



First Chronicles - Chapter Eight

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

Summary of Chapter Eight

Although Benjamin has already been considered in 1 Chronicles 7:6-12, a second, more detailed genealogy of this tribe is given here that has little in common with the earlier list and serves a different function. The structure of Judah-Levi-Benjamin is completed here. The other tribes are enclosed within an ideal conception of Israel as a nation led by the royal tribe of Judah in partnership with its neighbour Benjamin, with Levi at the centre to remind the people of their spiritual vocation.

Although most of Benjamin sided with the north in the disruption of the kingdom under Rehoboam, the Benjaminite area around Jerusalem as far as Bethel remained loyal to the Davidic king; refer to 1 Kings 12:21. Judah, including Simeon, and Benjamin formed the southern kingdom, and they are regularly mentioned together in this book. Together they were the legitimate heirs of Israel as it existed under the united monarchy. Judah and Benjamin also formed the core of the postexilic community in Jerusalem and Judah, which is confirmed in Ezra 1:5 and Nehemiah 11:4-9.

Verses 1-28 are especially concerned with the location of the Benjaminite settlements in Jerusalem and further afield. Most of the details in this section are probably from pre-exilic sources. They would have reminded the Chronicler's readers of their identity and ancient claim to the land, founded on God's promise and gift.

I.i 1 Chronicles 8:1-9:2 - Descendants of Benjamin

Refer to the chapter summary above.

¹ Benjamin became the father of Bela his firstborn, Ashbel the second, Aharah the third, ² Nohah the fourth, and Rapha the fifth. ³ And Bela had sons: Addar, Gera, Abihud, ⁴ Abishua, Naaman, Ahoah, ⁵ Gera, Shephuphan, and Hiram. ⁶ These are the sons of Ehud (they were heads of ancestral houses of the inhabitants of Geba, and they were carried into exile to Manahath): ⁷ Naaman, Ahijah, and Gera, that is, Heglam, who became the father of Uzza and Ahihud.

1 Chronicles 8:1-7

Benjamin became the father. The tribe was already listed in 1 Chronicles 7:6-12, but is given more attention here. One reason for this is because the most of these settlements were in the area of Jerusalem, which was the main area that the returning exiles came to in the days Chronicles was written.

Chronicles elaborates this material, not simply because of the significance of King Saul and his family, as it continued a dozen generations after him, but primarily because of the importance of Benjamin as a tribe, which ranked second only to Judah in postexilic society.

The descendants of the famous judge Ehud (Judges 3:15), who settled in the Benjaminite city of Geba: <<Then King Asa made a proclamation to all Judah; none was exempt: they carried away the stones of Ramah and its timber, with which Baasha had been building; with them King Asa built Geba of Benjamin and Mizpah>> (1 Kings 15:22), before their removal to Manahath, which was probably located in Judah.

⁸ And Shahraraim had sons in the country of Moab after he had sent away his wives Hushim and Baara. ⁹ He had sons by his wife Hodesh: Jobab, Zibia, Mesha, Malcam, ¹⁰ Jeuz, Sachia, and Mirmah. These were his sons, heads of ancestral houses. ¹¹ He also had sons by Hushim: Abitub and Elpaal. ¹² The sons of Elpaal: Eber, Misham, and Shemed, who built Ono and Lod with its towns, ¹³ and Beriah and Shema (they were heads of ancestral houses of the inhabitants of Aijalon, who put to flight the inhabitants of Gath); ¹⁴ and Ahio, Shashak, and Jeremoth. ¹⁵ Zebadiah, Arad, Eder, ¹⁶ Michael, Ishpah, and Joha were sons of Beriah. ¹⁷ Zebadiah, Meshullam, Hizki, Heber, ¹⁸ Ishmerai, Izliah, and Jobab were the sons of Elpaal. ¹⁹ Jakim, Zichri, Zabdi, ²⁰ Elienai, Zillethai, Eliel, ²¹ Adaiah, Beraiah, and Shimrath were the sons of Shimei. ²² Ishpan, Eber, Eliel, ²³ Abdon, Zichri, Hanan, ²⁴ Hananiah, Elam, Anthothijah, ²⁵ Iphdeiah, and Penuel were the sons of Shashak.

²⁶ Shamsherai, Shehariah, Athaliah, ²⁷ Jaareshiah, Elijah, and Zichri were the sons of Jeroham. ²⁸ These were the heads of ancestral houses, according to their generations, chiefs. These lived in Jerusalem.

1 Chronicles 8:8-28

And Shaharaim had sons in the country of Moab after he had sent away his wives Hushim and Baara. Shaharaim was a descendant of Benjamin, perhaps a son of Ahihud. After divorcing his wives, he remarried them and had children in Moab (Targum, Vilna Gaon).

These are the descendants of Elpaal, who led a westward expansion into the coastal plain (vv.12-13) and settled in Jerusalem (v.28). Although Jerusalem was the city of the kings from the time of David, it was located within the territory of Benjamin because David saw this as a neutral location to rule from rather than staying in Hebron in Judah.

²⁹ Jeiel the father of Gibeon lived in Gibeon, and the name of his wife was Maacah. ³⁰ His firstborn son: Abdon, then Zur, Kish, Baal, Nadab, ³¹ Gedor, Ahio, Zecher, ³² and Mikloth, who became the father of Shimeah. Now these also lived opposite their kindred in Jerusalem, with their kindred. ³³ Ner became the father of Kish, Kish of Saul, Saul of Jonathan, Malchishua, Abinadab, and Esh-baal; ³⁴ and the son of Jonathan was Merib-baal; and Merib-baal became the father of Micah. ³⁵ The sons of Micah: Pithon, Melech, Tarea, and Ahaz. ³⁶ Ahaz became the father of Jehoaddah; and Jehoaddah became the father of Alemeth, Azmaveth, and Zimri; Zimri became the father of Moza. ³⁷ Moza became the father of Binea; Raphah was his son, Eleasah his son, Azel his son. ³⁸ Azel had six sons, and these are their names: Azrikam, Bocheru, Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadiah, and Hanan; all these were the sons of Azel. ³⁹ The sons of his brother Eshek: Ulam his firstborn, Jeush the second, and Eliphelet the third. ⁴⁰ The sons of Ulam were mighty warriors, archers, having many children and grandchildren, one hundred and fifty. All these were Benjaminites.

1 Chronicles 8:29-40

Ner became the father of Kish, Kish of Saul. This is the genealogy of the most famous Benjaminite family, detailing the ancestry of Saul and his descendants through fifteen generations. Ner, in 1 Samuel 14:50, has the same name as Saul's ancestor. Ner is also called Abiel in 1 Samuel 9:1. The Hebrews record that his

proper name was Abiel; and that he was called Ner - that is, a lamp or torch - because he outshone in holiness.

Jonathan was David's great friend and a warrior of great repute in his own right. Although he opposed his father Saul's treatment of David, he remained loyal to the king and died in battle alongside his father and most of his brothers.

The first section of the list is probably of early pre-exilic origin, since it contains names that would have been unacceptable in later times because of possible pagan connotations, i.e. **Baal** (v.30); **Eshbaal** (v.33) is known as Ishbosheth in 2 Samuel 2:8; and **Merib-baal** (v.34) is known as Mephibosheth in 2 Samuel 4:4. Because the Israelites detested *Baal*, which signifies lord, they changed it into *bosheth*, which signifies shame or reproach.

Verses 35-38 extend the family line into the late pre-exilic time. These details are not known from other earlier sources, and were preserved among those families that prized the memory of their descent from Israel's first king.

The sons of Ulam were mighty warriors, archers. Archers is in Hebrew 'that tread the bow,' for the bows of steel, which these used, required great strength to bend them; which therefore they did by treading on the bow with their feet, and pulling the string with both their hands.

The Benjaminites were known for their bravery. When there was civil war between them and the rest of Israel, they faced a much stronger army but: <<*The Benjaminites came out of Gibeah, and struck down on that day twenty-two thousand of the Israelites*>> (Judges 20:21), and: <<*Eighteen thousand Benjaminites fell, all of them courageous fighters*>> (Judges 20:44). Eventually, they succumbed and were nearly eradicated as a tribe but survived to become strong once more; refer to Judges Chapter 21.

^{9:1} So all Israel was enrolled by genealogies; and these are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel. And Judah was taken into exile in Babylon because of their unfaithfulness. ² Now the first to live again in their possessions in their towns were Israelites, priests, Levites, and temple servants.

1 Chronicles 9:1-2

So all Israel was enrolled by genealogies. The first eight chapters of 1 Chronicles list these genealogical records. These records were inscribed in the Book of the Kings of Israel, but these are not the same books known as 1 or 2 Kings. This is probably the records referred to by the authors of Kings as the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel, or Judah, that were a separate record from Kings and

Chronicles to which the authors had access that recorded everything of significance that occurred during the reign of the kings.

And Judah was taken into exile in Babylon because of their unfaithfulness. In one sentence, the Chronicler provides a reminder that it was not the clash of empires or the intrigues of the geopolitical scene that doomed the kingdom of Judah. It was their unfaithfulness to God. If they had remained faithful, God would have protected them amid the rise and fall of a hundred powerful empires.

Now the first to live again in their possessions in their towns were Israelites. The Chronicler completely skips over the seventy years of captivity between vv.1-2. His interest is not only in the past, demonstrated by eight previous chapters of genealogies, but also in the present and in the future. The Israelites were back in the land. All this means that Chronicles has taken the history of Israel a stage further than 1 and 2 Kings. Although Second Kings ends on a note of genuine hope with news of the sole remaining Davidic king: *<<In the thirty-seventh year of the exile of King Jehoiachin of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, King Evil-merodach of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, released King Jehoiachin of Judah from prison; he spoke kindly to him, and gave him a seat above the other seats of the kings who were with him in Babylon. So Jehoiachin put aside his prison clothes. Every day of his life he dined regularly in the king's presence. For his allowance, a regular allowance was given him by the king, a portion every day, as long as he lived>>* (2 Kings 25:27-30), it is restrained and Israel is still in exile. However, now winter is over, and these lists are a definite sign that spring has begun to arrive.

There was no longer a kingdom of Judah and another kingdom of Israel; now they were all Israelites. Called here by the general name of Israelites, which was given to them before that unhappy division of the two kingdoms, and now is restored to them when the Israelites are united with the Jews in one and the same commonwealth, so that all the names and signs of their former division might be blotted out.

To live again in their possessions. The idea is that the people of the tribes of Israel came back to their ancestral lands, promised to them by God and first possessed in the days of Moses and Joshua. Their ancestral land is a term rarely found in Chronicles; indeed, it is elsewhere only in 1 Chronicles 7:28, 2 Chronicles 11:14 and 31:1. Its occurrence here evokes its frequent use in the time of Moses and Joshua.

God kept the land empty for them during the exile. This was a wonderful providence of God that as the land kept its Sabbaths for those seventy years, so the country should be all that time kept empty, until the return of the Jews.

Priests, Levites, and temple servants. These were three categories of workers at the temple, who had the task of restoring the temple and its worship in the days of Ezra:

- **Priests** were the descendents of Aaron who had the right to offer sacrifice and take care of the Holy Place in the temple.
- **Levites** were the much broader class of religious workers, who served in many ways: practical, artistic, and spiritual.
- The **temple servants** or *Nethinim* were special servants given to the temple. The temple servants were literally ‘given ones.’ They might consist of captives who had been spared but enslaved to temple service. Early Hebrew examples include the certain Midianite women in Numbers 31:35 and 31:47, or the people of Gibeon in Joshua 9:22-23, but their organisation as a class is credited to David: **<<also Hashabiah and with him Jeshaiah of the descendants of Merari, with his kin and their sons, twenty; besides two hundred and twenty of the temple servants, whom David and his officials had set apart to attend the Levites. These were all mentioned by name>>** (Ezra 8:19-20).