



First Chronicles - Chapter Four

I 1 Chronicles 1:1-9:44 - A Genealogical Presentation of the Tribes of Israel (continues)

I.b 1 Chronicles 2:1-4:23 - The Tribe of Judah (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Four

Information about other clans rounds off the genealogy of Judah and completes the literary inclusio into which all this fragmentary and diverse material has been arranged: vv.1-20 supply additional details of the descendants of Perez, who was first recorded in 1 Chronicles 2:4-8, while vv.21-23 fill out the lineage of Judah's third son, Shelah, the first to have children after the 'false starts' with Er and Onan, each of whom was referenced in 1 Chronicles 2:3.

The tribe of Simeon is considered next because its allotted territory lay within Judah's borders and was taken from that tribe (vv.28-33), although by David's time (v.31) Simeon had been largely absorbed back into Judah. Nevertheless, some Simeonite clans maintained their tribal identity through genealogical records (vv.34-38), which would have included the historical notes of two military expansions undertaken to relieve the pressures of overpopulation (v.38): one westward into Philistine territory in the days of Hezekiah in the 8th Century BC (vv.39-41), and another into the southern part of the Negeb (vv.42-43). The westward campaign to Gedor, probably Gerar, is depicted in the language of the conquest under Joshua as marked for destruction (v.41), which signifies the religious *kherem* or ban, in which a pagan people and their goods were devoted or wholly destroyed.

I.d 1 Chronicles 4:1-23 - Descendants of Judah

Refer to the first part of the chapter summary above.

¹ The sons of Judah: Perez, Hezron, Carmi, Hur, and Shobal. ² Reaiah son of Shobal became the father of Jahath, and Jahath became the father of Ahumai and Lahad. These were the families of the Zorathites. ³ These were the sons of Etam: Jezreel, Ishma, and Idbash; and the name of their sister was Hazzelelponi, ⁴ and Penuel was the father of Gedor, and Ezer the father of Hushah. These were the sons of Hur, the firstborn of Ephrathah, the father of Bethlehem. ⁵ Ashhur father of Tekoa had two wives, Helah and Naarah; ⁶ Naarah bore him Ahuzzam, Hopher, Temeni, and Haahashtari. These were the sons of Naarah. ⁷ The sons of Helah: Zereth, Izhar, and Ethnan. ⁸ Koz became the father of Anub, Zobebah, and the families of Aharhel son of Harum.

1 Chronicles 4:1-8

The sons of Judah. Since the focus of these genealogies is the dynastic line of David, it makes sense that the tribe of Judah is listed first.

Caleb would be expected here, rather than Carmi, which may reflect early scribal confusion from: <<*and the children of Reuben: Hanoah, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi*>> (Genesis 46:9), or textual corruption of Chelubai from 1 Chronicles 2:9.

According to RaDak, Reaiah is Haroeh in 1 Chronicles 2:52.

⁹ Jabez was honoured more than his brothers; and his mother named him Jabez, saying, 'Because I bore him in pain.' ¹⁰ Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, 'Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from hurt and harm!' And God granted what he asked.

1 Chronicles 4:9-10

Jabez was honoured more than his brothers. This man Jabez is one of the more interesting briefly mentioned people of the OT. He is only known from this text, and from the town of scribes that may have been named after him or associated with him: <<*The families also of the scribes that lived at Jabez: the Tirathites, the Shimeathites, and the Sucathites*>> (1 Chronicles 2:55a).

His mother named him Jabez, saying, 'Because I bore him in pain.' This name is associated with pain or sorrow. For some reason, probably surrounding the circumstances of his birth, his mother named him this. Because of the strong importance of the idea of a name in ancient Hebrew culture, this idea of pain was heavy with and upon Jabez - perhaps especially in his growing up.

According to the Sages, Jabez is identified with the Judge Othniel, who succeeded Joshua (Temurah 16a). RaDak suggests that the reason for Jabez' request was that he was concerned that his name, derived from pain and sadness, would serve as a bad omen for him.

This account is reminiscent of the birth of Benjamin: <<*Then they journeyed from Bethel; and when they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel was in childbirth, and she had a difficult labour. When she was in her difficult labour, the midwife said to her, 'Do not be afraid; for now you will have another son.'* As her soul was departing (for she died), she named him Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin>> (Genesis 35:16-18). Ben-oni means 'son of my sorrow' but Jacob did not want him to bear that label all of his life so he renamed him 'son of the right hand.'

Jabez called on the God of Israel. Jabez was honoured, and little more is known of him than that he was a man of prayer and that his prayer was answered. One way to gain honour in the Kingdom of God is through prayer, instead of through ambition and achievement. Jabez had five basic requests in his prayer.

- First, Jabez prayed to be blessed indeed. There are many who are blessed, but they are not blessed indeed, e.g. NASB, KJV, etc. That is, they have something that is in one sense a blessings, such as family, salvation, wealth, fame, health, security, but yet because of fundamental dissatisfaction in their life, they are not blessed indeed.
- Jabez prays that his name (Hebrew *ya'bets*), which contains the same three consonants ('-b-ts) as the Hebrew for pain ('*otseb*), will not be an ill omen, but rather that he will live under God's blessing and protection, with land equating to livelihood. That God answers heartfelt prayer is a prominent theme of the narrative.
- Jabez prayed for enlarged territory. Virtually all older commentators agree with Matthew Poole that Jabez called on the God of Israel when he was undertaking some great and dangerous service, in particular the conquest of the land of Canaan. Therefore, when he prayed ble^ss me and enlarge my border, it was to drive out these wicked and cursed Canaanites, whom the Lord had commanded them to root out, and therefore he justly begged and expected God's blessing in the execution of his command. On the gift of territorial expansion and divine protection in response to prayer, refer to 1 Chronicles 5:20-22 and 2 Chronicles 20:6-12.
- Jabez prayed to the Lord that your hand might be with me. The 'hand of the Lord' is a biblical term for God's power and presence in the lives of his people: <<*so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, and so that you may fear the Lord your God for ever*>> (Joshua 4:24), and: <<*See, the Lord's hand is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear*>> (Isaiah 59:1). The phrase 'the hand

of the Lord' is used many times in the OT, and often in a negative sense - that is, in the sense of God's hand being against someone in judgement. Here Jabez prayed that the hand of the Lord would be with him. The Psalmist wrote: <<*And I say, 'It is my grief that the right hand of the Most High has changed'*>> (Psalm 77:10). Here Jabez prayed in advance for something to remember later - to see the hand of God with him now.

- Jabez asked to be kept from evil and that he would not cause pain, i.e. from hurt and harm. Other translations render this with the idea that the pain Jabez did not want to cause was his own. He used this expression in allusion to his name, which signifies grief; that is, "Lord, let me not have that grief which my name implies, and which my sin deserves." Jabez recognised the evil in this world, no doubt because he had lived through much pain in his life, that he needed God to keep him from evil, and that blessings from the hand of God can transform the evil and pain of life.

While through these genealogies, and indeed throughout all the history, the records are occupied with those connected with government and the procession of events leading to universal issues, it is refreshing to be halted by the story of one man who took his need directly to God and obtained the answer of God's grace.

And God granted what he asked. This, of course, is the measure of effective prayer - that it is answered from heaven, allowing that "No" or "Wait" can also be an answer. Yet when people are close to the heart of God and pray for the things important to him and his kingdom, they expect that their prayers will be granted: <<*If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it*>> (John 14:14), and: <<*And this is the boldness we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us*>> (1 John 5:14).

¹¹ Chelub the brother of Shuhah became the father of Mehir, who was the father of Eshton. ¹² Eshton became the father of Beth-rapha, Paseah, and Tehinnah the father of Ir-nahash. These are the men of Recah. ¹³ The sons of Kenaz: Othniel and Seraiah; and the sons of Othniel: Hathath and Meonothai. ¹⁴ Meonothai became the father of Ophrah; and Seraiah became the father of Joab father of Ge-harashim, so-called because they were artisans. ¹⁵ The sons of Caleb son of Jephunneh: Iru, Elah, and Naam; and the son of Elah: Kenaz.

1 Chronicles 4:11-15

These are the men of Recah. It has not been determined whether Recah is a person or a place name.

The Kenizzites appear to have been a southern tribe that was absorbed into Judah. **Othniel** was the first major Judge of Israel as recorded in Judges 3:7-11, and a nephew of Caleb: <<*Othniel son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it; and he gave him his daughter Achsah as wife*>> (Joshua 15:17).

¹⁶ The sons of Jehallelel: Ziph, Ziphah, Tiria, and Asarel. ¹⁷ The sons of Ezra: Jether, Mered, Epher, and Jalon. These are the sons of Bithiah, daughter of Pharaoh, whom Mered married; and she conceived and bore Miriam, Shammai, and Ishbah father of Eshtemoa. ¹⁸ And his Judæan wife bore Jered father of Gedor, Heber father of Soco, and Jekuthiel father of Zanoah. ¹⁹ The sons of the wife of Hodiah, the sister of Naham, were the fathers of Keilah the Garmite and Eshtemoa the Maacathite. ²⁰ The sons of Shimon: Amnon, Rinnah, Ben-hanan, and Tilon. The sons of Ishi: Zoheth and Ben-zoheth. ²¹ The sons of Shelah son of Judah: Er father of Lecah, Laadah father of Mareshah, and the families of the guild of linen workers at Beth-ashbea; ²² and Jokim, and the men of Cozeba, and Joash, and Saraph, who married into Moab but returned to Lehem (now the records are ancient). ²³ These were the potters and inhabitants of Netaim and Gederah; they lived there with the king in his service.

1 Chronicles 4:16-23

These are the sons of Bithiah, daughter of Pharaoh, whom Mered married. The wife of Mered here is Bithiah. Her identification as a daughter of Pharaoh would locate this event during the early part of Israel's sojourn in Egypt before 1800 BC, the union probably being made possible because of Joseph's prominence.

The guild of linen workers, these were the potters. These records from pre-exilic times (vv.22-23) indicate that certain Israelite clans, at least, acted as guilds, specialising in particular trades or crafts such as linen work or pottery.

Lehem may be Bethlehem. Royal seal impressions from jar handles dating from the Iron Age II period (1000-586 BC) have been found throughout Israel. The impressions contain two line inscriptions: the upper line reads 'belonging to the king'; the lower line contains names of cities. The towns mentioned in v.23 may have supplied such goods.

These were the potters and inhabitants of Netaim and Gederah; they lived there with the king in his service. Since the broad focus of these chapters is to point to the tribe of Judah and especially to the family of David, these receive special mention because they worked for the king and lived with the king.

Charles Spurgeon preached a wonderful sermon on this verse, with four points under the title 'With the King for His Work!'

- Our King has many kinds of servants. "He has soldiers, watchmen, heralds, scribes, musicians, house servants, gardeners, servants for the children. We should therefore value the different servants and understand and value our own place of service."
- All who live with our King must work. "They did not live on the king's bounty and dwell on the king's country estates to do nothing, but they dwelt there for his work. I do not know whether all that call my Master 'Lord' have caught this idea. I have thought that some of our church members imagine that the cause of Christ was a coach, and that they were to ride on it, and that they would prefer the box seat."
- Those that work for the King ought to live with Him. "Now, those that live with Jesus Christ have a sort of secret alphabet between themselves and him. Oftentimes when a Christian man does the right thing. Do you know why he had that knack? He lived with his Master, so he knew what you knew not. He knew the meaning of his Master's eye, and it guided him."
- We are working for the King. "And after you have received Christ then you shall go forth and serve him. Put out an empty hand and receive Christ into it by a little faith, and then go and serve him, and the Lord bless you henceforth and for ever."

The personalities and events mentioned in these verses, although they are not found in other Books of Scripture, are based on reliable, ancient traditions.

I.e [1 Chronicles 4:24-43 - Descendants of Simeon](#)

The record now turns to the tribe of Simeon, Jacob's second born son.

²⁴ The sons of Simeon: Nemuel, Jamin, Jarib, Zerah, Shaul; ²⁵ Shallum was his son, Mibsam his son, Mishma his son. ²⁶ The sons of Mishma: Hammuel his son, Zaccur his son, Shimei his son. ²⁷ Shimei had sixteen sons and six daughters; but his brothers did not have many children, nor did all their family multiply like the Judæans. ²⁸ They lived in Beer-sheba, Moladah, Hazar-shual, ²⁹ Bilhah, Ezem, Tolad, ³⁰ Bethuel, Hormah, Ziklag, ³¹ Beth-marcaboth, Hazar-susim, Beth-biri, and Shaaraim. These were their towns until David became king. ³² And their villages were Etam, Ain, Rimmon, Tochen, and Ashan, five towns, ³³ along with all their villages that were around these towns as far as Baal. These were their settlements. And they kept a genealogical record.

1 Chronicles 4:24-33

The sons of Simeon; these were their settlements. Simeon and Levi, two of the sons of Jacob, massacred the men of the city of Shechem (Genesis 34:24-30 and 49:5-7), and were therefore cursed to be scattered. Therefore, the tribe of Simeon did not have a province to call their own, only these cities, villages, and settlements. Simeon was granted lands in Palestine only within the arid south western portions of Judah, refer to Joshua 15:26, 15:28-32 and 19:1-9; and it campaigned cooperatively with Judah in their conquest: <<*Judah said to his brother Simeon, 'Come up with me into the territory allotted to me, that we may fight against the Canaanites; then I too will go with you into the territory allotted to you.'* So Simeon went with him>> (Judges 1:3).

But his brothers did not have many children, nor did all their family multiply like the Judæans. The census data both at the beginning and the end of the Book of Numbers indicates that the population of the tribe of Simeon decreased radically during the wilderness years of the exodus. They were among the largest tribes at the beginning and among the smallest tribes at the end.

Along with all their villages that were around these towns as far as Baal. Each family group clustered around one of these towns so that each family is associated with one of these places (Malbim).

And they kept a genealogical record. This genealogy is very different from that given in Genesis 46:10 and Numbers 26:12. This may be occasioned by the same person having several names, one list taking one name, another list some other, and so on. Since the original historic records are not available, reconciliation of any anomalies is almost impossible.

³⁴ Meshobab, Jamlech, Joshah son of Amaziah, ³⁵ Joel, Jehu son of Joshibiah son of Seraiah son of Asiel, ³⁶ Elioenai, Jaakobah, Jeshohaiah, Asaiah, Adiel, Jesimiel, Benaiah, ³⁷ Ziza son of Shiphi son of Allon son of Jedaiah son of Shimri son of Shemaiah — ³⁸ these mentioned by name were leaders in their families, and their clans increased greatly. ³⁹ They journeyed to the entrance of Gedor, to the east side of the valley, to seek pasture for their flocks, ⁴⁰ where they found rich, good pasture, and the land was very broad, quiet, and peaceful; for the former inhabitants there belonged to Ham. ⁴¹ These, registered by name, came in the days of King Hezekiah of Judah, and attacked their tents and the Meunim who were found there, and exterminated them to this day, and settled in their place, because there was pasture there for their flocks. ⁴² And some of them, five hundred men of the Simeonites, went to Mount Seir, having as their leaders Pelatiah,

Neariah, Rephaiah, and Uzziel, sons of Ishi; ⁴³ they destroyed the remnant of the Amalekites that had escaped, and they have lived there to this day.

1 Chronicles 4:34-43

They journeyed to the entrance of Gedor, to the east side of the valley, to seek pasture for their flocks. After the division of Solomon's kingdom in 930 BC, elements of Simeon either moved to the north or at least adopted its religious practices, hence the inclusion of Beer-sheba along with the shrines of Ephraim that are condemned: <<***but do not seek Bethel, and do not enter into Gilgal or cross over to Beer-sheba; for Gilgal shall surely go into exile, and Bethel shall come to nothing***>> (Amos 5:5). Other Simeonites carried on in a semi-nomadic life in isolated areas that they could occupy, such as those noted at the end of this chapter.

Where they found rich, good pasture, and the land was very broad, quiet, and peaceful. The tribe of Simeon never faced threats from any invaders according to Elijah ben Solomon Zalman, also known as the Vilna Gaon.