

Numbers 26:45

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Of the sons of Beriah: of Heber, the family of the Heberites: of Malchiel, the family of the Malchielites.

Analysis

Of the sons of Beriah: of Heber, the family of the Heberites: of Malchiel, the family of the Malchielites. This verse appears within the second wilderness census, recording the families descended from Asher through his son Beriah. While seemingly mundane, such genealogical records hold profound theological significance in Scripture. The Hebrew term mishpachah (מִשְׁפָּחָה, "family") emphasizes clan structure that organized Israelite society, military units, land inheritance, and religious obligations.

These meticulous records demonstrate God's faithfulness to His covenant promises. Despite forty years of wilderness judgment that killed the exodus generation, God preserved each tribe and family. The census numbers prove that God's blessing continued—the total Israelite population remained nearly identical to the first census (Numbers 1), showing divine preservation despite massive mortality from plagues, rebellion, and natural attrition.

The naming of families preserves historical memory and individual significance within the covenant community. Heber (עֵבֶר) means "the region beyond" or "one who crosses over," while Malchiel (מַלְכִיאֵל) means "God is my king." These names themselves bear testimony to faith and identity. Genealogies in Scripture also establish legal inheritance rights, fulfill prophecy, and ultimately trace the line leading to Christ. What appears as dry census data actually reveals God's sovereign preservation of His people and His meticulous attention to every individual and family within the covenant.

Historical Context

Numbers 26 records the second census of Israel, taken approximately 38 years after the first census in Numbers 1. This census occurred on the Plains of Moab, just before Israel's entry into the Promised Land. Its primary purposes were military (numbering fighting men), administrative (organizing the tribes), and legal (determining land allotment based on population—Numbers 26:52-56).

The tribe of Asher, from which Beriah descended, was one of the northern tribes that would later settle in the coastal region of Phoenicia. Archaeological evidence suggests this region was agriculturally rich, fulfilling Jacob's blessing that "Asher's food shall be rich" (Genesis 49:20). The families listed here would have received specific territorial allotments when Joshua divided the land.

Ancient Near Eastern societies maintained careful genealogical records for legal and social purposes. These records determined property rights, tribal affiliation, military obligations, and social standing. The preservation of such detailed genealogies across forty years of wilderness wandering demonstrates sophisticated record-keeping systems. For later generations, these lists validated territorial claims and tribal identity, especially crucial after the Babylonian exile when proving Israelite descent became essential for community membership and temple service. The book of Ezra shows how seriously post-exilic Israel took genealogical verification (Ezra 2:59-63).

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What does God's preservation of detailed family records throughout wilderness judgment reveal about His character and faithfulness?

2. How should the biblical emphasis on genealogy shape our understanding of the importance of family, heritage, and generational faithfulness?
3. In what ways does this census data demonstrate that no individual or family is insignificant in God's redemptive purposes?
4. How do Old Testament genealogies pointing to Christ's lineage demonstrate God's long-term planning and sovereignty over history?
5. What practical lessons about record-keeping, organizational structure, and honoring our spiritual heritage can we draw from passages like this?

Interlinear Text

לְמִן לְכַיָּא לְ	קְחִיבָּר יְ	מִשְׁפָּחָת לְחִיבָּר בְּרִיאָה הַ	לְבָנָה	מִשְׁפָּחָת הַ	לְמִן לְכַיָּא לְ
Of the sons	of Beriah	of Heber	the family	of the Heberites	of Malchiel
H1121	H1283	H2268	H4940	H2277	H4439
מִשְׁפָּחָת הַמְּלִכְיָאִלִּים	the family of the Malchielites				
H4940	H4440				

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