How Many Years Were the Israelites in Egypt?

Exodus 12:40 declares that the Israelites were in Egypt for 430 years, yet evidence from other biblical texts suggests a much shorter sojourn.

[Dr. David Glatt-Gilad](https://www.thetorah.com/author/david-glatt-gilad)



*The Israelites Leaving Egypt*, David Roberts, 1828. Wikimedia

‍Internal Biblical Data Relating to the Length of the Israelite Sojourn in Egypt

The Torah in Exod 12:40–41 states unequivocally the length of Israel’s stay in Egypt:

יב:מ וּמוֹשַׁב֙ בְּנֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל אֲשֶׁ֥ר יָשְׁב֖וּ בְּמִצְרָ֑יִם שְׁלֹשִׁ֣ים שָׁנָ֔ה וְאַרְבַּ֥ע מֵא֖וֹת שָׁנָֽה: יב:מא וַיְהִ֗י מִקֵּץ֙ שְׁלֹשִׁ֣ים שָׁנָ֔ה וְאַרְבַּ֥ע מֵא֖וֹת שָׁנָ֑ה וַיְהִ֗י בְּעֶ֙צֶם֙ הַיּ֣וֹם הַזֶּ֔ה יָ֥צְא֛וּ כָּל־צִבְא֥וֹת יְ-הֹוָ֖ה מֵאֶ֥רֶץ מִצְרָֽיִם:

12:40 The length of time that the Israelites lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. 12:41 At the end of the four hundred and thirtieth year, to the very day, all the ranks of Yhwh departed from the land of Egypt.

Nevertheless, this sum is inconsistent with the genealogical data that can be gleaned from Genesis 46 and Exodus 6, (see Rashi *ad loc*.)[1] and from other parts of the Bible:

‍The Levite Line – Exodus 6 gives us a partial genealogy of Jacob’s descendants—of the tribes Reuben, Simeon, and Levi—up until the time of Moses showing only 2 generations between Kohath, who came to Egypt (see Gen 46:11), and Moses, who brought the Israelites out (Levi-Kohath-Amram-Moses). The span of a mere two generations between Moses and his grandfather Kohath[2] is far too short to bridge a period of 430 years.[3]

‍The Reubenite Line – The infamous pair of Reubenites, Dothan and Abiram, who rebelled against Moses’ authority during the wilderness wanderings, were the grandsons of Palu (Num 26:8–9), who in turn is mentioned in Gen 46:9 as one of the 70 migrants to Egypt. Once again, a span of only two generations is nowhere near the length of a 430 year stay in Egypt mentioned by Exod 12:40.

‍The Judahite Line – Looking a bit further afield, Nachshon son of Aminadav, a contemporary of Moses,[4] is listed at the end of Megillat Ruth (4:18–20) as the great-grandson of Hetzron, who appears in Gen 46:12 among the original 70 migrants to Egypt. This genealogy account creates a three generation span between those who descended to Egypt and those who participated in the exodus (rather than just two), but it still does not significantly close the gap of 430 years demanded by the literal understanding of Exod 12:40.

In sum, the evidence above implies that for the authors of these texts, the period of Israelite habitation in Egypt was far less than 430 years.

Sojourn in Canaan and Egypt – The Septuagint and the Samaritan Pentateuch

Some of the ancient versions solved this problem by extending the period of 430 years back to Abraham’s arrival in Canaan. Accordingly, the Septuagint and Samaritan Pentateuch solve the problem by adding the stay in Canaan explicitly into Exod 12:40:

Septuagint (LXX)

And the sojourning of the children of Israel, while they sojourned in the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan, was 430 years.

Samaritan Pentateuch (SP)

‍And the sojourning of the children of Israel, while they sojourned in the land of Canaan and the land of Egypt was 430 years.[5]

The added phrase does not appear in the same spot in the LXX and the SP, suggesting that they are not dependent on another, and that this solution was suggested twice, independently of each other, in each of these versions. It is striking that the Septuagint version of Exod 12:40 is recorded in the *Mekhilta* (Bo, *parasha* 14) as one of the cases in which the sages engaged by the Egyptian king Ptolemy to translate the Torah into Greek purposely deviated from the plain sense of the text.[6]

The treatment of the chronological data related to the patriarchs in the Septuagint and Samaritan Pentateuch suggests a neat breakdown of 215 years each for the periods of residence in Canaan and in Egypt:

* 25 years passed from the time of Abraham’s arrival in Canaan at the age of 75 (Gen. 12:4) until the birth of Isaac, at which time Abraham was 100 years old (Gen 21:5)
* 60 years passed from the birth of Isaac until the birth of Jacob (Gen 25:26)
* 130 years passed from the birth of Jacob until he and his descendants moved to Egypt (Gen 47:9)

The sum of the highlighted figures equals 215 years, thus leaving another 215 for the actual stay in Egypt. But even this figure is too high to accommodate the 2-3 generations of the Israelites’ stay in Egypt.

The Classical Rabbinic Solution: Reading 430 years in Exodus in Line with the 400 years of the “Covenant between the Pieces”

Despite the fact that the *Mekhilta* viewed the Septuagint’s version as secondary, the classical rabbis hardly viewed its solution as completely arbitrary, and several connected it to the 400 year period mentioned in Genesis 15:13–14, during which Abraham’s children would be strangers in a land not of their own until their eventual deliverance:

טו:יג וַיֹּא֣מֶר לְאַבְרָ֗ם יָדֹ֨עַ תֵּדַ֜ע כִּי־גֵ֣ר׀ יִהְיֶ֣ה זַרְעֲךָ֗ בְּאֶ֙רֶץ֙ לֹ֣א לָהֶ֔ם וַעֲבָד֖וּם וְעִנּ֣וּ אֹתָ֑ם אַרְבַּ֥ע מֵא֖וֹת שָׁנָֽה: טו:יד וְגַ֧ם אֶת־הַגּ֛וֹי אֲשֶׁ֥ר יַעֲבֹ֖דוּ דָּ֣ן אָנֹ֑כִי וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵ֥ן יֵצְא֖וּ בִּרְכֻ֥שׁ גָּדֽוֹל:

15:13 And He [God] said to Abram: Know well that your offspring shall be strangers in a land not theirs and they shall be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. 15:14 But I will execute judgment on the nation they shall serve, and in the end they shall go free with great wealth.

Two points need to be emphasized here:

1) In the rabbis’ view, the 400 year period of Abraham’s descendants’ sojourning and subjugation began as soon as Isaac was born, since even in Canaan, Isaac and Jacob could be regarded as sojourners in a land that did not yet officially belong to them.[7]

2) In order to account for the discrepancy between Exod 12:40 that refers to 430 years of sojourning and Gen 15:13 that speaks of 400 years, the rabbis suggested that God relayed the prophecy concerning the 400 years to Abraham 30 years *before* Isaac’s birth.[8]

מקרא מסורס – Transposing the Verse: Ramban’s Explanation

In adopting the classical rabbis’ approach, Ramban offers a syntactical explanation of Gen 15:13 designed to demonstrate that the hallmark of the 400-year period between Isaac’s birth and the redemption from Egypt was that Abraham’s descendants would be living as resident aliens, *not* that they would be physically enslaved for this entire period:

זה מקרא מסורס, ושיעורו כי גר יהיה זרעך בארץ לא להם ארבע מאות שנה ועבדום וענו אותם, ולא פירש כמה ימי העבדות והעינוי. והרבה מקראות מסורסות יש בכתוב ...

This is a verse that is to be transposed, its purport being that “thy seed shall be a stranger for 400 years in a land that is not theirs, and they shall enslave them, and they shall afflict them.” He has thus not specified the length of the period of servitude and affliction. There are many cases in Scripture where verses must be transposed if they are to be interpreted properly…

Ramban goes on to cite various other verses which make better sense if for the purpose of explication, their clauses are rearranged.[9] However, Ramban’s recourse to this exegetical method of transposing clauses in Gen 15:13 seems to be driven by his commitment to harmonize the verse with external data and not because of an internal or contextual problem with Genesis 15.

Rabbinic Counting – 210 years

Returning now to Exod 12:40, not only Rashi, but even more *peshat*-oriented commentators like Rashbam and Ibn-Ezra toe the line, such that the 430 figure overlaps with Gen 15:13’s 400 year period of sojourning. However, since the starting point of the sojourning/subjugation reckoning is from Isaac’s birth (rather than from Abraham’s arrival in Canaan following the Septuagint and Samaritan Pentateuch model), the number of years spent in Canaan and Egypt, respectively, ends up being slightly less symmetrical than in the reckoning reflected by the Septuagint and Samaritan Pentateuch:

* 60 years passed from the birth of Isaac until the birth of Jacob (Gen 25:26).
* 130 years passed from the birth of Jacob until he and his descendants moved to Egypt (Gen 47:9).

The sum of highlighted years here equals 190 years, thus leaving another 210 years (rather than 215) for the period of Israelite settlement in Egypt.[10] However, this still does not go far enough to bridge the gap of a mere 2-3 generations between those who arrived in Egypt and those who participated in the exodus as discussed above.

430 Years in Egypt: On its Own Terms

The solutions discussed up until now attempt to harmonize the genealogical data with the tradition that Israel was in Egypt for four hundred and thirty years by including the patriarchal period in the count. Taken on its own terms, however, Exod 12:40 speaks of the children of Israel who dwelled *in*Egypt (not Canaan), so this solution is not acceptable. Furthermore, before Jacob had children, an entity called the “children of Israel” did not exist,[11] so that the reckoning of the children of Israel’s stay in Egypt can by definition only commence from when Jacob’s children migrated there.

400 Years and the 4th Generation in the Covenant between the Pieces

As opposed to Ramban’s understanding of Gen 15:13, according to which the period of Abram’s descendants’ dispossession antedates the onset of their servitude, the fact remains that the dispossession and servitude are referred to in such syntactical proximity that it is hard to escape the impression that they are intended to be completely overlapping with each other for the full 400 year period mentioned at the end of the verse.[12]

How, then, should we understand the statement of Gen 15:16 that the “fourth generation” will return to Canaan, which actually better fits the genealogical information noted above?[13] One possibility is that Gen 15:16 reflects an early attempt at harmonizing the various data (i.e. the notion of a 400 year enslavement with the briefer period allowed for by the genealogies).[14] Another possibility is that the “fourth generation” is a general expression for a long amount of time. E. A. Speiser, the author of the Anchor Bible commentary on Genesis, adopts this position:

“Hebrew *dōr* signifies ‘duration, age, time span’, and is only secondarily ‘generation’ in the current sense of the term. The context does not show specifically how the author used the term in this instance; it could have been any of several round number of years. No conclusions can therefore be drawn from this passage in regard to the date of the Exodus.”[15]

Is a 430 Year Period in Egypt to be Understood Historically or Schematically?

Having established that the plain meaning of Exod 12:40 refers to an Israelite presence in Egypt alone, one is still left with the question of what to make of this figure. Might it carry any historical value, or is it preferable to interpret it through a symbolic prism?

Historical Approach

Positing a 400 year plus stay in Egypt might seem attractive for several reasons. It allows more time for the Israelite population explosion from 70 souls at the time of the arrival in Egypt (Gen 46:27) to the 600,000 fighting force at the time of the exodus (Exod 12:37). Furthermore, if the biblical traditions concerning the exodus have a historical kernel, this figure works well: the Israelite migration to Egypt would be connected to the period of Hyksos domination (beginning in approximately the second quarter of the seventeenth century B.C.E.) and the exodus connected to the reign of Ramses II (probably in the middle of the thirteenth century B.C.E., one generation before Merneptah refers to an Israelite presence in Canaan during the last quarter of that century). This indeed works out to a 400 year or so duration of the Israelites’ stay in Egypt.[16]

Still in all, linking the exodus, let alone Jacob’s arrival in Egypt, to particular historical periods is a notoriously difficult business, and one must reckon with the distinct possibility that the Egyptian-related elements in the Torah’s written traditions stem from a number of different settings not necessarily related to each other.[17]

Schematic Approach

A more fruitful avenue is to treat the 430-year figure of Exod 12:40 as representing a schematic number. Schematic numbers are used in various parts of the Bible to express wholeness (e.g. Joseph’s ideal lifetime, in Egyptian terms, of 110 years; the 40 year periods of tranquility in the Book of Judges), or as key elements of a much larger ideational framework. Since 430 is not elsewhere a typological number, it likely belongs to the latter category. It is part of a chronological chain that assigns precisely 1200 years from the birth of Abraham to the construction of Solomon’s temple:[18]

* 100 years from Abraham’s birth to Isaac’s birth (Gen 21:5)
* 60 years from Isaac’s birth to Jacob’s birth (Gen 25:26)
* 130 years from Jacob’s birth to the descent to Egypt (Gen 47:9)
* 430 years from the descent to Egypt to the exodus (Exod 12:40)[19]
* 480 years from the exodus to the construction of Solomon’s temple (1 Kgs 6:1)[20]

These five figures total 1200 years – a number that carries great significance in a chronographic system that is dominated by multiples of 60 (often with the addition of the special number seven), as noted by Cassuto and others.[21]

Historical Summaries vs. Genealogical Notices and the Ramifications for Dating Exod 12:40 (and 1 Kgs 6:1)

Verses like Exod 12:40 and 1 Kgs 6:1, that specifically state the number of years belonging to a given historical period, are fundamentally different than verses like those that depict Abraham’s age when Isaac was born (Gen 21:5), Isaac’s age when Esau and Jacob were born (25:26), and Jacob’s age when speaking with Pharaoh (47:9). That is because the genealogical data in verses of the latter type appear to have originated independently, before their eventual incorporation into the grand chronological schemes of verses of the former type.

To be sure, the chronological schemes represented by Exod 12:40 and 1 Kgs 6:1 do not have to be regarded as late insertions *a priori*. Schematic numbering is known from as early as the third millennium B.C.E. Sumerian king list all the way down through Jewish literature of the Second Temple period (e.g. the books of Daniel and Jubilees). Still in all, within the Torah, schematic numbering is most characteristic of Priestly literature. Included in the priestly corpus are the *toledot* passages in Genesis 5 and 11 that list the ages of the figures between Adam and Abraham at fatherhood and at death, as well as Exod 12:40 itself. The precise type of dating found in 1 Kgs 6:1 is also particularly characteristic of the priestly style and the building and dedication of Solomon’s temple was obviously a subject that would have attracted priestly attention.[22]

It is beyond the scope of this essay to deal with the date of the Priestly literature as a whole. However, one salient reason for viewing at least the chronologically schematic framework verses (such as Exod 12:40 and 1 Kgs 6:1) as late creations is that they come to impose an overall pattern on the material, even at the cost of not being able to accommodate all of the data. Thus, in erecting an overarching chronological scheme covering the period between Abraham and Solomon, the Priestly tradent responsible for Exod 12:40 was able to successfully incorporate the verses relating to the patriarchs’ ages, but not other data such as the genealogies of Exod 6 (even though these also stemmed from P).

Similarly, 1 Kgs 6:1 reflects a schematic system that incorporates Exod 12:40 and its schematic substratum, but without being able to accommodate the notices in the Book of Judges that relate to the judges’ periods of service and the interludes between them.[23]

A Conclusion Without a Conclusion: Redemption at the Proper Time

Coming back full circle to the question posed in the title of this article “For how many years were the Israelites in Egypt?,” we can take inspiration from Rashi, who was not ashamed to admit on various occasions “I don’t know!”[24] Nevertheless, we can still draw theological meaning from this lack of historical clarity.

One passage in the *Mekhilta* (Bo, *parasha* 14) clearly recognizes that the figure of a 400 year enslavement does not square with the notion of a mere four generation absence from the land of Israel and thus infers,

רבי אומר כתוב אחד אומר ועבדום וענו אותם ארבע מאות שנה וכתוב אחד אומר ודור רביעי ישובו הנה. כיצד יתקיימו שני כתובים הללו? אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא, אם עושין תשובה אני גואלם לדורות, ואם לאו אני גואלם לשנים

Rabbi says: One passage says 'And they shall serve them and they shall afflict them four hundred years,' and one passage says, 'And in the fourth generation they shall come back hither.' How can both these passages be maintained? The Holy One, blessed be He said: "If they repent I will redeem them after the number of generations, and if not, I will redeem them after the number of years.”

In other words, God’s plan was to redeem Israel at the proper time, whether sooner or later, but with a pre-determined outer limit.[25] This concept, of an ultimately redeeming God, however long it might take, is what has given hope to the people of Israel throughout its long history.

[View Footnotes](https://www.thetorah.com/article/how-many-years-were-the-israelites-in-egypt)

שלשים שנה וארבע מאות שנה – בין הכל משנולד יצחק עד עכשיו היו ארבע מאות שנה. משהיה לו זרע לאברהם נתקיים (בראשית טו יג) כי גר יהיה זרעך, ושלשים שנה היו משנגזרה גזירת בין הבתרים עד שנולד יצחק. ואי אפשר לומר בארץ מצרים לבדה, שהרי קהת מן הבאים עם יעקב היה צא וחשוב כל שנותיו וכל שנות עמרם בנו ושמונים של משה, לא תמצאם כל כך, ועל כרחך הרבה שנים היו לקהת עד שלא ירד למצרים, והרבה משנות עמרם נבלעים בשנות קהת והרבה משמונים של משה נבלעים בשנות עמרם, הרי שלא תמצא ארבע מאות לביאת מצרים, והוזקקת לומר על כרחך, שאף שאר הישיבות נקראו גרות, אפילו בחברון, שנאמר (בראשית לה כז) אשר גר שם אברהם ויצחק, ואומר (שמות ו ד) את ארץ מגוריהם אשר גרו בה, לפיכך אתה צריך לומר כי גר יהיה זרעך משהיה לו זרע. וכשתמנה ארבע מאות שנה משנולד יצחק, תמצא מביאתן למצרים עד יציאתן מאתים ועשר שנה, וזה אחד מן הדברים ששינו לתלמי המלך:

1. See Exod 6:18, 20; see also Num 26:58–59.
2. See *Seder Olam Rabbah* (ch. 3), that even if one were to add the full life span of Kohath (133 – see Exod 6:18) with that of his son Amram (137 – see Exod 6:20), together with the age of his grandson Moses at the time of the exodus (80 – see Exod 7:7) sequentially, i.e., without any overlap between the three figures, this would only come to a total of 350 years. Cassuto attempts to square the 430 years of Exod 12:40 with the life spans given in Exod 6–7 for Levi, Kohath, Amram, and Aaron, but only by treating the figures sequentially and by arbitrarily lopping off precisely 60 years for the period of time that Levi and Kohath were not yet in Egypt. See U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (English translation; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), pp. 86–87.
3. See Exod 6:23 and Numbers 1:7; 3:3; 7:12

ומושב בני ישראל ואבתם אשר ישבו בארץ כנען ובארץ מצרים שלשים שנה וארבע מאות שנה

“ומושב בני ישראל אשר ישבו במצרים ובארץ כנען ובארץ גושן שלשים שנה וארבע מאות שנה” – זה אחד מן הדברים שכתבו לתלמי המלך

1. This point is brought out clearly in the rabbinic treatise *Seder Olam Rabbah* chapter 3, followed by Rashi to Gen 15:13

סדר עולם רבה - נאמר לאברהם אבינו בין הבתרים ידוע תדע כי גר יהיה זרעך וגו’. ואי זה זרע? זה יצחק, שנאמר כי ביצחק יקרא לך זרע.

רש”י בראשית פרק טו פסוק יג - בארץ לא להם – לא נאמר בארץ מצרים אלא בארץ לא להם, ומשנולד יצחק (להלן כא לד) ויגר אברהם וגו’, וביצחק (שם כו ג) גור בארץ הזאת, (תהלים קה כג) ויעקב גר בארץ חם, (בראשית מז ד) לגור בארץ באנו:

1. For details, see David Blumenthal’s TABS article, [“The Rabbinic Chronology of Lech Lecha.”](http://thetorah.com/rabbinic-chronology-of-lech-lecha/)
2. Gen 39:17; 41:57; Exod 12:15; Isaiah 2:20; Hosea 8:2, etc.
3. Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 91:2, which takes Jacob’s words רדו שמה in Gen 42:2 as alluding through *gematria* to the eventual length of his offspring’s stay in Egypt (*resh* = 200, plus*dalet* = 4, plus *vav* = 6).
4. The term first appears in the context of Jacob’s sons going down to Egypt during the extended famine in order to purchase food (Gen 42:5).
5. An unusually extended period of actual exile under oppressive conditions would also best account for the threatening imagery of the vulture in v. 11 there as well as the great darkness and fear that seizes Abram in v. 12.

וירד העיט על-הפגרים וישב אתם אברם. ויהי השמש לבוא ותרדמה נפלה על-אברם והנה אימה חשכה גדלה נפלת עליו

1. ודור רביעי ישובו הנה כי לא-שלם עון האמרי עד-הנה
2. Accordingly, then, each generation would be seen as encompassing 100 years – see Rashbam and Hizkuni ad loc, who, along with Ramban, also see an allusion here to the principle enunciated in Exod 20:5 – פקד עון אבת על-בנים על-שלשים ועל-רבעים לשנאי – in the sense that four generations of sinful Amorites will be punished until they are eliminated.
3. E. A. Speiser, *Genesis: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Anchor Bible, vol. 1); Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964, p. 113.
4. For details, see Baruch Halpern, “The Exodus and the Israelite Historians,” *Eretz-Israel*vol. 24 (Abraham Malamat Volume); Jerusalem: The Israel Exploration Society, 1993, pp. 89\*–96\*.
5. Thus, the phenomena of Asiatics migrating to Egypt in time of famine and groups of slaves escaping from Egypt are attested to in various and sundry periods of Egyptian history. On the fusing of memories from various periods of Egyptian history in the Exodus tradition, see especially William H. C. Propp, *Exodus 19–40: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible, vol. 2A; New York: Doubleday, 2006), pp. 741–744.
6. See Jeremy Hughes, *Secrets of the Times: Myth and History in Biblical Chronology*(JSOTSupp 66; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), p. 2.
7. With regard to the specific function of the 430 year figure in Exod 12:40, Propp cites the suggestion made by Dillmann in the latter’s 1880 commentary to Exodus, that Exod 12:40 may be expressing the idea that the Israelite stay in Egypt was exactly twice as long as the period of the patriarchs’ sojourns in Canaan, which as we saw above, with reference to the Septuagint and the Samaritan Pentateuch, totaled 215 years. See William H. C. Propp, *Exodus 1–18: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible, vol. 2); New York: Doubleday, 1999, p. 415.

ויהי בשמונים שנה וארבע מאות שנה לצאת בני-ישראל מארץ-מצרים בשנה הרביעית בחדש זו הוא החדש השני למלך שלמה על-ישראל ויבן הבית לה’

Indeed, the 480 years of 1 Kgs 6:1, perhaps the most famous link in this chain, itself expresses a multiple of 60, although the significance of the 480 figure has often been understood, following Wellhausen, as representing a schematic assignment of 40 years for each of the 12 high priests listed in 1 Chr 5:29–36 as having served between the period of the exodus and Solomon’s temple (40 times 12 equaling 480). See Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible, vol. 10); New York: Doubleday, 2001, p. 236. Although Azariah son of Yohanan, who is named in 1 Chr 5:36 as being the priest who served in Solomon’s temple, is separated from Aaron by 14 generations rather than 12, the distinction most likely belongs to Azariah son of Ahimaaz mentioned in v. 35 there, since Ahimaaz’s father Zadok is known to have been contemporary with David (2 Sam 8:17; 15:27). Indeed in 1 Kgs 4:2, Azariah ben Zakok is listed as Solomon’s priest (the verse seems to tie Azariah to his more famous grandfather, rather than to his actual father Ahimaaz).

1. See U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (English translation); Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961 and 1964, vol. 1, pp. 258–262 and vol. 2, pp. 252–258; Lloyd R. Bailey, “Biblical Math as *Heilsgeschichte*?,” in Richard D. Weis and David M. Carr (eds.), *A Gift of God in Due Season: Essays on Scripture and Community in Honor of James A. Sanders*(JSOTSupp 225); Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996, pp. 84–102. The number 60 and its multiples, particularly 12, probably attracted the attention of the ancients due to their astronomical significance.
2. 1 Kgs 8:3–4, 6–8, 10–11 as well bear the hallmarks of priestly writing; see Hughes,*Secrets of the Times* (above, n. 18), pp. 32–33.
3. These latter notices evidently stemmed from what is referred to in scholarship as the Deuteronomistic school, i.e. the group that was active from the seventh century through the Babylonian exile in editing various sections of the Former Prophets books (and the book of Jeremiah) in the spirit of Deuteronomy. Already Spinoza in chapter 9 of his *Theologico-Political Treatise* dealt at length with the discrepancy between 1 Kgs 6:1 and the scattered chronological notices in the books of Judges and Samuel.
4. For a list of such instances in Rashi’s commentary, see Ezra Zion Melammed, *Bible Commentators* (2nd ed.), Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1978, vol. 1, p. 423 [Hebrew].
5. The same idea underlies the Rabbinic comment on Isa 60:22 – אני ה’ בעתה אחישנה – which b. *Sanhedrin* 98a interprets as meaning זכו – אחישנה. לא זכו – בעתה