

February 26, 2023

The Gospel According to Moses' Genealogy

Exodus 6:14-30

The blessing of genealogies

There are some 25 genealogies found in Scripture.¹ I don't know about you, but for me, these lists of names are the most difficult parts of Scripture to read. I've always struggled to find their relevance, and typically what I've done is to quickly gloss over them. But the Apostle says this in **2 Timothy 3:16-17** "*All Scripture is breathed out by God* and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." This genealogy in Exodus 6 was *breathed out by God*. And that means that God intends for it to benefit us, to bless us, to prune us and correct us, and to give us a living hope.

This genealogy is not filler

This particular genealogy on the surface seems to break up the flow of the story. Kind of like how when the hobbits stumble into Tom Bombadil's land. If you don't know what Tolkien is doing, you might think '*what's the point here, why are you adding this needless filler; let's get to Strider; let's get to the Inn of the Prancing Pony.*' This genealogy, far from being mere filler, is a precious treasure. By giving this list of names, we see that God is *not* rescuing His people because they were just *a little better* than the Egyptians. He would tell them later "The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth...not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart...for you are a stubborn people...[and] you have been rebellious against the LORD."² This genealogy displays the abounding

¹ <https://www.esv.org/resources/esv-global-study-bible/facts-1-chronicles-6/>

² Deuteronomy 7:7; 9:5-7

grace of God that He saves the worst of people. Beloved God did not rescue you because you were just *a little better* than others. We are just like the Egyptians. While we were still enemies, while we were still dead in our sin, He sent a Savior because of His great love for us.

The Big Idea...

Every genealogy in Scripture tells the story of notorious sinners and the Savior who saved them

- ☆ Our Doctrine
- ☆ Our Duty
- ☆ Our Delight

I. Our Doctrine

Re-orientating ourselves

Remember that last week we heard that God always writes the story so that He is seen as the hero. He doesn't share the credit with anyone. Paul says in **1 Corinthians 1:30** that it is "...because of *Him* you are in Christ Jesus." God alone wanted to save us, and everyone on planet earth warred against His saving grace including ourselves. **Exodus 5** displays that truth.

Pharaoh was against God's grace. He wouldn't let Israel go.

Israel was against God's grace, they sided with Pharaoh against Moses.

And Moses was against God's grace, he accused the LORD of evil.

God is the only one in the universe who truly wanted to save Israel. Everyone including His own people were against His saving grace. This genealogy accentuates that truth.

The 30,000 foot view

Let's first consider the genealogy from 30,000 feet. This genealogy is a list of Israel's first three sons Reuben the firstborn, v.14 and his sons. Simeon the second born, v.15 and his sons. And then Levi, v.16 and his sons. No other sons of Israel are listed. Why is that? Because the focal point is on the tribe of Levi. From v.16 forward, it's all about the tribe of Levi. There are other reasons Reuben and Simeon are mentioned, but one reason is to establish Levi as the third born son.³ The ministry of the tabernacle and all the religious duties of Israel was going to fall to the tribe of Levi.

- Levi's first son *Gershon* (v.16) and all his descendants (v.17) were in charge of all the coverings, the tent itself and all its curtains (**Numbers 3:25-26**).
- Levi's second son *Kobath* (v.16) and all his descendants (v.18) were in charge of all the holy things inside of the tent (**Numbers 4:4**).
- Levi's third son *Merari* (v.16) and all his descendants (v.19) were in charge of all the supporting structures, the pillars, bars, bases etc. (**Numbers 3:36-37**).

By listing off all these men who would build and keep and maintain *the tabernacle* what do we learn about God's heart? He longs to meet and commune with His people. Beloved this is who God is. **Revelation 3:20** "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me."

³ Additionally the other 9 sons of Israel are not listed here (they were already listed in chapter one) because the focus is on Israel's human deliverers—Moses and Aaron.

The house that God built

Children boys and girls, one day—God willing—you will get married have children of your own. How important will it be to find a home? What happens in your home? That is where you will share your life with your spouse and your children. It will be most dear to you. It's where you will cry together, laugh together, feast together, sleep together. Someone built that home, and someone has to maintain that home in order for you meet with your family in love and safety. The Levites were in charge of the very tabernacle where God and man met. In listing these Levites God shows how much He desires to meet and dwell with His people. Beloved take that baffling thought into your bosom. Though God is infinitely excellent and perfectly satisfied in the sweetness of intra-Trinitarian fellowship—Father, Son and Spirit—though their communion is perfect bliss, perfect happiness, a fullness of everlasting joy, needing nothing outside of Themselves for Their enjoyment, these three Persons of the Trinity desire to commune with man who is made of the dust. “What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?”⁴ That is the most delightful mystery. Yahweh wants to dwell with us. Jehovah wants us to be near to Him, to be in His presence, to feast off the abundance of His house and drink from the rivers of His delight.

The house of Levi

The other reason this genealogy is focused on the tribe of Levi, is because Moses and Aaron came from the line of Levi. Please look at v.20 “Amram [the grandson of Levi] took as his wife Jochebed his father's sister, *and she bore him Aaron and Moses.*” In other words, Moses and Aaron weren't some random men that God sent. They were authentic Hebrews descended Levi, from Israel, from Isaac from Abraham *himself*.

⁴ Psalm 8:4

The house of Aaron

But perhaps surprisingly, Moses is *not* the focus. None of his children are listed at all. We know he had sons, but the focus here is *entirely* on Aaron's family. Look at **v.23** "Aaron took as his wife Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab and the sister of Nahshon, and she bore him Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar." Then again in **v.25** "Eleazar, Aaron's son, took as his wife one of the daughters of Putiel, and she bore him Phinehas. These are the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites by their clans." Why this focus on Aaron's family? Please turn with me to **Exodus 28:1**. Out of descendants of Levi, it was Aaron in particular that was set aside by God. "Then bring near to you Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the people of Israel, *to serve me as priests*—Aaron and Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar."⁵ Please turn to **Exodus 40:14-15**. Speaking again of Aaron's sons "You shall bring his sons also and put coats on them, ¹⁵ and anoint them, as you anointed their father, that they may serve me as priests. And their anointing shall admit them to *a perpetual priesthood throughout their generations.*" Do you see? It was Aaron and his descendants *alone* that the priesthood belonged. The Levites *as a whole* took care of the tabernacle *but* it was Aaron's family *alone* that belonged to the priesthood.

The priesthood

This is the what the genealogy drives to: the priesthood. Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, Ithamar and Phinehas were all priests. *Why* was ministry of the priesthood so vital? Because the priests *atoned* for the sins of the people. How could sinful man could commune with a holy God? *Only through* shed blood, *only through* sacrifice, *only through* God's wrath being propitiated. This genealogy points to the priesthood *because* this genealogy is full of guilt and sin and shame.

⁵ Also see Exodus 40:15

Our Doctrine: the sinners in this genealogy

And so we arrive at **our doctrine**: *Every genealogy in Scripture tells the story of notorious sinners and the Savior who saved them.* Let's consider this genealogy more closely now. My object here is *not* to point out general sinners for all in this list are guilty of sin. My object here is to point out notorious sinners.

1. Reuben the incestuous adulterer

First we have Reuben, Israel's firstborn in v.14. What do we know of him? He slept with his father's concubine. **Genesis 35:22** "While Israel lived in that land, *Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine.* And Israel heard of it." Certainly it was wrong for Israel to have a concubine,⁶ but it was double evil for Reuben to sleep with her especially since Bilhah had given birth to two of his brothers Dan and Naphtali.

2. Simeon taking a cursed wife

Then we have Simeon. Look at v.15, his sixth son Shaul was "the son of a Canaanite woman." Why would that be included here? To point out that Simeon had take a forbidden woman who belonged to the cursed people of Canaan.⁷

3. The blood brothers

Then we have Levi who together with Simeon murdered a whole city of men. Back in **Genesis 34** their sister Dinah was raped by Shechem the Hivite. They in turn deceived Shechem and all the men of his city into getting circumcised promising him his sister in return. While they were recovering, Simeon and Levi raided the city and murdered all the men.⁸ So angry was Israel over this even that he *curse*d them as he neared his death. **Genesis 49:5-7**

⁶ Genesis 30:4; in fact Israel had four wives.

⁷ cf. Gen. 9:25-27 w/ 26:34-35

⁸ "Dr. Lightfoot thinks that Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, are thus dignified here by themselves because they are left under marks of infamy by their dying father, and therefore Moses would put this particular honor upon them, to magnify God's mercy in their repentance and remission." - Matthew Henry

“Simeon and Levi are brothers; weapons of violence are their swords. ⁶Let my soul come not into their council; O my glory, be not joined to their company. For in their anger they killed men, and in their willfulness they hamstringed oxen. ⁷*Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce, and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel.*” It was from this tribe—Levi’s tribe—that was under the curse of their father, that called God Moses and Aaron.⁹

4. Amram the incestuous

Next we read of Moses own father in **v.20**. “Amram took as his wife Jochebed *his father's sister.*” Moses dad slept with his own aunt. He and Aaron were born of incest. Calvin says here

“...although the law had not *yet* forbidden illicit marriages,¹⁰ yet did [not] nature itself [teach], that it was improper for a nephew to have [relations] with his aunt, who stands in the degree of his mother[?] When, therefore, Moses does not hesitate to confess that he sprang from an incestuous marriage, he does not only fail to consult his own reputation, but ingenuously proclaims the disgrace of his parents, for the sake of illustrating solely the grace of God.”¹¹

5. Korah the insurrectionist

Next there is Korah in **v.21** “The sons of Izhar: *Korah*, Nepheg, and Zichri.” It was Korah who led an insurrection along with 250 other men against his cousin Moses to overthrow his leadership (**Numbers 16**).

⁹ E. Dennett said “It was from the tribe of Levi which, along with Simeon, lay under a curse (Gen. 49:5-7) that God called Moses and Aaron.” quoted from A.W. Pink’s *Gleanings In Exodus*, pg. 86-7. Source: <https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/pink/Gleanings%20In%20Exodus%20-%20Arthur%20W.%20Pink.pdf> Accessed February 25, 2023

¹⁰ cf. Leviticus 18:14 “You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's brother, that is, you shall not approach his wife; she is your aunt.”

¹¹ John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries Vol. 2*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: BakerBooks, 2009), pg. 137

6. Aaron the idolater

Then there is Aaron himself brother of Moses. When Israel finally makes its exodus out of Egypt, Moses is summoned by God on the Mountain. When the people grow impatient, they convince Aaron to make for them a golden calf so they can worship it. Aaron the priest of Yahweh makes an idol—a metal cow—for the people to bow down do and pay homage (**Exodus 32**).¹²

7. Nadab and Abihi and their unauthorized worship

Then we have Nadab and Abihi the first two sons of Aaron in v.23. After hearing how Yahweh commanded them to lead Israel in worship as high priests, after hearing they were not to engage in “will” worship—to worship God however they willed—or to worship according to the pagan nations around them what do they do? **Leviticus 10:1** “Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them.” These high priests of Israel gave *the high hand* to the Lord.

Moses the perfect sinner

Now notice how chapter 6 closes to focus on one more man. Starting v.26

These are the Aaron and Moses to whom the Lord said: “Bring out the people of Israel from the land of Egypt by their hosts.”²⁷ *It was they* who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt about bringing out the people of Israel from Egypt, this Moses and this Aaron.

²⁸ On the day when the Lord spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, ²⁹ the Lord said to Moses, “I am the Lord; tell Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say to you.” ³⁰ **But** Moses said to the Lord, “*Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips*. How will Pharaoh listen to me?”

¹² Later, Aaron himself along with his sister Miriam speak harshly against Moses (Numbers 21).

Note here that **v.30** is a repetition of **v.12**. “Behold I am of uncircumcised lips.” As we saw last week, Moses is confessing his sin, to be uncircumcised was to be unclean, defiled and rebellious. But *why* is it repeated here? A.W. Pink offers some helpful insight. He says this:

“The objection of Moses in **v.30** is evidently the same as in **v.12**. And *yet* there is a reason for its repetition. In chapters 3 and 4 Moses makes *five difficulties* in reply to the Lord; here in [chapter 6], are two [more], making seven altogether. It was therefore the complete exhibition of the weakness and unbelief of Moses.”¹³

Seven times—the number of perfection—Moses either raises an objection or argues with the LORD or confesses his guilt. *Seven times* he brings forward his inadequacies, unbelief, weaknesses and sin. Before he delivers one shoe, one hoof, one child out of Egypt, Moses is shown to be a complete sinner.

A genealogy of notorious sinners

Now let’s think about this very carefully. It was *these people* that God rescued out of Egypt. These incestuous adulterers, these insurrectionists, these murderers, these idolaters, these false worshippers, these who were under a curse and joined themselves with those who were cursed. How is this group *any different* than those in Egypt? They weren’t. Israel was identical in sin to Egypt. Dear congregation this is how the gospel works, and it should continue to surprise and shock you. If the gospel doesn’t shock you, you should ask yourself, what gospel are you believing? God put this genealogy here, *right here*, at the beginning of His dramatic rescue so that we would come face to face with the type of people that He saves. Not those who are healthy but those who are sick, the deplorable, the profane, the blasphemer, the sexually immoral, the prodigal. That’s **our doctrine**: The genealogical line of the seed of the woman is just as

¹³ Pink, pg. 87

guilty as the seed of the serpent, *but God* according to His own mercy has saved us and brought us into His family.

II. Our Duty

Informatory Use

Our **first duty** is simply to *consider* how the genealogies in Scripture work to encourage our hearts. **First consider** that these genealogies demonstrate the historicity of the Bible. Boys and girls, you have a genealogy. Your parents have names, and so do your grandparents and your great grandparents and your great, great, great grandparents. Why? Because they were real flesh and blood people. Children, the people in these genealogies were real people. The Bible is not like Lord of the Rings. The genealogies in the Tolkiens's tales are fiction. These are real. Phil Ryken tells the story of a native tribe that was converted by a genealogy of Scripture. He says:

“A Western missionary had worked with them for many years and had often shared the good news about Jesus Christ, but with little result. Finally, he translated one of the Biblical genealogies that went all the way back to Adam. “Now we know that what you say is true,” the natives said. “We recite the names of our ancestors, but we had forgotten the beginning. Now we know that your Bible is true.” The natives repented of their sins and received Jesus Christ as the Son of David, the son of Adam, the Son of God.”¹⁴

These genealogies demonstrate the reality of Scripture. These aren't tales or myths. These genealogies connect us to all the people that lived before us, all the way to the beginning of the world.

¹⁴ Philip Graham Ryken, *Preaching the Word: Exodus, Saved for God's Glory*, (Wheaton, IL, : Crossway, 2015), pg. 160

Secondly consider how genealogies show the *affection* God has for each of His individual children. I was talking to a Christian brother the other day who was fixing a pipe that burst under my house. The doctrine of election came up and he resisted it claiming that God didn't predestine individuals but rather a people group to Himself. It hurt my heart to hear it. No these genealogies show that God does not just have a plan for a nebulous faceless mass of humanity, but for specific individuals with specific names. **Isaiah 43:1** "But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; *I have called you by name, you are mine.*" These genealogies shows that God counts His children one by one, He knows their names, He knows the number of the hairs on their head, He keeps all their tears in his bottle, He has all their days numbered before one of them is spent. These genealogies prove the precious truth of **2 Timothy 2:19** "But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: *'The Lord knows those who are his,'*"

Elenctic Use

You may say "But my name is not on this list or any list in Scripture, how then do these genealogies *help me?*" Oh but if you have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, then *you are* on these lists. **Galatians 3:29** "And if you are Christ's, *then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.*" If you belong to Christ then you are a child of Abraham and the Exodus story is your story.

But you may say "Ah but I have been too sinful, I've sinned against too much light, I've turned my back too many times, surely God has marked me off His list." I know that feeling. I was raised in a Christian home. Had family worship at the dinner table. But when my parents got divorced and I became a teenager I spiraled out of control. By the time I was fifteen I was in the drug scene and engaged in illicit sexual immorality. By the time I was 18, I was in college getting drunk every night partying with total strangers, crawling to class in a fog during the day. My conscience was my constant accuser and enemy. I knew God. I was the prodigal son, and I silenced it by louder music, more drugs, more alcohol, more partying. When I was sober I felt so ashamed so

empty, so beyond hope. But Christ brought me back to His House, *because I was on His list*. I belonged to Him and His Father gave Him a solemn charge. **John 6:39** “And this is the will of him who sent me, *that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me.*”

Consolatory Use

Loved one, if you have been born again by the Holy Spirit, if you have trusted Immanuel, the Great Prince of Peace, you cannot out sin His grace.

Q. Have you committed illicit sexual immorality?

Take heart, you are no worse a position than Reuben whom Jehovah delivered from Egypt.

Q. Have you committed murder?

If the LORD saved Simeon and Levi who killed men in cold blood, has His arm grown short so that he cannot save you?

Q. Do you feel cursed by father and mother?

If God redeemed Simeon and Levi from their father’s curse, then surely He can remove any stain or shame your parents have heaped upon you.

Q. Have you committed purposeful and presumptuous idolatry?

Jehovah saved Aaron who made the golden calf, certainly He is willing and able to turn your heart back to Him the Living and True God.

Q. Have you sinned against light again and again and again?

Moses’ failures are mentioned 7 times, He was a complete sinner. Don’t you see that you are in the same position as He?

No dear friend, you have not out-sinned the grace of God. This genealogy shows that where sin abounds grace abounds all the more.

Summa Theologica

Those are our duties. 1) To consider that these genealogies show the historicity of the Bible. 2) To consider that these genealogies show God's tender affection He has for His individual children. 3) To consider that if you are in Christ, then these genealogies are your genealogies. 4) To consider that no matter what sin you've committed, you cannot be disqualified from the grace of God.

III. Our Delight

Phinehas the priest

There are no accidents in this genealogy. Note that this genealogy begins with an *adulterer*—Reuben (v.14) and it ends with Phinehas (v.25) the priest who executed an adulterer. Isn't that interesting? Look at v.25 "Eleazar, Aaron's son, took as his wife one of the daughters of Putiel, and she bore him *Phinehas*." Please turn with me to **Numbers 25**. Why is Phinehas so important? Look at v.1

"While Israel lived in Shittim, the people began to *whore with the daughters of Moab*.² These invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and *the people ate and bowed down to their gods*. [Note Israel's sin of sexual immorality led to a further sin: idolatry]³ So Israel yoked himself to Baal of Peor. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.⁴ And the LORD said to Moses, "Take all the chiefs of the people and hang them in the sun before the Lord, that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel."⁵ And Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Each of you kill those of his men who have yoked themselves to Baal of Peor."

⁶ And behold, one of the people of Israel came and brought a Midianite woman to his family, in the sight of Moses and in the sight of the whole

congregation of the people of Israel, while they were weeping in the entrance of the tent of meeting. [Zimri was this man's name.¹⁵ In the midst of this controversy, in the sight of all, he walked his Midianite mistress in front of them all and was going to have sex with her in God's house] ⁷ When Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose and left the congregation and took a spear in his hand ⁸ and went after the man of Israel into the chamber and *pierced both of them*, the man of Israel and the woman through her belly. *Thus the plague on the people of Israel was stopped.* ⁹ Nevertheless, those who died by the plague were twenty-four thousand.

¹⁰ And the Lord said to Moses, ¹¹ "Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my wrath from the people of Israel, in that he was jealous with my jealousy among them, so that I did not consume the people of Israel in my jealousy. ¹² Therefore say, 'Behold, *I give to him my covenant of peace,* ¹³ and it shall be to him and to his descendants after him the covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because he was jealous for his God and *made atonement for the people of Israel.*"

Altogether, God killed 24,000 with a plague before Phinehas the priest did his work. He stopped the plague by *piercing* the two sinners and shedding their blood. Phinehas is included in our genealogy to show us what the dreadful end of sin is: death. All these sinners in this genealogy deserve death. That's what Reuben's, Simeon's, and Levi's sin all leads to: execution. The wages of sin is death. The soul that sins shall die. God is a holy, holy, holy God.

The True and Better Phinehas

"But" you say, "...what was all this talk of God's grace and being welcomed by Him no matter what we've done?" This is the crux of the matter. God does welcome notorious sinners as His children. But He doesn't welcome them *by ignoring their sin*. Phinehas must do his work.

¹⁵ v.14

- **Phinehas**, Aaron's son, the priest *pierced* those sinners through bringing upon them the wages of their sin.
- But **Jesus Christ**, God's Son, our Great High Priest was *pierced for us*. **Isaiah 53:5** "But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities."¹⁶
- **Phinehas** satisfied the wrath of God by shedding the blood of *the sinners*.
- But **Jesus Christ** satisfied the wrath of God by shedding His own blood *for sinners*. **Revelation 1:5** "To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood."
- **Phinehas** ended the plague in Israel.
- But **Jesus Christ** ends the plague for all time *for all who trust in Him*. **John 5:24** "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life."

Summa Theologica

Dear congregation, this genealogy is a testimony of the gospel. It began with the sin of Reuben and ended with the salvation of Phinehas. That's your story. You began in sin. But Jesus Christ our True and Better Phinehas didn't leave you there. His salvation has the final Word. He is Your Great High Priest. He made full atonement for your sin. He put an end to the plague of death that hung over your life. He satisfied God's wrath for you. Where your sin

¹⁶ Isaiah 53:5

abounded, His blood and righteousness abounded all the more. Where you were once an idolater, you are now a child of the Living and True God. Where you were once adulterer, you are now married to the Bridegroom of Heaven. Where you were once under a curse, you are now a new creation. Where your status was once a 7-time sinner, a perfect and complete sinner like Moses, you now possess the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Where you were once in slavery, you have now been set free. If the Son sets you free, you are free indeed.