelihood of 195 years being sufficient for the descendants of Jacob to grow into the number of Israelites who came out at the Exodus, 195 being the number of years given for the sojourn in Egypt in my article "Biblical chronology reassessed and the seventh vial" ([Apr. 2001, p. 132](#)) and also in Sister Debbie Hurn's letter ([Jun. 2001, p. 254](#)). The question can be resolved by using the information given in Genesis.

To establish first of all the length of the period from the birth of the twelve patriarchs to their entry into Egypt, the fact that Joseph was thirty when he appeared before Pharaoh is helpful (Gen. 41:46). It means that when Jacob and his family entered Egypt, Joseph would have been thirty-nine years old, following the seven years of plenty and the first two years of famine (45:11).

Details of Jacob's descendants at the time of their entry into Egypt are given in Genesis 46. The total of the male descendants of the twelve sons of Jacob is fifty-five. In the cases of Judah and Asher the names of grandchildren, two each, are included. This means that in these two cases two generations are indicated. As Judah's affairs were complicated, it is more convenient to take

Asher's family for allocating the length of their single and married lives.

Asher had four sons, and the fourth mentioned, Beriah, had two sons, which means that he also was married. Asher would be about one year older than Joseph (Gen. 30:13,24), making him about forty when entering Egypt. If five years are allowed for the birth of Asher's children and three for Beriah's, we are left with $40 - 8 = 32$ years for the two single lives before marriage, that is, sixteen years each. On this basis we could therefore think of Jacob's sons beginning to have children when Asher was sixteen, which would be $40 - 16 = 24$ years before entering Egypt, during which period the fifty-five children would have been born.

To arrive at a more realistic rate of increase, it would be better to eliminate from the calculation children who had not reached their teens. These would include the four grandsons, Joseph's two sons and some of Benjamin's sons.

To decide how many of Benjamin's sons to eliminate from the calculation, it is necessary to assess Benjamin's age. When Jacob fled from Padan-aram with camels and asses, he and his household reached Mount Gilead in ten days (Gen. 31:22,23). This place is well over halfway towards Bethel, and it was after leaving here and reaching adjacent Ephrath that Benjamin was born (Gen. 35:16-18), we assume in the same year. We know that Jacob served a further six years in Padan-aram after Joseph was born (30:24; 31:41), so, if Benjamin was born a year after leaving Padan-aram, then he would have been seven years younger than Joseph, and therefore thirty-two when he entered Egypt.

Assuming also that Benjamin married at about the same age as Asher, sixteen, his family of ten sons would have started arriving $32 - 16 = 16$ years before entry into Egypt. This means that seven of his sons could not have reached their teens by then, unless he had more than one wife.

On the basis of the above we would therefore eliminate a total of $4 + 2 + 7 = 13$ sons from the fifty-five previously counted, leaving forty-two. Over the twenty-four-year period identified above, the number of mature male descendants of Jacob would therefore have increased from twelve to forty-two, 3.5 times as many. Assuming that this rate of increase continued, the number of male descendants of Jacob in Egypt, calculated in twenty-four year periods, would have grown as follows:

Years					Totals
24	42	×	3.5	=	147
48	147	×	3.5	=	514.5
72	514.5	×	3.5	=	1800.75
96	1800.75	×	3.5	=	6302.625
120	6302.625	×	3.5	=	22059.187
144	22059.187	×	3.5	=	77207.154
168	77,207.154	×	3.5	=	270,225.03
(177)					(432,266)
192	270,225.03	×	3.5	=	945,787.6
(195)					(1,106,120)

If, however, some couples had families as large as Benjamin's, which was not reflected in the rate of 3.5 above, the effect on the total would be considerable. Supposing, for example, that the rate of growth increased a little to, say, 3.75, the total number of males after 192 years would be over 1,640,000. In Numbers 1:1,46 the number of able men over twenty years of age, excluding Levites, counted two years after the Exodus, was 603,550.

The object of the above calculations is solely to demonstrate that it was quite possible for the descendants of Jacob to multiply into a nation of such a size as to produce the numbers required within 195 years in Egypt.

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