



The Sinaitic Light

The 400 Year Fallacy

Study Article No. IX

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This article uses the English terms for Elohim (God), Yah (Father) Yahoshua (Christ).

Objective and Learning Outcome

Objective:

The objective of this article is to effectively rebut the commonly held position asserted by some within so-called Hebrew Israelism, that the Abrahamic promise of Genesis 15:13-16 is being fulfilled in the American diaspora.

Learning Outcome:

Upon completion of this study, the reader will:

1. Understand what the promise and prophecy of Genesis 15:13 was applicable to.
2. Understand what nation God judged in Genesis 15:14.
3. Understand what nation was plundered which allowed Abraham's decedents to leave with great wealth according to Genesis 15:14.
4. Understand who represents the fourth generation of the Abrahamic promise in Genesis 15:16.
5. Understand what the iniquity of the Amorites means, and why it is mentioned in Genesis 15:16.
6. Identify textual attestations revealing when the Abrahamic prophecy was consummated and
7. Understand what represents a biblical generation.

Given the remedial nature of this topic, this composition was not written as a study guide. It was written in response to overwhelming inquiries within the Israelite community which continues to embrace and propagate a doctrine that is biblically indefensible and unsustainable. It is the endeavor of this composition to assist those within the Hebraic society in acquiring the proper interpretation of Genesis 15:13-16.

Introduction

A main staple of Hebrew Israelite doctrine has been the teaching that Hebrew Israelites are cursed to live, serve, and be oppressed in the diaspora under the tyranny of pagans and adversaries of God's truth. This punishment is due to our Israelite ancestors disobeying the Sinaitic covenant, exacerbated by our continued disobedience and willful disregard for the grace and mercy of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This doctrine arises from a vision Yah gave to Abraham while he was in the land of Canaan. The author of Genesis writes,

As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. 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 (Gen. 15:13-16).

In the Abrahamic prophecy, Yah prophesied that Abraham's descendants would be a sojourner in a land that is not theirs. In this land they will (1) reside as servants and they will be (2) afflicted for four hundred years. The 400 years is used as a timeline in most Hebrew Israelite doctrine that has been subjective from the time it was proposed. In other words, some assert that the descendants of Abraham will dwell in a land for four hundred years, and in this land, they will be servants and afflicted as a marginalized and disenfranchised people. In most Hebrew Israelite doctrines, this sojourn is the American diaspora. This composition will set forth the thesis that the Abrahamic prophecy is not applicable to the American diaspora for any Hebrew Israelite. The Abrahamic prophecy was fulfilled in the fifteenth century BC in the generation of Moses and the Egyptian sojourn.

Genesis 15:13-16

God tells Abraham that his descendants will occupy a land that is not theirs for 400 years. While dwelling in this land, they will be oppressed, used, abused, marginalized and disenfranchised as a human being and citizen. Dr. R. Kent Hughes, Professor of Practical Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary writes, "God foretold Abram that his followers would be enslaved for four hundred years in an undesignated land (which we know to be Egypt). The word 'afflicted' is the same Hebrew word used in Exodus to describe the oppression that the Israelites experienced in Egypt as they built the store cities for Pharaoh."¹

¹ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing* (Wheaton IL: Crossway, 2004), 231-32.

Most within the Hebrew Israelite economy have been taught to associate this maltreatment with the American captivity. Yet this supposition is hardly possible given the context of the Abrahamic prophecy. The prophecy contains *prophetic markers* to denote when Abraham's prophecy would *commence* and be *consummated*. The following represents the markers that one needs to take into consideration for this study.

1. Verse 13 says, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land"
2. Verse 14 says, "But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions."
3. Verse 16 says, "And they shall come back here [Canaan] in the fourth generation" and
4. Verse 16 continues with "for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete".

Yah made the Abrahamic prophecy transparent. He left nothing ambiguous other than the place of his descendants' sojourn. The following is an outline of the consummated occurrences stated in the aforementioned verses.

Stranger and Sojourner

A very apparent marker is the use of the term stranger, which is applied to the Israelites of the Exodus. Yah said that Abraham's progeny would be strangers in a strange land (Gen. 15:13), and we have testimony by this language alone as to whom Yah was referring. Moses writes, "You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt" (Ex. 22:21) and "You shall not oppress a sojourner. You know the heart of a sojourner, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt" (Ex. 23:9). Leviticus says, "When a stranger sojourn with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God" (Lev. 19:33-34). Deuteronomy also says, "Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt (Deut. 10:19). and Deuteronomy 23:7 says, "You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother. You shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were a sojourner in his land" (see Ps. 105:8-10).

It is clear from the previous passages that when Yah told Abraham that his descendants would be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, He was prophesying about Egypt, although the place was not revealed to Abraham. It was nevertheless revealed as the prophecy began to commence and unfold.

Judgement

God said that he would bring judgment upon the land that Abraham's progeny would occupy. This composition asserts that the land in question was the land of Egypt which fell under

God's judgment for the oppressive rule of His people, Israel. The following Scriptures are proof text to this position.

And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. Then the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites (Ex. 3:6-8).

God says to Moses that He has seen the affliction of His people that dwell in Egypt and has listened to their cry because of their taskmasters. God also states that He acknowledges their sufferings and has come to deliver them. This language is associated with Genesis 15:13 (serve and afflict). God says that He will bring them out of Egypt and establish them in the land of Israel, the land He promised to Abraham's progeny. In the following passage, Yah says to Moses,

But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go. And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go, you shall not go empty, but each woman shall ask of her neighbor, and any woman who lives in her house, for silver and gold jewelry, and for clothing. You shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So, you shall plunder the Egyptians" (Ex. 3:19-22).

Yah knows that Pharaoh will refuse to let the Israelites leave the land of Egypt because He is going to place it on Pharaoh's heart to resist Him (Ex. 9:12), thereby provoking God to execute judgment upon the land (v.20). Due to this judgment, the Egyptians will gladly, under duress, give to the Israelites their precious metals and valuables, thus plundering the Egyptians (vv.21-22). Dr. Nahum M. Sarna, Late Professor of Old Testament and Jewish studies at Florida Atlantic University writes, "Great wealth, either in restitution for the years of slave labor or in accordance with the law in Deuteronomy 15:13f. that emancipated slave must be liberally provisioned by the master."² Sarna correlates the language of the Abrahamic promise with the future events surrounding his decedent's bondage in Egypt. What the author writes in Exodus corresponds to Genesis 15:14.

The prophecies uttered to Abraham, and reiterated to Moses were accomplished in Egypt. There were 10 plagues that fell upon Egypt which Sarna says, "is a reference, of course to the plagues, which are so referred to in Exodus 6:6, 7:4, and 12:12"³

² Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 116.

³ Ibid.

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| 1. Blood | – Ex. 7:20 |
| 2. Frogs | – Ex. 8:1-4 |
| 3. Lice | – Ex. 8:16-17 |
| 4. Flies | – Ex. 8:21-24 |
| 5. Death of Cattle | – Ex. 9:3-7 |
| 6. Boils | – Ex. 9:8-10 |
| 7. Hail | – Ex. 9:23-25 |
| 8. Locusts | – Ex. 10:4-5 |
| 9. Darkness | – Ex. 10:21-22 |
| 10. Death of the Firstborn | – Ex. 11:4-10 |

As a result of the judgments, Pharaoh released the Egyptians from their oppressive servitude, and in the process, they were able to leave with the wealth of the Egyptians (Ex. 12:35-36).

Fourth Generation

Another marker that needs to be taken into consideration is the timeline that God is giving Abraham of when His progeny will experience their deliverance from their affliction. God says that this will take place in the fourth generation “And they shall come back here [Canaan] in the fourth generation” (Gen. 15:16). A generation is defined as the term of years, roughly 30 among human beings, accepted as the average period between the birth of parents and the birth of their offspring (Dictionary.com). In the Bible, that generation could be extended to 100 years. Nevertheless, the text suggests that the fourth generation in view was the generation of Moses. The following passages corroborate this supposition. In 1 Chronicles 6:1-3, the chronicler writes, “The sons of *Levi*: Gershon, *Kohath*, and Merari. The sons of *Kohath*: *Amram*, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. The children of *Amram*: Aaron, *Moses*, and Miriam. The sons of Aaron: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar” [emphasis added].

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|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Levi is the first generation | – 1st generation. |
| 2. Levi’s son Kohath is the | – 2nd generation |
| 3. Kohath’s son, Amran is the | – 3rd generation |
| 4. Amran’s son, Moses is the | – 4th generation |

Moses delivers the children of Israel out of the Egyptian captivity in his generation, the fourth generation, from Levi which presumingly began the count down to their Israel’s redemption. This supposition would have to be accurate due to several reasons. First, when Matthew gives his generational table he says, “So all the generations from Abraham to David were *fourteen generations*, and from David to the deportation to Babylon *fourteen generations*, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ *fourteen generations*” (Matt. 1:17). The total generations from Abraham are 42 generations. The Abrahamic promise was that his descendants

would be delivered from captivity in the fourth generation. Moses was the fourth generation of the Egyptian captivity and was the one who led His people out of Egypt.

For those who assert that the Black Hebrew Israelite diaspora of the Americas began in 1619 has to consider that so-called Black Israelites were being deported in ships to South America and the Islands (first), long before the American slave trade began. Thus, between 1505 - 1619 Anglos were transporting Black Jews and Africans into the New World. Therefore, when does one begin the count? Finally, the number of generations that have been in the Americas since the seventeenth century far surpasses four generations. If we use the age 30 for every interval generational year, then Black Hebrew Israelites have been here *for at least 14* generations, 10 generations past God's promise. Thus, the doctrine of America being the 400-year prophetic sojourn fails. In addition, there is another marker that has to be taken into consideration. That marker is a timeline associated with the Amorites.

God says, "for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete" (Gen. 15:16). This passage suggests that God's deliverance will not begin until he has determined to remove the Amorites from power, and the Bible supports such a proposition surrounding the Exodus of Egypt, not America. The author of Deuteronomy writes,

These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan in the wilderness, in the Arabah opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab. It is eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of Mount Seir to Kadesh-barnea. In the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses spoke to the people of Israel according to all that the LORD had given him in commandment to them, after he had defeated *Sihon the king of the Amorites*, who lived in Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, who lived in Ashtaroth and in Edrei (Deut. 1:1-4) [emphasis added].

Verse four demonstrates to the reader that Israel left Egypt in the generation of Moses when it was time to dispossess the Amorites of their land so that the Israelites could occupy it. The author continues,

"So, I sent messengers from the wilderness of Kedemoth to Sihon the king of Heshbon, with words of peace, saying, 'Let me pass through your land. I will go only by the road; I will turn aside neither to the right nor to the left. You shall sell me food for money, that I may eat, and give me water for money, that I may drink. Only let me pass through on foot, as the sons of Esau who live in Seir and the Moabites who live in Ar did for me, until I go over the Jordan into the land that the LORD our God is giving to us.' But Sihon the king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him, for the LORD your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, that he might give him into your hand, as he is this day. And the LORD said to me, 'Behold, I have begun to give Sihon and his land over to you. Begin to take possession, that you may occupy his land.' Then Sihon came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at Jahaz. And the LORD our God gave him over to us, and we defeated him and his sons and all his people. And we captured all his cities at that time and devoted to destruction every city, men, women, and children. We left no survivors (Deut. 2:26-34).

Sihon and his tribe have been destroyed by the Israelites who could now occupy their land. This occurrence happened after (1) *Egypt was judged*, (2) *Egypt was plundered*, (3) *in the fourth generation of Moses* (4) *at the fullness of the Amorites iniquity* which resulted in their demise. Yah affirms this position through the prophet Amos. “Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars and who was as strong as the oaks; I destroyed his fruit above and his roots beneath. Also, it was I who brought you up out of the land of Egypt and led you forty years in the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite” (Amos 2:9-10). Dr. Victor P. Hamilton, Professor Emeritus of Old Testament at Asbury University writes, “Only when the iniquity of the Amorites (i.e., the pre-Israelite inhabitants of Palestine) has run its full measure will the Israelites enter Palestine to claim it and possess it. Only when the iniquity of the Amorites has reached the point of no return will they forfeit the land. This last half of the verse articulates the idea that fixing of times is conditioned not on necessity but on morality.”⁴

Hamilton argues that the present prophetic context is relevant to the Israelites invasion and capture of the land, which was at that time ruled and governed by the Amorites. This prophecy was fulfilled in the fifteenth century BC and has no prophetic coalition to the Amorites in the twenty-first century because there is no Amorite nation to be displaced in this dispensation. The Amorites that were not destroyed by Israel assimilated with other surrounding nations, thereby losing their constitution as a nation. The book of Psalms supports this thesis and is quite explicit in its recounting of the Abrahamic promise that was fulfilled in Egypt. The psalmist writes,

He is the LORD our God; his judgments are in all the earth. He remembers his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations, *the covenant that he made with Abraham*, his sworn promise to Isaac, which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, saying, “To you I will give the land of Canaan as your portion for an inheritance.” *For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham, his servant. So, he brought his people out with joy, his chosen ones with singing and he gave them the lands of the nations, and they took possession of the fruit of the peoples’ toil* (Ps. 105:7-11, 42-44) [emphasis added].

The psalmist rejoices in the fact that God kept His promise to Abraham, bringing his progeny out of Egypt, rejoicing, and singing allowing them to take the land of Israel from the Amorites and the Canaanites to acquire the fruit of their labors as an inheritance from God (Deut. 9:4-5).

⁴ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 436.

New Testament Attestation

As part one of this lesson concludes, it would be imprudent not to include Stephen's discourse pertaining to this discussion. Stephen serves as a testimony to this composition and will affirm the consummation of the Abrahamic prophecy. Stephen says at his inquisition, “And God spoke to this effect—that his offspring would be sojourners in a land belonging to others, who would enslave them and afflict them four hundred years. ‘But I will judge the nation that they serve,’ said God, ‘and after that they shall come out and worship me in this place” (Acts 7:6-7). Dr. Robert H. Gundry, Professor Emeritus and Scholar-in-residence at Westmont College writes,

Stephen refers to the Israelites moving to Egypt, where they lived as resident aliens till the Egyptians enslaved and maltreated them. The indefinite ‘*whatever nation*’ is due to God’s not identifying Egypt as the nation at the time he spoke to Abraham. The judging of that nation consisted in the ten plagues God sent on Egypt (Exodus 7:14-12:30). ‘They’ll come out’ refers to Israel’s exodus from Egypt; and do me religious service in this place’ refers to the worship of God in the temple at Jerusalem (see 6:14 for “this place” as the temple).⁵

Stephen is quoting the Abrahamic prophecy which is also the Abrahamic promise. The promise that God made with Abraham that although his decedents would be in captivity for 400 years and afflicted, He would redeem them, judge the nation that oppressed them, and establish them in the land He gave to Abraham and his children. An obvious question would emerge here. Why would Stephen, in his defense, be revisiting a prophecy or promise that was yet to be fulfilled? Why would Stephen be rehearsing a story that is supposed to be applicable to Black Hebrew Israelites some 1,600 years later? He is not projecting this prophecy. Stephen is associating the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise with Moses and the succeeding generations who occupy the land of Israel in the day of Stephen’s testimony. The following passage ratifies this position. “But *as the time of the promise drew near*, which God had granted to Abraham, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt” (Acts 7:17) [emphasis added]. What promise is Stephen referring to? It is the promise God made with Abraham that although his children would be in captivity, God would deliver them and establish them in Israel.

Conclusion

The idea that America is the 400-year captivity, prophesied and promised to Abraham is an error in textual exegesis and sadly has misled thousands of people within the Israelite community. God’s promise to Abraham was fulfilled in the fourth generation represented by

⁵ Robert H. Gundry, *Commentary On Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 59.

Moses after they, beginning with Levi and his brothers, began to serve in Egypt. Yet oftentimes, a rebuttal to this observation will be, “well, Israelites were in Egypt for 430 years and Yahweh don’t make no 30-year mistake”. True, Yah does not make a 30-year error. This is why the text must be read within its proper chronological context using its markers for informative purposes. The author of Exodus says, “All the descendants of Jacob were seventy persons; *Joseph was already in Egypt*” (Ex. 1:5) [emphasis added].⁶ The author is alluding to the fact that Joseph had gone ahead of his nation perhaps by some 30 years before his father and brother entered Egypt, which officially began the countdown to their deliverance perhaps centered upon Jacobs birth and entrance into the land. A number of scholars offer various theories on the matter. Sarna writes,

Four hundred years, this figure presents an unresolved riddle. No indication is given as to the year from which the reckoning begins. Moreover, it does not seem to accord with the mere ‘four generations’ of verse 16, and it is not identical with the 430-year figure given in Exodus 12:40 as the entire period of time spent in Egypt. Another complication is the absence of any biblical tradition specifying the time that elapsed between the death of Joseph and the commencement of the slavery. Rabbinic exegesis generally understands the 400 years to begin with the birth of Isaac and the 430 years from the day of the covenant. According to this interpretation, the 400 years apply to the entire period of alienage. Since 190 years elapsed between the birth of Isaac and the descent of Jacob to Egypt, as can be computed from Genesis 25:26 and 47:9, this leaves 210 years for the entire Egyptian experience. This is not compatible, however, with the plain meaning of Exodus 12:40, which clearly belongs to another strand of tradition. It should be noted, though, that according to the Septuagint, Samaritan, and Syro-Palestinian versions of Exodus 12:40, the figure of 430 includes the years spent in Canaan.⁷

Questions abound about the 430-year paradox. Biblical Scholar, Dr. K.A. Kitchen, Professor Emeritus of Egyptology and Ancient Near Eastern History states, “400 years is a round figure in prospect, while the 430 years is more precise in retrospect.”⁸ Hebrew Israelites typically

⁶ Genesis 37:2, 41:46. Joseph was 17 years of age when he was sold into Egypt, and as Genesis states in 41:46 he was 30 years of age when he received the position of governor over Israel. This means that Joseph was serving in the land of Egypt for now 13 years before the rest of his family moved into Egypt. One must also include the “seven plenteous years” that Genesis mentions in 41:47, as well as 2 additional years mentioned in chapter 45:5-6, which means that Joseph is serving as governor in Egypt for 22 documented years without the rest of his family being in the land. There is approximately 22 years of Egyptian servitude, that Joseph; the seed of Abraham did prior to the rest of his brothers and his father coming into the land of Egypt. The additional 8 years are not documented in the Scripture, but is assumed to lie within the transitional years after Joseph’s confirmation of governor over the land of Egypt, just prior to the 7 years of plenty and prior to the 7 years of famine. This would certainly make since due to the fact that there had to be provisions made in order to store the great amounts of grain that would be collected during the seven years. Therefore, it is safe to assume that as the Egyptians and Hebrews built Pyramids and other monuments that took many years to construct, they also built enormous storage facilities in order to store the grains of seven years of plenty. Whatever the non-documented circumstances are, one can account for at least 22 of the 30 years in question which are documented, and the additional 8 years may lie within the transitional periods of the prophecy of plenty and famine.

⁷ Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis*, 116.

⁸ K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Press, 1966), 53.

default to this seemingly incongruent and irreconcilable number to argue that the Abrahamic prophecy has yet to be fulfilled. However, this argument simply fails because all of the additional markers are without ambiguity; thus, it is not enough to negate the data submitted within this composition that fulfills the markers Yah left the reader to see the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise in the fifteenth century BC. To ignore these markers is to violate the fundamental rules of hermeneutics, which are needed to understand the author's message, and any related prophecy he is revealing to the reader through figures and signs.

Part II of this discussion is titled *A Cruise To America*, which will further rebuff the idea that Black Hebrew Israelites were prophesied to come to America based upon the curses in the book of Deuteronomy 28, especially Deuteronomy 28:68. We hope that this article has been edifying for you, and you have been able to acquire a better understanding of Genesis 15:13-16.

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