

1 Chronicles 4:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the sons of Ezra were, Jether, and Mered, and Ephraim, and Jalon: and she bare Miriam, and Shammai, and Ishbah the father of Eshtemoa.

Analysis

Genealogical Significance: This verse appears within the Judah's expansion and conquest section of Chronicles' genealogical framework. The Hebrew term נַחֲלָה (nachalah) - inheritance 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 God's faithfulness in land promises.

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's clans and territorial expansions. 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

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

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 God's faithfulness in land promises connect to the New Testament revelation of Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of Old Testament promises?

Interlinear Text

וּבָנִים	עֶזְרָה	יֵתֶר	וּמֶרֶד	וְעֵפֶר	וְיָלֹן		
And the sons	of Ezra	were Jether	and Mered	and Epher	and Jalon		
H1121	H5834	H3500	H4778	H6081	H3210		
וְהִיא	אֶת	מִרְיָם	וְאֶת	שָׁמַי	וְאֶת	יִשְׁבָּח	אָבִי
and she bare	H853	Miriam	H853	and Shammai	H853	and Ishbah	the father
H2029		H4813		H8060		H3431	H1
אֶשְׁתֵּמוֹעַ:							
of Eshtemoa							
H851							

Additional Cross-References

1 Chronicles 4:19 (Parallel theme): And the sons of his wife Hodiah the sister of Naham, the father of Keilah the Garmite, and Eshtemoa the Maachathite.
