

## The Book of Acts: Verse-by-Verse

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### Acts 7:17-29

- **Stephen's Account Of Moses: verses 17 to 43:**

Stephen divides his history of Moses' career into three forty-year periods: 40 years in Egypt, 40 years in Midian, and 40 years of leading Israel.

Perhaps Stephen spends so much time on Moses' leadership because he had been accused of speaking against Moses. He demonstrates a thorough knowledge of Moses, and a deep respect for his legacy among Israel's leaders.

- **God's Promise To Abraham: vv.17-19:**

"As the time drew near for God to fulfill his promise to Abraham, the number of our people in Egypt greatly increased. 18 Then another king, who knew nothing about Joseph, became ruler of Egypt. 19 He dealt treacherously with our people and oppressed our forefathers by forcing them to throw out their newborn babies so that they would die.

Stephen immediately contextualizes the story of Moses by placing it in the larger story of God's promises to Abraham. See: Genesis 15:13-16

400 Years or 430 Years?

- Exodus 12:40–41: "The time that the people of Israel lived in Egypt was 430 years."
- Acts 7:6: "God spoke to this effect—that his offspring would be sojourners in a land belonging to others, who would enslave them and afflict them 400 years."

- Galatians 3:16–17, \*17 “...The law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void.”

Was the Israelite captivity 400 years or 430?

Dr. Floyd Nolen Jones: (The Chronology of the Old Testament)

Israel's 400 years of sojourning and affliction started with Isaac's weaning when he was five years old. It was at that time that his half-Egyptian brother, Ishmael, mocked him.

James Usher: “Based on these verses (Ga 4:29, Ge 15:13, Ac 7:6), we conclude that this persecution started at this time when Isaac was five years old and Abraham made this feast. This was thirty years after Abraham left Haran.”

- **A New King – An Incentive To Deliverance: vv. 18-19**

“Then another king, who knew nothing about Joseph, became ruler of Egypt. He dealt treacherously with our people and oppressed our forefathers by forcing them to throw out their newborn babies so that they would die.”

God had given Abraham two promises. 1. He would produce a nation. 2. His descendants would possess the land of Canaan.

The first promise was being fulfilled even during their Egyptian captivity. Jacobs family of 75 persons had now multiplied greatly during the four centuries in Egypt.

How would Israel come to possess Canaan? In short, the answer was, only after a protracted era of suffering. Egypt's new king became the instrument by which God would force Israel's emancipation.

Who was the Pharoah of the Exodus Story?

Historians suggest that the Pharaoh of the Exodus story was one of the early kings of Egypt's Nineteenth Dynasty. One of the clues to this suggestion is found in the references to the building of "Raamses" in Ex. 1:11. This probably points to Pi-Ramesse, which was the East Delta residence of Rameses II. He reigned from 1290–1224 B.C. and is considered the greatest king of the 19<sup>th</sup> Dynasty.

- **Why It Took Suffering For Israel To Want To Leave Goshen:**

F.F. Bruce: "But for his [Pharaoh's] policy they might have found Egypt so comfortable that they would never have thought of leaving it." - F.F. Bruce

Goshen was situated in Egypt's northeast, in the delta region. Joseph advised his father to tell Pharaoh that they were shepherds in order for them to settle in Goshen: 1. Shepherds were despised by Egyptians, but a large area was needed. (See: Genesis 46:34). 2. Goshen was known as one of the highly fertile areas of Egypt. (See: Genesis 47:6)

A Political Reason: Goshen was very likely located close to the centers of the Egyptian government. The baby Moses was discovered by Pharaoh's daughter when she went for her ritualistic bath in the Nile, near to the royal palace.

In Genesis 47:11, the region of Goshen is also referred to as Rameses - one of Egypt's garrison cities.

- **An Unlikely Deliverer: vv. 20-22:**

"At that time Moses was born, and he was no ordinary child. For three months he was cared for in his father's house. 21 When he was placed outside, Pharaoh's daughter took him and brought him up as her own son. 22 Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action."

At what appeared to be the peak of suffering for God's people, Moses was born. The NIV translates verse 2 as 'No ordinary child'. The

Hebrew phrase combines two features about the baby: He was both beautiful and pleasing to God.

Without going into the details we find in Exodus, Stephen simply notes that Moses was cared for in his father's house. This was, of course, during a time when Egypt's king was demanding that all male infants be drowned in the Nile.

- **The Importance Of The Nile:**

Rabbi Menachem Posner suggests Pharaoh's astrologers predicted water would be the catalyst for the downfall of the Hebrews' savior. Moses' mother hoped that putting Moses in the Nile the astrologers would be satisfied and the death sentence for Hebrew male infants would be lifted.

- **A Man Powerful in Speech and Actions: v. 22**

An irony: The King of Egypt decreed that all Hebrew male infants should be drowned in the Nile, but his daughter found Moses and raised him as a prince.

Stephen says Moses distinguished himself in both oratory skills and actions. Does he mean while Moses was still in Egypt or when he led Israel? See: Exodus 4:10-13:

Note: Stephen's description of Moses is conservative compared to how many Greek/Jewish scholars of his day presented him. Some went as far as to insist that Moses was the Egyptian father or science and the founder of Egyptian civilization.

- **The Second Epoch: vv. 23-25**

"When Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his fellow Israelites. 24 He saw one of them being mistreated by an Egyptian, so he went to his defense and avenged him by killing the Egyptian. 25

Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not.”

- The Number “40” And It’s Symbolic Purposes:

- Specifically mentioned no less than 146 times in scripture.
- Often used as an indicator of a probationary period, a time of testing, and eventually attached to victory.
- Indicative of God’s promises – either positively or negatively.

Examples:

- Moses was on Mount Sinai for 40 days and nights two different times. (Exodus 24:18, 34:1- 28)
- The spies were sent into Canaan for 40 days, to determine the fortifications of the cities Israel would attack. (Numbers 13:25, 14:34).
- Jonah told the Ninevites that they had 40 days before God would send destruction to their city. (Jonah 3:4)
- Ezekiel laid on His right side for 40 days, symbolizing Judah's sins and God’s coming judgment. (Ezekiel 4:6).

- **A Flawed Attempt:**

“... He decided to visit his fellow Israelites.” This is an indication of Moses’ knowledge of his dual heritage.

The Exodus account of Moses’ failed deliverance gives us his actions, while Stephen’s account gives us his motives.

1. The first time he tried to rescue a Hebrew slave from an Egyptian taskmaster and ended up killing the Egyptian. 2. His second venture led to his discovery that the murder was knowns.

Stephen tells us that Moses was confused by the fact that his fellow Hebrews didn't understand his calling to deliver them from Egyptian bondage. He records, "Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not."

Smith's Bible: A Parallel Of Deliverers – Joseph and Moses:

1. Both men were both called to deliver their people.
  2. Both men failed on their first introduction to their respective audiences. Joseph made himself the odious to his brothers by continually reminding them of his dreams. Moses caused his fellow Hebrews to dread him when he killed the Egyptian official.
  3. Both men found themselves cast out of their homelands. Joseph was sold as a slave into Egypt. Moses had to flee from Egypt and took up residence in Midian.
  4. Both men experienced the rigors of testing and apparent defeat, yet, at the right time, God brought both back to their original callings.
- **Next time: Moses is recalled to Egypt.**