

EXODUS

THE GOD WHO RESCUES

SESSION OBJECTIVE: EXODUS 6:14-30

To understand more about Aaron and his lineage.

Read the Text:

“These are the heads of their fathers’ houses: the sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi; these are the clans of Reuben. 15 The sons of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul, the son of a Canaanite woman; these are the clans of Simeon. 16 These are the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari, the years of the life of Levi being 137 years. 17 The sons of Gershon: Libni and Shimei, by their clans. 18 The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel, the years of the life of Kohath being 133 years. 19 The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These are the clans of the Levites according to their generations. 20 Amram took as his wife Jochebed his father’s sister, and she bore him Aaron and Moses, the years of the life of Amram being 137 years. 21 The sons of Izhar: Korah, Nepheg, and Zichri. 22 The sons of Uzziel: Mishael, Elzaphan, and Sithri. 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. 24 The sons of Korah: Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph; these are the clans of the Korahites. 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. 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?”” (Exodus 6:14-30, ESV)

Study the Text:

Aaron’s Genealogy

Having already introduced Moses by way of a broader, Jacobite genealogy (Ex. 1:1-7), the narrative is interrupted to introduce both Moses and Aaron in a more specific genealogy (although Aaron seems to be the greater emphasis of this genealogy, as evidenced below). Below is a breakdown of some of the interesting details that arise out of this particular genealogy.

THE WOMEN

It’s highly unusual to find women mentioned by name in genealogies during this time in history. When they are mentioned, it’s usually for a special purpose. Either they are significant to a later story or they point to something else significant in the genealogy. In this case, there are only three women mentioned: Aaron’s mother Jochebed (Ex. 6:20), Aaron’s wife Elisheba (Ex. 6:23), and Aaron’s daughter-in-law, the daughter of Putiel and wife of Eleazar (Ex. 6:25). The special recognition of these women indicates something about the nature of this genealogy; its emphasis is Aaron!

The only other mention of a woman in this genealogy occurs in verse 15, speaking of “Shaul, the son of a Canaanite woman.” The reasoning behind her being mentioned is not explicit but one can make some educated guesses. For one, it separates “the sons of Simeon” (Ex. 6:15) from “the sons of Levi” (Ex. 6:16) by showing that Levi’s line was more pure than the other lines. This is an important detail because the Levites will eventually become the priestly tribe, and purity will be paramount for their success. Second, the presence of a Canaanite woman in an Israelite line carries with the later theme of Exodus of a “mixed multitude” that God

was working to redeem (Ex. 12:38, 48). The mention of the three specific women coupled with the implied purity of Levi's line in this genealogy helps shape the emphasis of the genealogy, which is Aaron and the priesthood.

AARON'S SONS

Given the emphasis on Aaron in this genealogy, of note of the many names are his sons: "Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar" (Ex. 6:23). All four of Aaron's sons are ordained into the priesthood, the first two representing failure and the second two representing blessing.

Nadab and Abihu

Nadab and Abihu are the two priests who infamously offer God "strange fire" in Leviticus 10 and face the dire consequences of such actions: 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. 2 And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD" (Lev. 10:1-2).

Eleazar and Ithamar

Where Nadab and Abihu failed, Eleazar and Ithamar succeeded. Numbers 3 names Eleazar as the chief of the tribe and superintendent of the Kohathites, who were to care for the sanctuary and its furnishings (Num 3:32). In addition to Eleazar's general oversight of the tabernacle, the book of Numbers lists more of his specific responsibilities: "And Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest shall have charge of the oil for the light, the fragrant incense, the regular grain offering, and the anointing oil, with the oversight of the whole tabernacle and all that is in it, of the sanctuary and its vessels" (Num. 4:16). Eleazar was eventually appointed chief of the tribe of Levi (Ex. 6:23-25) and finally succeeded Aaron as high priest (Ex. 28:1). His brother Ithamar was made the treasurer of the offerings for the Tabernacle (Ex. 38:21), and superintendent of the Gershonites and Merarites in the service of the Tabernacle (Num. 4:28,33).

One of the major points of emphasis implicit in the four sons of Aaron is the specific demands of God for the priesthood. God will not allow his servants to do things "their way." Nadab and Abihu had seemingly good intention when they offered the strange fire (or unauthorized offering) to God, but it didn't matter; the road to destruction is paved with good intentions and Nadab and Abihu prove that. Eleazar and Ithamar stand in contrast to them as servants of God who act obediently and according to what God commands. Whenever we do things in our own power, it will lead to ruin. We must always ask: "What would God have me do?"

KORAH

Verse 24 mentions "the sons of Korah." Korah later becomes a key character in a major rebellion against Aaron and the priesthood. In Numbers 16, Korah seeks to take control of the priesthood with the aid of Dathan and Abiram and are subsequently consumed by the ground in a great act of judgment from God (Num. 16:1-50). Korah, a descendant of Levi, was of the priestly line, which is probably why his treachery is emphasized more than Dathan and Abiram (sons of Reuben). Nevertheless, he belongs in the priestly genealogy and is worth mentioning.

AN UNUSUAL MATRIMONY

Verse 20 mentions the unusual marriage of Aaron and Moses' parents: "Amram took as his wife Jochebed his father's sister, and she bore him Aaron and Moses." The reason this is so unusual is that it eventually becomes forbidden. Leviticus 18:6 will eventually say: "None of you shall approach any one of his close relatives to uncover nakedness." Amram's wife is actually his aunt! However, this law was not yet binding on

the people, and thus Amram was not guilty of any sin concerning this union. There was reason as well for this union; both were from the tribe of Levi, securing both sides of Moses' and Aaron's priestly claim (Lev. 2:1).

A BRIEF RECAP

After laying out the (mostly) Aaronic genealogy, verses 26 through 30 provide a recap of the events that have taken place thus far in the Exodus account between Moses, Aaron, and pharaoh.

What About Now?

The big takeaway is the reality that lineage amounts to mostly nothing when it comes to obedience to God's commands. This genealogy subtly hints at Aaron and his line, and by extension the Aaronic priesthood. While all priests would come from the Levites, the high priests would descend from Aaron. This is a high calling for his family, and yet his family (and the Levite descendants) are mixed with both men of blessing (Eleazar and Ithamar) and men of great disobedience (Nadab, Abihu, and Korah). The family you come from does not necessarily confine you to blessing or curse; obedience is the final word (Jn. 14:21). Another takeaway of this passage is God's *planning ahead* for what would eventually become the priesthood. The priesthood carries out major tasks in the Old Testament that are central to life as a Hebrew. Their purity was tantamount to their calling, and so God did everything necessary to set them up well from the beginning by curating a pure line beginning with Moses and Aaron.

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read Exodus 6:14-19. Write down all of the names you don't recognize and do a quick search for each of them.

2. Read Exodus 6:20. What is significant about Amram's marriage? (Hint: See above notes)

Day Two

1. Read Exodus 6:21-22. Whose sons are listed in these two verses? Which name stands out the most?

2. Read Exodus 6:23. Who did Aaron take as his wife? Who were their sons? What is significant about their sons? (Hint: See above notes)

Day Three

1. Read Exodus 6:24-25. Who are the sons of Korah? Who is Korah? Why is he significant? Who was Eleazar's son? Why is he significant?

2. Read Exodus 6:26-27. How does this genealogy end? What did Aaron and Moses say to pharaoh?
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Day Four

1. Read Exodus 6:28-29. What did the LORD tell Moses to say to pharaoh?
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2. Read Exodus 6:30. What was Moses' response to the LORD?
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Discuss the Text!

Week 12 Discussion: Family of Origin

The family from which you come does not dictate your relationship with God. While it is true that God desires to pass generational faith on to children through the parents (Deut. 6:4-9), there are plenty of examples in Scripture where heritage amounts to nothing (Jn. 8:31-38). One's relationship with God hinges on one's obedience to His commandments. However, it is also true that families of origin can work against us. The book of Exodus will later speak of generational curses as well (Ex. 20:5). Talk as a group about how your family of origin has impacted your faith, positively or negatively, and how your community of faith has helped you in your walk with Christ.

1. Icebreaker: Did you grow up in a Christian home? If not, what was the religious preference of your family?
2. Name one thing for which you are thankful from your family of origin.
3. How did your family of origin negatively impact your faith?
4. How did your family of origin positively impact your faith?
5. Can generational curses be broken? How?
6. How has your church family served you in ways your family of origin could not?

Takeaways:

1. This genealogy subtly emphasizes the Levites, specifically Aaron, and the Aaronic priesthood.
2. Some of Aaron's sons were rebellious, and some were obedient.
3. Some of the Levites eventually became rebellious despite their priestly lineage.
4. God is particular about what He demands of His servants.
5. Aaron and Moses were set up well to lead Israel out of Egypt.