

# Exodus 12:37-41

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/exod/exod-12/exodus-1237-41/>

*Verses 37 – 41 summarize the exit from Egypt. Verse 37 itself is a turning point in the book of Exodus. Instead remaining in bondage in Egypt, the Israelites are now beginning their journey to freedom out of Egypt. With them go various other enslaved ethnic peoples, along with a great many livestock. They left so quickly, they could only make unleavened bread for food. The Israelites had been in Egypt for 430 years.*

In the first leg of the trip, *the sons of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth*. This is about a day's journey beginning on the east side of the Nile delta. The location of "Succoth" is unknown, but it was probably only a few miles from Rameses.

There is much debate about the meaning of *about six hundred thousand men on foot*. The issue is the meaning of the word translated "thousand" (Hebrew *eleph*). If taken literally, 600,000 men could suggest an equal number of women and a comparable number of children. This would make the total number of Israelites that left Egypt to be just under 2 million. Others take the word "thousand" to refer to a group of people, such as a "family" or "clan." Still others take the word less literally to mean "hundred" or something similar. There is no way to know for sure, but one can safely say that the number of Israelites that left Egypt was quite large, probably over one million. Because the Scriptures do not tell us, it is impossible to be certain. The phrase *aside from children* (Hebrew "little ones") further identifies the 600,000 as grown men able to take up arms because "children" often refers to persons (of both genders) who are 20 years of age or less.

There is also a difference of opinion concerning the identity of the *mixed multitude* who *also went up with them* in verse 38. Some take it spiritually, meaning those who fear the LORD and those who do not. It seems best to see the "mixed multitude" as a collection of different ethnic groups that used the Israelite exit as their opportunity to flee their own slavery in Egypt. It might have included Egyptians that had come to faith in the LORD during the plagues (9:20) as well as other enslaved ethnic groups. Their departure also included *flocks and herds, a very large number of livestock*.

For food, *they baked the dough which they had brought out of Egypt into cakes of unleavened bread*. In their haste to leave, *it had not become leavened, since they were driven out of Egypt and could not delay*. They were neither able to prepare bread in the normal way *nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves*. Since leaven is often used as a symbol for sin, this could be a picture that Israel left their sin in Egypt. It could be a future picture of Jesus, our Passover, who leads us out of slavery to sin, and into freedom ([Gal 5:13-15](#)).

Verses 40 – 41 provide a summary of *the time that the sons of Israel lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years*. How was this calculated? Assuming that the year that the exodus occurred in 1446 B.C., it appears that the start of the 430-year period was around 1876 B.C. This was about the time that Jacob obeyed the LORD and migrated to Egypt with his family (see [Genesis 46:1-7](#)). So, *at the end of four hundred and thirty years, to the very day, all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt*. The “four hundred and thirty years” is mentioned by Paul in [Galatians 3:16-17](#) to date the giving of the Mosaic Law at Mount Sinai.

The phrase “to the very day” has been understood in various ways. Though it is possible that it means that the Israelites left on the very day Jacob arrived in Egypt 430 years earlier, it is more likely that it refers to their exit on the very day of Passover. *All the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt*. The word “hosts” is a military word (it is often translated “armies” – see [Numbers 1:52](#) and [1 Kings 2:5](#)), suggesting that they left Egypt in a battle formation.

It is because of the LORD’s deliverance of Israel on the night of the tenth plague that *it is a night to be observed for the Lord for having brought them out from the land of Egypt* (verse 42). It was completely the work of the LORD, so *this night is for the Lord, to be observed by all the sons of Israel throughout their generations*. There should never be a time when the people of Israel stop celebrating their deliverance from slavery by remembering and honoring the LORD. The LORD delivered Israel without their help – they were simply supposed to obey Him and He would fight their battle. They did not have to rise up in armed rebellion against a vastly superior force – in fact, they did not have to “fire a shot”! This deliverance is wholly the work of their sovereign, omnipotent LORD.

### **Biblical Text:**

<sup>37</sup> **Now the sons of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, aside from children.** <sup>38</sup> **A mixed multitude**

also went up with them, along with flocks and herds, a very large number of livestock.<sup>39</sup> They baked the dough which they had brought out of Egypt into cakes of unleavened bread. For it had not become leavened, since they were driven out of Egypt and could not delay, nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves.<sup>40</sup> Now the time that the sons of Israel lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years.<sup>41</sup> And at the end of four hundred and thirty years, to the very day, all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.