

Exodus 6:9-7:7

Introduction

This morning, we're going to be nourished with what I might call a "sandwich." Not a peanut butter and jelly sandwich or a grilled cheese sandwich, but a biblical, theological "sandwich." A sandwich is made up of two slices of bread and the filling. And so here in Exodus 6:9-7:7 we have, as it were, two slices of bread and the filling. We see the first slice of bread in verses 10-13. (For the "sandwich" structure of the passage and the genealogical chart, see pages 9-10)

I. Exodus 6:9-13 — Moses spoke thus [cf. 6:6-8] to the people of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and harsh slavery. So the LORD said to Moses, "Go in, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the people of Israel go out of his land." But Moses said to the LORD, "Behold, the people of Israel have not listened to me. How then shall Pharaoh listen to me, for I am of uncircumcised lips?" But the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron and gave them a charge about the people of Israel and about Pharaoh king of Egypt: to bring the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt."

Does this sound wearisomely familiar yet? Moses' logic is impeccable. If the Israelites won't listen to me, then there's no way in the world that Pharaoh is going to listen to me. And once again, Moses is thinking of his own inadequacies – his own inability to speak powerfully and persuasively – How then shall Pharaoh listen to me, for I am of uncircumcised lips?"

But the Lord is done "arguing" with Moses. He "spoke to Moses and Aaron and gave them a charge about the people of Israel and about Pharaoh king of Egypt: to bring the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt." Period. End of discussion. Here we see the first slice of bread. And now notice how starting with verse 28, Moses adds the second slice of bread by basically repeating everything he's just said here.

II. Exodus 6:28-7:5 — On the day when the LORD spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, the LORD said to Moses, "I am the LORD; tell Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say to you." But Moses said to the LORD, "Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips. How will Pharaoh listen to me?" And the LORD said to Moses, "See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go out of his land. But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, Pharaoh will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and bring my hosts, my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment. The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them."

So the only real difference here is that in our second slice of bread we get some more details about the Lord's charge to Moses and Aaron (compare verse 6:13 and 7:1-5). Yes, Moses' logic is impeccable; it just doesn't really have anything to do with anything! Moses says: "I'll never get Pharaoh to listen to me. First of all, even my own countrymen won't listen to me. And second of all, I'm just not a good communicator." But the Lord never called Moses to persuade and convince Pharaoh. Moses' job is not to *get* Pharaoh to listen. And so just like that, all that

Moses has just said is completely irrelevant. “The LORD said to Moses... “You shall *spea*k all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall *tell* Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go out of his land.” Moses’ job was not to *persua*de Pharaoh, but simply to relay God’s words. (cf. Durham) How often do we assume responsibility for results, or even assume our right to *have* results, when God has given us *neither* the responsibility nor the *right*? Our only responsibility is to be obedient and faithful, *always* leaving *all* the results in His hands.

Of course, Moses should have known already that if he was going to measure his success by how quickly he could persuade Pharaoh, then he was doomed to failure. God repeats what He said before: “But I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, Pharaoh will not listen to you.”

And *why*, again? Why the uncomfortable, painful, long, drawn out process? God answers: “Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and bring my hosts, my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment. The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them.” God’s purpose was that even Pharaoh should come to *know* by experience that Yahweh was God above all gods, and King above all kings. Once again, God’s passion is that HE should be glorified *in and through* our salvation. And sometimes this happens in ways that we might never expect or even understand.

The Lord has finished “arguing” with Moses. He is to go and do exactly as God commands him. And then God will do exactly as He has said He will do. That’s it. Period. End of discussion.

If *one* thing has become clear ever since we first met Moses in chapter two, it’s that Moses truly is a most *unlikely* vessel. And yet what has become *equally* clear is the fact that God *will* make Moses His vessel to bring his judgment on Egypt and to redeem His people – so that all might know that He is Yahweh. It is these two realities—the total unlikelihood of Moses and the persevering determination of God—that together serve as both the bottom slice and the top slice of our theological “sandwich.”

So now what’s the filling? Well, it’s a *genealogy*. Not only do we, today, not get very excited about genealogies and lists of names, but this genealogy especially might seem to be terribly out of place. What in the world is it doing *here*? We know this is the inspired Word of God, and God is never haphazard or random in anything He does or says. We see this here from the fact that this genealogy has been carefully placed as the filling between these two slices of bread. So how are we to understand the message of these verses not as two separate slices of bread scattered here and there, and a random pile of filling just dumped on the table, but rather as a single, *very carefully put together* theological sandwich intended to feed and nourish all of us as God’s people? Well, let’s take a closer look now at the genealogy – at the filling in our sandwich.

III. Exodus 6:14-16a — 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. The sons of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul, the son of a Canaanite woman; these are the clans of Simeon. These are the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

So far, Moses is quoting almost word for word from another genealogy at the end of the book of Genesis. (Gen. 46:8-11) Remember that Exodus is just the continuation of Genesis, written by the same author, Moses. So everything in Exodus assumes the fact that we've read Genesis. And here we have one of those really obvious links pointing us backwards to Part I. We'll see in a minute how hugely important this is.

For right now, we notice first of all Simeon's obvious failure in marrying a Canaanite woman. Second of all, when we hear the names of Simeon, Levi, and Reuben, we can't help but remember the stories in Genesis of how Simeon and Levi ruthlessly slaughtered all the men of Shechem (Gen. 34; 49:5-7), and how Reuben slept with his father's concubine. (Gen. 35:22; 49:3-4) Jacob emphasized these things especially in Genesis 49:

- ✓ Genesis 49:3-7 — Reuben, you are my firstborn... Unstable as water, you shall not have preeminence, because you went up to your father's bed; then you defiled it... Simeon and Levi are brothers; weapons of violence are their swords... 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."

A genealogy is in one sense a list of names. But sometimes those names carry with them stories that remind us very vividly and painfully of the sinfulness of man.

So we've made it as far as Jacob's third son – Reuben, Simeon, Levi. In Genesis 46 the genealogy goes on to cover all twelve of Jacob's sons.¹ But this time, once Moses gets to Levi, he stops. Apparently, he's included Reuben and Simeon, *only* so that we can see Levi in the bigger picture – in the bigger picture of a larger, and at times dysfunctional family that we are not to forget has its *beginnings* in the book of Genesis.

IV. Exodus 6:16-19 — *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. The sons of Gershon: Libni and Shimei, by their clans. The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel, the years of the life of Kohath being 133 years. The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. ***These are the clans of the Levites according to their generations.***

Notice how at the beginning we have the sons of Levi “according to their generations,” and then at the end we have the clans of the Levites “according to their generations.” The Hebrew word for “generations” is not a very common word in the Old Testament, and we only find it one other time in the book of Exodus. (cf. 28:10) But for the Jews who were listening to this book being read in Hebrew, the moment they heard this word, they would immediately be transported back *yet again* to Genesis where this word is used *thirteen* times, and is actually one of the *key* words in Genesis dividing the book into ten different parts.² Once again, we have one of those really

¹ Even here in Exodus 6, it looks at first like Moses plans to repeat the entire genealogy of all twelve sons (“These are the heads of their father's houses”).

² Genesis 2:4 — These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

Genesis 5:1 — This is the book of the generations of Adam.

Genesis 6:9 — These are the generations of Noah.

Genesis 10:1 — These are the generations of... Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Genesis 11:10 — These are the generations of Shem.

obvious links pointing us backwards to Part I (Genesis). And once again, we'll see in the end that this is hugely important.

For right now, as we zero in on the family of Levi, we're reminded that the Gershonites, Kohathites, and Merarites are the three families that God appointed to serve in the tabernacle (Num. 3:25-37), and ultimately to be "scattered" throughout Israel teaching the people God's ways and God's laws (Josh. 21). As we zero in on the family of Levi, we're reminded that in the sovereignty of God, Levi's curse—that he would be scattered in Israel—was actually turned to Israel's blessing! (cf. VanGemeren)

Of Levi's three sons, Kohath is the only one whose age at the time of his death is recorded. Sure enough, after mentioning Gershon and Merari, they're left aside now (just like Reuben and Simeon, so Moses can zero in on the family of Kohath.

V. Exodus 6:20-22 — 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. The sons of Izhar: Korah, Nepheg, and Zichri. The sons of Uzziel: Mishael, Elzaphan, and Sithri.

Out of Kohath's three sons, we can already guess that Moses *must* have a special interest in the line of Amram! Just like with Kohath and Levi, Moses only tells us the lifespan of Amram. But more obvious than that, of course, is the fact that Amram became *the father of Aaron and Moses!*

I don't know about you, but for me, I'd naturally expect that now we've reached the end of the genealogy – *now* that we've arrived at Moses and Aaron. Wasn't that the whole point? And why should we go any farther, since Moses and Aaron are where we are in the story? And yet now, after reaching into the past, even all the way back into Genesis, Moses moves right on into the future, anticipating parts of the story that are still to come.

VI. Exodus 6:23 — Aaron took as his wife Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab and the sister of Nahshon, and she bore him Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

By the time Moses wrote these words, Aaron's first two sons, Nadab and Abihu, were already dead. They had been slain by fire that came out from the presence of the Lord because they were careless and flippant in their worship of God. (Lev. 10:1-7) Yes, a genealogy is a list of names. But sometimes those names carry with them stories that remind us very vividly and painfully of how fallen and sinful men are.

Now this next part of the genealogy might feel like the most unexpected part of all. After we arrived at Aaron and Moses—at what appeared to be the main point of the genealogy—not only does Moses keep right on going into the future, anticipating parts of the story that are still to

Genesis 11:27 — These are the generations of Terah. Terah fathered Abraham...

Genesis 25:12 — These are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son.

Genesis 25:19 — These are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son.

Genesis 36:1 — These are the generations of Esau.

Genesis 37:2 — These are the generations of Jacob.

come, but besides Aaron, he picks only *one* other of the Kohath's eight grandchildren³ to follow his family for one more generation. Who will it be?

VII. Exodus 6:24 — The sons of Korah: Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph; these are the clans of the Korahites.

Korah, of all people! Korah led a rebellion against the authority of Moses and Aaron, and as a result, he and all those who stood with him were destroyed when the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up. (Num. 16) By the time of the New Testament, the “rebellion of Korah” was proverbial for evil and wickedness. (Jude 11)

And yet in spite of Korah's rebellion and his terrifying end, Moses is careful to point out in Numbers 26 that “the sons of Korah did not die.” (Num. 26:11) In Moses' day, it was specifically the Korahites who were appointed the task of guarding the entrance to the tabernacle and the presence of God. (1 Chron. 9:19-20) It was specifically a Korahite who was entrusted with making the bread for the table that was in the holy place. (1 Chron. 9:31) And in 2 Chronicles 20, we see that it was also the Korahites who were responsible for the public praise and worship of the Lord. (2 Chron. 20:18-19) Eleven of the psalms that we still use and read today as a part of the inspired Word of God are associated with the sons of Korah. (Psalm 42, 44-49, 84-85, 87-88) For as infamous as the name of Korah was, it's interesting to me that his children were still referred to as Korahites. What an awesome testimony to the fact that God can overcome even the terrible “fallenness” of man to still use *people* for His redemptive purposes and for His glory!

Well, now Moses returns once more to the children of Aaron, taking us one generation further into the future, and anticipating one more famous part of the story that's still yet to come.

VIII. Exodus 6:25 — 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.

By the time Moses was writing these words, Phinehas was as famous as Korah was infamous. When a leading man in Israel publicly flaunted the holiness of God by bringing a Midianite woman into his tent, Phinehas turned back God's wrath from Israel by following them into the tent and putting them both to death. Phinehas was jealous for the Lord's holiness and glory. And so the Lord made a covenant with Phinehas: “Behold, I give to him my covenant of peace, 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.” (Num. 25:1-15) The psalmist remembers Phinehas with these words:

- ✓ Psalm 106:28–31 (cf. 1 Chron. 9:20) — [Israel] provoked the LORD to anger with their deeds, and a plague broke out among them. Then Phinehas stood up and intervened, and the plague was stayed. And that was counted to him as righteousness from generation to generation forever.

³ Many Biblical genealogies are selective, skipping generations, so that “father” has more the idea of “ancestor.” I refer here to the eight grandchildren of Kohath simply because it's easier than saying something like “the third generation (that we are aware of) from Kohath”! For discussion of this issue, see the commentaries.

What an astonishing contrast with the two uncles of Phinehas, Nadab and Abihu, who were slain before the Lord because they were flippant and careless about His glory! And so we see again that God can overcome even the terrible “fallenness” of man to still use *people* for His redemptive purposes and for His glory!

Well, there have been a lot of names in this genealogy, some more famous than others, some for good reasons and some for bad reasons. But what does it all mean? Moses finishes the “filling” of the sandwich with these words:

IX. Exodus 6:26–27 — *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.” *It was they* who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt about bringing out the people of Israel from Egypt, *this Moses and this Aaron*.

We get the very clear idea here that Moses and Aaron are somehow the *reason* for this genealogy. And yet we also get the clear idea from the genealogy itself that Moses and Aaron are not *at all* the main point. And there we have it.

Remember all those links that we saw connecting this genealogy back to Part I? This genealogy points us irresistibly backwards to Genesis – to other genealogies with other names and other stories, until we finally arrive all the way back at Adam and Eve and the very first promise of redemption.

✓ Genesis 3:14–15 — The LORD God said to the serpent... “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your *offspring* and her *offspring*; *he* shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise *his* heel.”

In the end, this promise of an *offspring*—this promise of *redemption*— is the reason for every genealogy in the Bible. God said to Abraham, “In your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” (Gen. 22:18; 26:4; 28:14; cf. 12:3) And so the genealogies of the offspring of Abraham through Isaac, and Jacob, are nothing less than the genealogical record of God’s salvation plan. Genealogies – full of *names*. Names that remind us very vividly of the fallenness and sinfulness of man. And yet also names that remind us of God’s promise to bring His salvation into the world even through the line of a fallen and sinful people.

Remember the two slices of bread in our sandwich? They reminded us that if anything has become clear since we first met Moses in chapter two, it’s that Moses is a most *unfit* and *unlikely* vessel. And yet they’ve also reminded us of the *equally* clear fact that God *will* make Moses His vessel to bring his judgment on Egypt and to redeem His people – so that all might know that He is Yahweh. It’s these two realities—the complete unlikelihood of Moses and the persevering determination of God—that serve together as the bottom and top slices of our theological “sandwich.” And it’s in light of these two realities that we understand what the “filling” is all about.

Who are Moses and Aaron? Nobody, really. Just two more names in a genealogy. Two more names in a genealogy that records the offspring through whom *God* has determined to bring *His* salvation even to *us*.⁴

When Moses came to his brother Aaron, he made this note in the genealogy: “Aaron took as his wife Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab and the sister of Nahshon.” Of course, Moses couldn’t have known this, but the God who is the Author of every word in Exodus *did*: Amminadab and Nahshon are both listed in the royal genealogy of Jesus in Matthew chapter 1. (Mat. 1:4) And so here is a genealogy that anticipates in every way Jesus our King (Aaron’s father-in-law and brother-in-law), Jesus our High Priest (Aaron), and Jesus our Prophet (Moses⁵). Who are Moses and Aaron? Nobody, really. Just two more names in a genealogy – *pointing us ahead*, and by a singular miracle of God’s sheer grace *preparing the way*, for Jesus.

Now remember how in the second slice of bread, God said to Moses, “You shall speak all that I command you.” (7:2) Aren’t we half expecting to hear another argument – another excuse? But now that the sandwich is completed, see how Moses concludes:

X. Exodus 7:6-7 — Moses and Aaron *did so*; they did *just as the LORD commanded them*. Now Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron eighty-three years old, when they spoke to Pharaoh.

Somehow, suddenly, at eighty years of age, it seems that the old Moses is finally gone, with a new, more humble, more obedient, more God-focused Moses in his place. One commentator writes:

“By what inward processes of thought and decision Moses reached his crucial transformation we are not told. He entered the presence of the Lord with complaints about his failure; he emerged, as subsequent chapters will prove over and over again, as the man who had no words other than those God had taught him, no acts other than those God had commanded, and no position except that of a man sent from God.” (Motyer)

God *alone* will be the mover, and actor, and hero of this story from its beginnings even as far back as Genesis, all the way to its finale in Jesus, and then on, and on, and on throughout all eternity. Who are Moses and Aaron? The placement of this genealogy right here, right now, is proof that Moses has finally learned the answer to that question. They are just two more names in a genealogy that tells the story of God’s power to use fallen and sinful people for His redemptive purposes and for His glory. And so now, suddenly, we get the very distinct feeling that we’re finally ready for action. As always, God’s timing is perfect.

⁴ “This genealogy may be seen as an attempt to set both Aaron *and* Moses firmly within the special descendancy of Jacob/Israel’s third son, Levi, the ancestor of the line of those who handle holy things and mediate Yahweh’s words of expectation and judgment. [The purpose of this genealogy] in [context] is the celebration of the descendancy of the promise.” (Durham)

⁵ Notice that Moses does not mention any of his own children in the genealogy. One commentator suggests that this could be because the office of “prophet” is not hereditary.

Conclusion

After the birth of Jesus, there are no more genealogies in the Bible. That's because Jesus was the end goal of all genealogies. And when Jesus came, He came not to continue a physical line of children, but to create a spiritual offspring. The prophet Isaiah writes:

- ✓ Isaiah 53:10 — It was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, *he shall see his offspring*; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

We are now, as it were, the offspring of Jesus. And so your name is also written in a genealogy – a genealogy of a very different kind, and yet one that still finds its roots even in Exodus chapter six.

So *who are we?* Nobody, really. But that's something of a deceptive answer, isn't it? We're just people whose lives can tell the story of God's power to use fallen, and sinful, and weak, and inadequate people like us, for His redemptive purposes – and for His glory.

- ✓ 1 Corinthians 1:26–31 — For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

Exodus 6:9-7:7

Moses spoke thus to the people of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses, because of their broken spirit and harsh slavery...

So the LORD said to Moses, “Go in, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the people of Israel go out of his land.”

But Moses said to the LORD, “Behold, the people of Israel have not listened to me. How then shall Pharaoh listen to me, for I am of uncircumcised lips?”

But the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron and gave them a charge about the people of Israel and about Pharaoh king of Egypt: to bring the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

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. The sons of Simeon: Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul, the son of a Canaanite woman; these are the clans of Simeon. 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. The sons of Gershon: Libni and Shimei, by their clans. The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel, the years of the life of Kohath being 133 years. The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These are the clans of the Levites according to their generations. 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. The sons of Izhar: Korah, Nepheg, and Zichri. The sons of Uzziel: Mishael, Elzaphan, and Sithri. Aaron took as his wife Elisheba, the daughter of Amminadab and the sister of Nahshon, and she bore him Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. The sons of Korah: Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph; these are the clans of the Korahites. 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.

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.” It was they who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt about bringing out the people of Israel from Egypt, this Moses and this Aaron.

On the day when the LORD spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, the LORD said to Moses, “I am the LORD; tell Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I say to you.”

But Moses said to the LORD, “Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips. How will Pharaoh listen to me?”

And the LORD said to Moses, “See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall tell Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go out of his land. But I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, Pharaoh will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and bring my hosts, my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment. The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them.”

Moses and Aaron did so; they did just as the LORD commanded them. Now Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron eighty-three years old, when they spoke to Pharaoh.

Exodus 6:14-25

