

1 Chronicles 4:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The sons of Shelah the son of Judah were, Er the father of Lecah, and Laadah the father of Mareshah, and the families of the house of them that wrought fine linen, of the house of Ashbea,

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

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

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

אֶבֶן	וְיְהוּדָה	בָּנָיו	שֵׁלָה	הַבָּנִים	בָּנִים	אֶרְאָן	לְכָה
The sons	of Shelah	The sons	of Judah	were Er	the father	of Lecah	
H1121	H7956	H1121	H3063	H6147	H1		H3922

וְلֹא־עָזָה	אָבִי	מִרְשָׁה	וּתְמִשְׁפֵּחַ	לְבִית
and Laadah	the father	of Mareshah	and the families	of the house

אֲשֶׁר־עָבֵד תִּהְיֶה	פָּנֶיךָ לְבִתְּהִימָה	פָּנֶיךָ לְבִתְּהִימָה	אֲשֶׁר־עָבֵד תִּהְיֶה
of them that wrought	fine linen	of the house	of Ashbea
H5656	H948	H1004	H791

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 38:5 (Parallel theme): And she yet again conceived, and bare a son; and called his name Shelah: and he was at Chezib, when she bare him.

1 Chronicles 2:3 (Parallel theme): 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.

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 26:20 (Parallel theme): And the sons of Judah after their families were; of Shelah, the family of the Shelanites: of Pharez, the family of the Pharzites: of Zerah, the family of the Zarhites.