

1 Chronicles 2:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The sons of Judah; Er, and Onan, and Shelah: which three were born unto him of the daughter of Shua the Canaanitess. And Er, the firstborn of Judah, was evil in the sight of the LORD; and he slew him.

Analysis

Genealogical Significance: This verse appears within the Judah's lineage and David's royal line section of Chronicles' genealogical framework. The Hebrew term יְהוּדָה (Yehudah) - praise is central to understanding this passage's purpose. The Chronicler, writing to post-exilic Israel (c. 450-400 BCE), uses these genealogies not merely as historical records but as theological statements about covenant continuity and divine faithfulness.

The genealogical structure serves multiple purposes:

1. establishing Israel's connection to God's creation plan from Adam
2. legitimizing post-exilic community's claim to covenant promises
3. emphasizing Judah and Levi's special roles in God's redemptive plan,
4. demonstrating that despite exile, God's covenant purposes continue.

The selection and arrangement of names is intentional, highlighting Messianic line through Judah to David.

Chronicles diverges from Genesis and Samuel-Kings in its genealogical presentation, reflecting the Chronicler's distinct theological agenda. Where earlier texts focus on narrative history, Chronicles emphasizes continuity, legitimacy, and

hope for restoration. This verse contributes to the larger argument that the post-exilic community is the rightful heir of God's ancient covenant promises.

Historical Context

Post-Exilic Context: The Chronicler wrote during the Persian period (450-400 BCE) to a community returned from Babylonian exile, struggling with identity and purpose. These genealogies answered crucial questions: Who are we? What is our relationship to ancient Israel? Do God's promises still apply to us?

The historical setting influences the text's emphasis on Genealogies of Judah and David's lineage - royal line emphasis. Ancient Near Eastern cultures valued genealogies for establishing land rights, royal legitimacy, and tribal identity. Chronicles' genealogies served similar functions while adding theological depth. The inclusion of specific names and details reflects the author's access to temple archives, royal records, and earlier biblical texts.

Archaeological evidence from Persian-period Judah shows a small, struggling community centered around Jerusalem and the rebuilt temple. The genealogies reinforced their connection to the glorious past and provided hope for future restoration through God's covenant faithfulness.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does understanding genealogies as theological statements rather than mere historical records change your reading of Chronicles and other biblical genealogies?
2. What does this verse teach about God's faithfulness across generations, and how does that apply to your own family's spiritual legacy?

3. How does Messianic line through Judah to David connect to the New Testament revelation of Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of Old Testament promises?

Interlinear Text

בָּנֵי יְהוּדָה	וְעַד אֶרְן	וְעַד אֹנוֹן	וְעַד שֵׁלָה	שְׁלֹשָׁה	בָּנִים
The sons	of Judah	And Er	and Onan	and Shelah	which three
H1121	H3063	H6147	H209	H7956	H3205
מִבְּתָח	עַד רָנוֹת	שׁוּעָת יְהוּדָה	בְּנֵת שְׁעָרָה	בָּנֵי יְהוּדָה	בָּנֵי יְהוּדָה
unto him of the daughter	of Shua	the Canaanitess	H1961	And Er	the firstborn
H1323	H7774	H3669		H6147	H1060
בָּנֵי יְהוּדָה	בָּנֵי יְהוּדָה	בָּנֵי יְהוּדָה	בָּנֵי יְהוּדָה	בָּנֵי יְהוּדָה	בָּנֵי יְהוּדָה
was evil	in the sight	of the LORD	and he slew		
H3063	H7451	H5869	H3068	H4191	

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 46:12 (Parallel theme): And the sons of Judah; Er, and Onan, and Shelah, and Pharez, and Zerah: but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan. And the sons of Pharez were Hezron and Hamul.

Numbers 26:19 (Parallel theme): The sons of Judah were Er and Onan: and Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan.

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