

1 Chronicles 5:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The sons of Reuben, and the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, of valiant men, men able to bear buckler and sword, and to shoot with bow, and skilful in war, were four and forty thousand seven hundred and threescore, that went out to the war.

Analysis

Genealogical Significance: This verse appears within the Trans-Jordanian tribes and their failures section of Chronicles' genealogical framework. The Hebrew term מַאֲל (ma'al) - unfaithfulness/treachery 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 Consequences of covenant unfaithfulness.

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 Trans-Jordanian tribes: Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh. 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

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

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 Consequences of covenant unfaithfulness connect to the New Testament revelation of Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of Old Testament promises?

Interlinear Text

בְּנֵי	רְאוּבֵן	וְגָדִי	וְחֵצִי	שִׁבְט	מְנַשֶּׁה	מִן
The sons	of Reuben	and the Gadites	and half	the tribe	of Manasseh	
H1121	H7205	H1425	H2677	H7626	H4519	H4480
בְּנֵי	חִיל	אֶנְשִׁים	נָשָׂא	מִגֵּן	וְחֶרֶב	וְדָרְכֵי
The sons	of valiant men	men	able to bear	buckler	and sword	and to shoot
H1121	H2428	H582	H5375	H4043	H2719	H1869
שֵׁת	וְלִמּוּדֵי	מִלְחָמָה	אַרְבָּעִים	וְאַרְבָּעֵה	אֶלֶף	וְשִׁבְעֵה
with bow	and skilful	in war	and forty	were four	thousand	seven
H7198	H3925	H4421	H705	H702	H505	H7651
מֵאֵת	וְשָׁלֹשִׁים	יֹצְאִים	עָצָא:			
hundred	and threescore	that went out	to the war			
H3967	H8346	H3318	H6635			

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 1:3 (Parallel theme): From twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel: thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies.