

1 Chronicles 8:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now Benjamin begat Bela his firstborn, Ashbel the second,
and Aharah the third,

Analysis

Genealogical Significance: This verse appears within the Benjamin and Saul's failed kingship section of Chronicles' genealogical framework. The Hebrew term בִּנְיָמִין (Binyamin) - son of the right hand 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 sovereign choice of leadership.

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 Benjamin's genealogy and Saul's lineage. 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

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

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 sovereign choice of leadership connect to the New Testament revelation of Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of Old Testament promises?

Interlinear Text

וְבִנְיָמִן	הוֹלִיד	אֶת	בֶּלָע	בְּכֹרֹוֹ	אַשְׁבֵּל	הַשֵּׁנִי
Now Benjamin	begat	H853	Bela	his firstborn	Ashbel	the second
H1144	H3205		H1106	H1060	H788	H8145
וְאַחָרָה	הַשְּׁלִישִׁי					
and Aharah	the third					
H315	H7992					

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 46:21 (Parallel theme): And the sons of Benjamin were Belah, and Becher, and Ashbel, Gera, and Naaman, Ehi, and Rosh, Muppim, and Huppim, and Ard.

Numbers 26:38 (Parallel theme): The sons of Benjamin after their families: of Bela, the family of the Belaites: of Ashbel, the family of the Ashbelites: of Ahiram, the family of the Ahiramites: