

Do Commas Matter?

<u>King James Version</u>	<u>New International and other Modern Versions</u>
<i>Exodus 12:40</i> “Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years.”	<i>Exodus 12:40</i> “Now the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years.”

These Bibles do not say the same thing!

The KJV requires 430 years of sojourning and does not state the time in Egypt. The NIV and others say nothing about sojourning but require 430 years in Egypt.

Do you know Bible history? God promised Abraham He would bless all Gentile nations through him, when he was 75 years old. This occurred 430 years before God gave the Law to Moses (Gal 3:17), in the same year that Israel left Egypt. Abraham and his family sojourned in Canaan for 215 years, and then his family lived in Egypt for another 215 years. Here is what the 430 years looks like in a table:

God blessed Abraham, when he was 75 (Gen 12:1-4)	0
Years until Isaac was born (Gen 21:5)	25
Years until Jacob was born (Gen 25:26)	60
Age of Jacob at move to Egypt (Gen 47:9)	<u>130</u>
Number of years the family ... sojourned in Canaan	215
Number of years the family ... sojourned and dwelt in Egypt	<u>215</u>
TOTAL Years Between the Covenants (Gal 3:17)	<u>430</u>

Can you read English? The KJV in Exodus 12:40 does not say how long Israel dwelt in Egypt: it only says they sojourned 430 years. The NIV does not say Israel sojourned at all: it only says they lived in Egypt 430 years. This is wrong by 215 years, as the table shows. The NIV contradicts itself, because it has Israel in Egypt for 430 years (Ex 12:40), but has only 430 years from Abraham to Sinai (Gal 3:17).

A nonrestrictive clause is not essential to the sentence, so it is enclosed with commas. Exodus 12:40 in the KJV allows Abraham and his family to sojourn for 215 years before moving to Egypt, where their children dwelt another 215 years. The clause, “who dwelt in Egypt,” is enclosed in commas, so it is not essential to the sentence, and it has no relation to the 430 years. The NIV, by removing the commas and any reference to sojourning, requires Israel in Egypt for 430 years, contradicting Galatians 3:17! Commas are important! The NIV is wrong! And so are all other modern versions in Exodus 12:40!

Adjective clauses or phrases are nonrestrictive when they describe (rather than limit the meaning of) the noun or pronoun they modify: set off by commas, they are nonessential parenthetical elements that may be omitted.

Harbrace College Handbook, Tenth Edition, 1986.