

Exodus 6:14-27

Introduction

1. Often when we get to genealogies, we are tempted to skim over them or even skip them altogether because they're generally not all that exciting
2. However, they serve several general purposes in the Bible:
 - a. They help establish the historicity of people and places
 - b. They reveal God's promise-keeping and covenant-keeping nature (e.g. the Abrahamic covenant passed down through Isaac, Jacob, etc.)
 - c. They establish lines and succession of authority (e.g. priests, kings)
 - d. They confirm the fulfillment of prophecy (e.g. Abrahamic and Davidic prophecies fulfilled in Christ)
 - e. They show how God's redemptive plan has always included both Jew and Gentile (e.g. Tamar, Rahab, Canaanite, Ruth, and Bathsheba were all in Christ's lineage)
3. Today we're in Exodus 6:14-27 and see a few of these purposes reflected in the genealogy recorded there:
 1. It provided a way to determine who was qualified to serve as priests and priestly assistants
 2. It confirmed the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham
 3. It established Moses's and Aaron's authority to lead God's people

A. One purpose for this genealogy was to provide a way to determine who was qualified to serve as priests and priestly assistants

1. When it begins, it looks like it's going to be a genealogy of Jacob's 12 sons because it begins with his first three sons in their birth order (READ 6:14-16)
2. However, instead of continuing with Jacob's remaining nine sons, the focus narrows in on only the descendants of Levi (READ 6:17-25):
 - a. The focus on Levi's descendants is emphasized three times:
 - 1) V. 16: **"These are the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations"**
 - 2) V. 19: **"These are the families of the Levites according to their generations"**
 - 3) V. 25: **"These are the heads of the fathers' households of the Levites according to their families."**
 - b. When we get to the fourth generation in v. 20 the genealogy narrows once again and only follows the lines of Aaron and his cousin Korah
 - 1) Aaron's line continues for two more generations (his sons and one grandson)
 - 2) Korah's line continues for just one more generation

3. So the focus of the genealogy is Levi, Aaron, and Korah:
 - a. Levi and Aaron are important because God chose them for specific roles and responsibilities in Israel:
 - 1) He chose Aaron, his sons, and their descendants—and only their descendants (READ Numbers 3:1-4):
 - a) They were the only ones who could serve as priests and certain rights and rituals were reserved for them like entering the Holy of Holies to perform the offering of atonement
 - b) Others, even Levites, who attempted to perform these duties were either killed by God or to be put to death
 - c) This genealogy would help determine which descendants of Levi could serve as priests
 - 2) God chose the descendants of Levi to serve as assistants to the priests (READ Numbers 3:5-10):
 - a) This included performing the daily sacrifices and offerings, caring for the tabernacle and temple, and teaching
 - b) God assigned specific duties to each of the tribes named after Levi's three sons (found in Numbers 3:21-39)
 - c) This genealogy would help determine who could serve in these capacities
 - b. The inclusion of Korah and his sons is a little puzzling here, especially considering where it's placed:
 - 1) Six of Moses's and Aaron's cousins are included in this genealogy but none of their children are listed, only Korah's
 - 2) Plus, Korah's genealogy is stuck right in the middle of Aaron's genealogy which is an odd placement
 - 3) This begs the question why Korah and his sons are included, and why are they placed where they are?
 - 4) The reason may be related to Korah's rebellion recorded in Numbers 16 and to emphasize the fact that Korah and his sons were not qualified to be priests:
 - a) Korah was a Levite, but he wasn't happy with the leadership of Moses and Aaron so he gathered 250 leaders from the other tribes and tried to usurp their authority for himself
 - b) In Numbers 16:3 he claimed, **“You have gone far enough, for all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is in their midst; so why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?”**
 - c) As a result, Moses rebuked him for not being satisfied with his role as a Levite and instead seeking to be a priest (READ Number 16:8-11)

- d) Moses would have written Exodus after Korah's rebellion so including him in this genealogy might have been a way of highlighting that Korah wasn't qualified to serve in the role he attempted to usurp from Aaron
4. So, one of the primary purposes of this genealogy was to provide a way to determine who could serve as priests and priestly assistants

B. A second purpose for this genealogy was that it confirmed the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham

1. Back in Genesis 15 God revealed to Abraham that his descendants would not only spend 400 years in a foreign land, but that He would bring them out **"in the fourth generation"** (Genesis 15:16)
2. This genealogy reveals that God did just that:
 - a. Jacob's sons were the first generation
 - b. The sons of Reuben, Simeon, and Levi in vs. 14-16 were the second generation
 - c. The third generation is listed in vs. 17-19
 - d. The fourth generation, which included Aaron and Moses, is listed in vs. 20-22 and this is the generation that was alive at the time of the Exodus
 - e. Two additional generations are recorded in 23-25: Aaron's sons Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar are the fifth generation and his grandson, Phinehas, is the sixth
3. As with some of the Biblical genealogies, there's controversy over this one:
 - a. Many claim that the four generations from Jacob to Aaron and Moses aren't long enough to cover the 430 years that Israel was in Egypt:
 - 1) So, their suggestion to resolve this is to shorten Israel's time in Egypt from 430 years to 215 years but this contradicts other passages that seem to clearly indicate 400+ years (Genesis 15:13; Exodus 12:40-41, Galatians 3:17)
 - 1) Plus, it is technically possible given the ages listed for Levi, Kohath, Amram and Moses's age at the Exodus if they had their children near the end of their lives
 - 2) This may not be probable, but it is technically possible
 - b. Others claim that Israel could not grow from 70 individuals to over 2 million in only four generations
 - 1) So, they claim there must be gaps in the genealogies and base this on the fact that "sons" can also refer simply to descendants
 - 2) While it's true that some Biblical genealogies contain gaps, in those cases there's clear evidence of gaps and simple explanations for it
 - 3) However, that's not the case here because other genealogies match this one and don't have obvious gaps (Numbers 3:17-19; 26:58-59; 1 Chronicles 6:1-3; 23:12)
 - 4) Two other things I would add:

- Aaron’s genealogy actually extended to six generations over the 430 years (down to his grandchild), and we also don’t know how many generations or descendants Jacob’s 11 other sons had over that same time period—considering their long lives, some could have had many more than four generations and far more descendants increasing exponentially Israel’s growth
 - Also, we can’t forget God’s favor on Israel and their incredible growth described in Exodus 1
4. We can sometimes focus on difficult or challenging issues like this one and forget the main point—and in this case, the main point is that God promised Abraham that He would bring his descendants out in the fourth generation and He did just that

C. A third purpose of this genealogy is that is established Moses’s and Aaron’s authority to lead God’s people

1. Immediately following the genealogy there’s a two-verse addendum and notice the three-fold repetition regarding Moses and Aaron (READ 6:26-27):
 - a. **“It was the same Aaron and Moses to whom Yahweh said...”**—some translations read, **“it was this Aaron and Moses”**
 - b. **“They were the ones who spoke to Pharaoh King of Egypt...”**
 - c. **“It was the same Moses and Aaron...”**
2. As one commentator, Douglas Stuart, wrote, **“this emphasis (through the addendum) unmistakably links the two brothers to not only the genealogy but the exodus”** (Stuart, p. 179):
 - a. His first point is that it links Moses and Aaron to the genealogy; why would this be important?
 - 1) It proved their Hebrew ancestry by linking them back to Jacob
 - 2) This likely wasn’t a problem for Aaron since he lived among the Hebrews for his entire life and was married to a Hebrew wife
 - 3) However, Moses was a different story:
 - a) For the first 40 years of his life, he lived not as a Hebrew but an Egyptian:
 - He was adopted as a toddler and raised by the pharaoh’s daughter which means he would have been living as part of pharaoh’s family, likely in the palace
 - Exodus 2:11 supports this suggesting he made to make a special trip out to see his fellow Hebrews
 - b) He then spent the next 40 years living apart from Israel in the land of Midian:
 - He not only lived there but came back with a Midianite wife

- We know Miriam and Aaron had a problem with his wife because Numbers 12:1 says they “**spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married**”
- c) All of this might have caused the Israelites to view Moses as an outsider, but there’s one other thing that may have added to any suspicion but it’s a bit speculative:
- Prior to fleeing Egypt, some scholars believe Moses had risen to become one of the highest-ranking officials in Egypt known by the name Senenmut
 - We don’t have time to go into the evidence for this but it’s substantial, and if Moses was indeed Senenmut, when he returned to Egypt many of the Israelites might have still remembered him as this Egyptian high official
- d) So, this genealogy would have served to link Moses to Israel proving his Hebrew ancestry
- b. Stuart’s second point is that the emphasis in the addendum unmistakably linked Moses and Aaron to the Exodus:
- 1) I would go further and suggest that it provides the authority by which Moses and Aaron led Israel out of Egypt and through the wilderness
 - 2) As we learn in Numbers 16, not everyone recognized Moses’s and Aaron’s authority because Korah rose up and led 250 leaders to rebel against them in essence demanding to know what gave them the right to lead Israel
 - 3) God responded by swallowing up Korah and his family in a giant hole in the ground and sending fire from heaven to consume the other 250 leaders
 - 4) However, before He did this Moses declared to these men, “**By this you shall know that Yahweh has sent me to do all these deeds; for this is not from my heart.**” (Numbers 16:28)
 - 5) It may have been this very event that led Moses to add this addendum to the genealogy

Conclusion

1. As I stated in the introduction, at first glance the Biblical genealogies might not seem to offer much more than a list of names
2. We may be tempted to just skip over them
3. But, as we’ve seen today, they actually do serve a purpose:
 - a. It provided a way to determine who was qualified to serve as priests and priestly assistants
 - b. It confirmed the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham
 - c. It established Moses’s and Aaron’s authority to lead God’s people