

Numbers 26:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

The sons of Judah after their families—Judah's census lists three main clans: Shelanites (from Shelah, Judah's third son by Bathshua), Pharzites (from Pharez, Judah's twin son by Tamar), and Zarhites (from Zerah, Pharez's twin). The prominence of Pharez's line is theologically significant—though born of the scandalous Tamar incident (Genesis 38), Pharez became the direct ancestor of David and Christ (Ruth 4:18-22; Matthew 1:3).

The Hebrew word *mishpechōt* (families/clans) organizes Judah's massive tribe into manageable kinship units. As the largest tribe (76,500 men), Judah's organization was crucial for both military deployment and land distribution. Jacob's blessing that 'the scepter shall not depart from Judah' (Genesis 49:10) begins fulfillment through this structured tribal dominance.

Historical Context

Judah absorbed Simeon's territory (Joshua 19:1) and became the southern kingdom's dominant tribe. The Pharzite clan produced Nahshon (Exodus 6:23), prince of Judah during the Exodus, and eventually King David (c. 1010 BC). This census captured Judah at peak strength before the conquest—later, Judah and Benjamin formed the southern kingdom after Solomon's death.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What does God's choice of Pharez's scandalous line to produce the Messiah teach about grace overcoming human sin and shame?
2. How does Judah's tribal organization and numerical strength foreshadow its role as the messianic and royal tribe?
3. In what ways does the inclusion of Tamar's sons (Pharez and Zerah) in the genealogy point forward to Christ's inclusion of sinners and Gentiles in His kingdom?

Interlinear Text

וְהִי ו	בְּנֵי	יְהוּדָה	מִשְׁפַּחַת	לְשֵׁלָה
H1961	And the sons	of Judah	after their families	were of Shelah
	H1121	H3063	H4940	H7956
מִשְׁפַּחַת	הָשֵׁלָנִי	לְפָרֶז	מִשְׁפַּחַת	הַפָּרְזִי
after their families	of the Shelanites	of Pharez	after their families	of the Pharzites
H4940	H8024	H6557	H4940	H6558
לְזֶרַח	מִשְׁפַּחַת	הַזָּרְחִי		
of Zerah	after their families	of the Zarhites		
H2226	H4940	H2227		

Additional Cross-References

Nehemiah 11:24 (Parallel theme): And Pethahiah the son of Meshezabeel, of the children of Zerah the son of Judah, was at the king's hand in all matters concerning the people.

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.

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