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The Role and Functions of the Biblical Genealogies

Paul J. Ray, Jr.

Introduction

Interest in the biblical genealogies was cultivated as early as the post-exilic period. The authors of the various Apocryphal (Tob 1:1–2), Pseudepigraphal (Jubilees 4:1–33), NT (Matt 1:1–17), and Rabbinic writings (b. Pes 62b) produced at that time considered this type of literature to be historically accurate.

This was the dominant position until the latter half of the nineteenth century when serious doubts were raised concerning the use of this material for writing history. Ancient Near Eastern parallels to the early parts of Genesis led scholars to suspect that their biblical counterparts might have been extracted from these early legends and myths. It was also discovered through ethnographical data, that tribal societies, like ancient Israel,¹ used genealogies to express political and social relationships between families, and

¹ For the latest critique on tribalism, see Piotr Bienkowski, “‘Tribalism’ and ‘Segmentary Society’ in Iron Age Transjordan,” in *Studies on Iron Age Moab and Neighbouring Areas in Honour of Michèle Daviau*, ed. P. Bienkowski (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 15–22.

therefore, the biblical genealogies might be seen simply as accounts of tribal origins and interrelationships at the time they were composed.²

It was also noted by literary critics that, although a few of the genealogies (or sections of them) might be as early as David (J), the majority were composed very late, by the “P” source and the Chronicler.³ These data and various interpretations of it were formulated into a view which suggested that the early sources were tribal interrelationships, while the later ones were, for the most part, artificial and retrojected back into antiquity, usually being purely fabrications. Modern scholars echo these older positions which have tended to fall within three basic positions, viewing the biblical genealogies as 1) originally tribal genealogies reflecting varying degrees of historicity; 2) artificial creations, usually late, which join earlier narrative segments;⁴ or 3) more liberally, providing accurate information for historical purposes on the basis of the fact that tribal cultures have amazing memories when it comes to genealogical data.⁵

These treatments however, have tended, until recently, to deal exclusively with the literary function of the biblical genealogies. Two major monographs have appeared during the twentieth century. The first,⁶ basically followed the literary-critical paradigm, while the second,⁷ though breaking much new ground by the use a comparative approach which looks into modern oral genealogies, as well as written genealogies from the Ancient Near East, nevertheless, in the opinion of the present writer, still takes a basically literary approach. In addition, a number of recent articles have appeared, some of which use the latter as a starting point, broadening this approach, or sometimes moving in new directions.

The methodology used in this paper assumes the Bible is the word of God, but also takes advantage of modern scientific methods where they make a contribution to the study of the biblical genealogies. We will first provide an

² Robert R. Wilson, “The Old Testament Genealogies in Recent Research,” *JBL* 49 (1975): 169–72.

³ S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (Glouster, MA: Peter Smith, 1972), 14–17, 159, 519–21.

⁴ Martin Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, trans. Bernhard W. Anderson (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 214–19.

⁵ W. F. Albright, *From Stone Age to Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday Anchor, 1957), 72–81, 238–43.

⁶ Marshall D. Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 3–82.

⁷ Robert R. Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977).

analysis of the terms that appear in connection with genealogies in the biblical text. Next, we will summarize the approach to the genealogies found in Wilson and others, and attempt applications to some biblical material, which, for the most part, have not been considered by them. Finally, we will glean the above insights and make some suggestions in terms of the role and functions of the biblical genealogies.

Linguistic Data

The verb *yālad* is frequently used in the books of Genesis and 1 Chronicles where it occurs primarily in the genealogies connected with the patriarchal narratives. It occurs 468 times in the OT⁸ as follows: Genesis, 170 times; 1 Chronicles, 108 times; Ruth, 14 times; and 176 times in the other books. It is most frequently found in the *qal* (217 times: Genesis, 89; 1 Chronicles, 20; and Ruth, 4) and *hiphil* (172 times: Genesis, 60; 1 Chronicles, 77; and Ruth, 9) formations. In *niphal* it is used 38 times (Genesis, 7; and 1 Chronicles, 10), in *pual* 27 times, and in *hophal* three times (Genesis, 1). In *piel*, where it means “do the office of midwife,” it occurs 10 times (Genesis, 2; Exodus, 8), and in *hithpael*, meaning “register by genealogy,” it occurs only one time (Num 1:18).

The basic meaning of the word⁹ is “bring forth,” and both *qal* and *hiphil* have the meaning “become the father of,” “beget,” and “procreate” with the male as the subject. In *qal*, it takes the meaning “bear (children)” when a female is the subject.¹⁰ The *qal* and *hiphil* forms of *yālad* have been used by literary critics to differentiate between the so-called “J” and “P” sources of the biblical genealogies. Thus, e.g., the genealogy of Genesis 4 and parts of the Table of Nations are thought to be “J” because the verb is used in *qal*, while the genealogies in Genesis 5, 11 and Ruth 4 are seen as “P” because of the use of the verb in the *hiphil*.¹¹

The question arises as to whether or not this method is legitimate in terms of trying to understand the meaning of the biblical text. The answer would seem to be no. Cassuto¹² has pointed out that there is a peculiarity in the Hebrew language whereby the verb *yālad* can be used with reference to

⁸ A. Evon-Shoshan, *A New Concordance of the Old Testament* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1985), 467–69.

⁹ J. Schreiner and G. J. Botterweck, “yalad,” *TDOT* 6:77.

¹⁰ W. L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 134–35.

¹¹ Driver, *Literature*, 15, 134n 45; 455–56; Schreiner and Botterweck, “yalad,” 79.

¹² U. Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1983), 46–47.

the male role in the production of the child in the *hiphil* perfect and imperfect, and occasionally in the *qal* perfect, but basically never in the *qal* imperfect. The latter is only used in the feminine form and translated into English as “bear,” or “give birth to.”

Indeed, if one checks the overall usage of the verbal forms, it will be found that the *qal* imperfect of *yālad* is used only one time in the masculine form (Prov 27:1), and even then only in a metaphorical sense. However, the same form is used in the feminine 68 times. The *qal* perfect on the other hand is used 24 times (though even a few of these are used metaphorically). The *qal* active participle is also used occasionally (three times). By contrast, *yālad* is used in the *hiphil* formation quite frequently (47 times in the imperfect and 112 times in the perfect). It would seem that the *qal* form was used with the female role in the production of the child (but not exclusively), whereas, the *hiphil* was for the most part reserved for the male role. It is thus the general rule or usage of the Hebrew language itself that determines the specific choice of the verb *yālad* rather than a particular author’s rather limited vocabulary. It would also appear that the choice of one form of the verb over another is not a legitimate device for determining ancient sources.

Another problem in connection with the usage of this verb in *qal* and *hiphil* is whether or not direct physical offspring is necessitated by the use of the *hiphil* formation.¹³ It is well known that the use of the verb in *qal* can have a more general relationship; Ps 2:7 being an apt example. While it would seem that actual paternity is reflected in almost every instance of the *hiphil*, the word does not necessarily point to the immediately following generation,¹⁴ as is seen by its usage in the genealogies themselves (see below).

¹³ Schreiner and Botterweck, “yalad,” 79. The suggestion that the *hiphil* form of the verb *yālad* is preferred in vertical (i.e., linear) genealogies (e.g., Gen 5) and that *qal* is preferred in segmented genealogies (e.g., Gen 10) is inadequate. As in 1 Chronicles (G. Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 1–9*, AB 12 [New York: Doubleday, 2003], 250), there are genealogies in Genesis of “mixed type,” combining both linear and segmented forms. Genesis 5, in the *hiphil* formation, ends in a segmented genealogy (5:32) and Genesis 4, which is in the *qal* formation, has both linear and segmented elements to its structure (See Table 1 for an illustration of these types of genealogies). Other examples could be cited. G. F. Hasel, “The Meaning of the Chronogenealogies of Genesis 5 and 11,” *Origins* 7 (1980): 67 suggests that the *hiphil* imperfect plus the *wau* consecutive (converted imperfect) indicates direct physical offspring in Genesis 5 and 11. While the uniqueness of Genesis 5 and 11 (perhaps also Exod 6:16, 18 and 20, at least in part) seems to be their interlocking features, *yālad* in the *hiphil* imperfect plus the *wau* consecutive would seem to equal the *hiphil* perfect found in genealogies with evidence of telescoping (e.g., the genealogy of David, below).

¹⁴ P. R. Gilchrist, “yālad,” *TWOT* 1:378–80 pointed out that by giving birth to a child, that individual becomes a parent to all the descendants of that child.

In this connection, it is interesting to note the LXX translations of this verb in *qal* and *hiphil*. There are four verbs used to translate the *hiphil* of *yālad* in the LXX. They are γεννάω, (γί)γνομαι, (ἐκ)τίκτω, and τεκνοποιέω. These same four verbs (along with six others),¹⁵ are used to translate the *qal* of the Hebrew verb. It would seem then, that the translators of the LXX saw no basic difference between these two forms of the Hebrew verb *yālad*.

The NT genealogies of Jesus, in Matthew and Luke, use γεννάω and the phrase “the son of” in the genitive (τοῦ), respectively. Matthew 1:3–6 is based, for the most part, upon Ruth 4:18–22, and 1 Chr 2:3–15, where all of the former and the majority of the latter use the *hiphil* form of the verb *yālad*. Hence, in the NT, where the Hebrew originals were consulted (at least by the translators of the LXX, before them), the Greek words are translations of the verb *yālad* in the *hiphil* form. In addition, Jesus is described as “the son of David, the son of Abraham,” in Matt 1:1, and there are also a number of omissions of Judahite kings, known elsewhere in the OT, in the remainder of this genealogy, which is stylized into three sets of fourteen generations (cf. v. 17). In Luke 3:36, there is the well-known addition of Cainan. It would seem therefore, that the Greek writers were aware of and made use of the phenomena known as genealogical fluidity (to be discussed below).

One other verb is used in the OT in connection with the biblical genealogies. This is *yḥś*, which is found only 20 times, all in postexilic period contexts. It is distributed as follows: Ezra, 3 times; Nehemiah, 2; 1 Chronicles, 10 and 2 Chronicles, 5.¹⁶ It is always found in the *hithpael*, where it has the meaning “have oneself registered in a genealogical table.”¹⁷ The noun *yaḥś* is used one time in Neh 7:5 meaning “pedigree” or “register.” It has been suggested that the original meaning of this word may have been “people” in the sense of an ethnic or social group, and only later taken on the specialized meaning connected with legitimate descent.¹⁸ Whatever the case, its comparatively late use in the history of Israel adds little to the overall meaning, role and function of the biblical genealogies.¹⁹

The noun *tôl^edôt* is used 39 times in the OT, always in the plural. It is found in Gen 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1, 32; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 13, 19; 36:1, 9; 37:2; Exod 6:16, 19; 28:10; Num 1:20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 3:1;

¹⁵ HRCS, 1:237, 256, 443; 2:1342, 1351; cf. Schreiner and Botterweck, “yalad,” 77.

¹⁶ Evon-Shoshan, *Concordance*, 464.

¹⁷ Holladay, *Lexicon*, 133.

¹⁸ R. K. Harrison, “Genealogy,” *ISBE* 2:424.

¹⁹ G. F. Hasel, “Chronicles, Books of,” *ISBE* 1:667.

Ruth 4:18; 1 Chr 1:29; 5:7, 7:2, 4, 9; 8:28; 9:9, 34 and 26:31. It is also found a number of times in the Dead Sea Scrolls literature including four times in IQS and three times each in IQM and the Songs of the Sacrifices. Its meaning has been translated variously as “generations,” “genealogies,” “succession,” “narrative,” “family history,” “fathering,” “begetting,” “offspring,” and “descendants.” It has been suggested that its meaning comes closest to the *hithpael* form of the verb, the *hapax legomenon* in Num 1:18 translated “to get one’s descent acknowledged.”²⁰ Whether this is the case or not is debatable. It seems safer to let each context suggest its exact meaning.

In eleven instances in the book of Genesis and also two other places (exactly one third of the total usage) the formula *zeh/ʔelleh (sēpher) tôlēdôt* PN (“this/these is/are [the book of] the generations of PN”) is used. This forms a series whereby each individual genealogy runs in an overlapping sequence.²¹ In Genesis this formula is usually connected with a genealogy. Only the first and last of these usages do not have this connection, and as such perhaps form an *inclusio* around the whole system in that book. If the two other usages (Num 3:1 and Ruth 4:18) are included, the genealogies run from Adam to David. Table 1, below, summarizes that data.

Following Wiseman,²² Harrison²³ has popularized the view that the book of Genesis was divided into 11 tablets (or sources) based on the analogy of the colophon in cuneiform tablets. The *tôlēdôt* formula, like the colophon, is reflective of what precedes it rather than what follows as well as the natural use of genealogies which focus on the offspring that are brought forth from an ancestor. Nowhere in Genesis does a genealogy include the birth of an individual whose genealogy is introduced, with the exception of Isaac in Gen 25:19. Although this is a possible function of the *tôlēdôt* formula, one should be cautious about its use as sources, as it would seem that the analogy breaks down in places e.g., Gen 36:9 which introduces a genealogy of Esau’s descendants²⁴ in Seir, after he left Canaan, but without any preceding narrative section dealing with this material. Rather it follows another genealogy of Esau in Canaan.

²⁰ Johnson, *Purpose*, 14–15; J. Schreiner, “Toledeth,” *TDOT* 15:582–83, 587.

²¹ Johnson, *ibid.*, 15, 22–23; Schreiner, *ibid.*, 583.

²² P. J. Wiseman, *New Discoveries in Babylonia About Genesis* (London: Marshall, 1958), 46.

²³ R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1969), 543–51; “Genesis,” *ISBE* 2:436–37; and “Genealogy,” 424.

²⁴ Gilchrist, “yālad,” 380.

The use of the *tôledôt* formula in Gen 2:4 has always been seen as problematic. It is sometimes seen as an interpolation of a redactor.²⁵ Looked at from the perspective suggested above, the emphasis would be on the previous section (Gen 1:1–2:3), which has already dealt with the creation of the heaven and the earth, not on the material yet to follow. The following section (Gen 2:4–25), would then take its rightful place as a detailed account of the creation of mankind, and along with the introduction of sin (Gen 3), and its spread (Gen 4), constitute the background of Adam’s genealogy (*tôledôt*) in Gen 5.²⁶

The noun *dôr* is sometimes understood to be important in connection with genealogical terminology. It is used 167 times in the OT,²⁷ and while usually translated as generation,²⁸ actually has a wide range of meaning.²⁹ Its basic meaning seems to be the “circle of person’s lifetime” (e.g., Gen 15:16).³⁰ Other meanings include an extended period of time, e.g., an age or period of past (Isa 51:9), future (Ps 102:24), or even endless (Ps 89:1) time; one’s contemporaries (Isa 53:8); a class of individuals distinguished by certain moral or spiritual characteristics (Ps 14:5); or a group as opposed to a single person (Gen 17:12).

Its most well-known meaning refers to the time from a person’s birth to the birth of his offspring. It is here that the problem of the average length of a generation comes to play. Some have taken Gen 15:16 as indicating a length of 100 years,³¹ while the most popular average is 40 years, based on the generation who died in the wilderness (Deut 2:14; Ps 95:10). A figure of 25 years is actually closer to the average,³² for individuals whose life spans are about 70 years (Ps 90:10). It would seem that the average was longer for those who lived prior to the Exodus. If one averages the life spans for all whose age at death was recorded from Abraham to Moses and Aaron, a figure of ±140 is obtained. A figure of 50 years per generation (twice 25 for 70 years), therefore, seems reasonable. In fact, recent research³³ on 737 well-documented dynasties (mostly medieval and modern Europe and Asia),

²⁵ J. Skinner, *Genesis* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1930), 41.

²⁶ Gilchrist, “yālad,” 380.

²⁷ Even-Shoshan, *Concordance*, 261–62.

²⁸ Holladay, “Lexicon,” 69.

²⁹ R. D. Culver, “Dor,” *TWOT* 1:186.

³⁰ D. N. Freedman and J. Lundbom, “D ô r,” *TDOT* 3:169–81.

³¹ Cf. P. J. Ray, “The Duration of the Israelite Sojourn in Egypt,” *AUSS* 24 (1986): 236–37.

³² J. Bright, *A History of Israel*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 121.

³³ D. Henige, “Comparative Chronology and the Near East: A Case for Symbiosis,” *BASOR* 261 (1986): 62.

indicates an average generation of 25–34 years for 480, 15–24 years for 145, and 35–50 years for 112 of these dynasties. It would therefore, seem that 50 year pre-Exodus and 25 year post-Exodus generational averages are tenable figures.

Genealogy and History

As we have seen above, many modern biblical scholars have been reluctant to consider the biblical genealogies accurate sources for reconstructing Israel's history, and have tended to approach them from an exclusively literary point of view. However, since the appearance of Wilson's book, the way of dealing with this material has moved in a different direction. Though cautious, Wilson has suggested that the biblical genealogies are both accurate, and used critically, may be used as sources for historical research.³⁴ In fact, the current consensus is that the biblical genealogies not only contain historically accurate information,³⁵ but they are accurate explanations of the milieu in which they were created.³⁶

Wilson first dealt with modern anthropological evidence, consisting of oral genealogies, then moved to comparisons with ancient Near Eastern written genealogies, and finally to the biblical genealogies. For convenience, we shall move from Wilson's conclusions to the specifics of his arguments, and make some of our own comparisons with the biblical genealogies, both in passing and more specifically at the end of the discussion.

In no case, whether in terms of modern oral genealogies, or ancient extra-biblical and biblical written genealogies, did Wilson find evidence that they were produced primarily for historical records. Nevertheless, due to the following reasons, they may still be seen as authentic statements, and as such can be used by the modern historian. In the case of oral genealogies they are accepted by society as accurate statements of past domestic, political and religious relationships. In written genealogies (both from the ancient Near East and the Bible), they preserve historical information incidentally. In the former, this takes the form of genealogical data in king lists, which can only be interpreted as being given for additional information, possibly as historical notes. The king lists were regarded as historical records and were

³⁴ Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 200.

³⁵ Y. Levin, "From Lists to History: Chronological Aspects of the Chronicler's Genealogies," *JBL* 123/24 (2004): 606.

³⁶ M. W. Chavalas, "Genealogy," *EDB* 490.

possibly even used as the basis for historical works. Where parallels exist, they have been found to be identical, and therefore, accurate.³⁷

Likewise, in the biblical genealogies, much information, though not created for the purpose of conveying historical information, is nevertheless preserved incidentally. Although the genealogies were originally created for domestic, political and religious functions, they were nevertheless later understood as historically accurate. This, for instance, is how the Chronicler understood the genealogies of Genesis. Other genealogies ceased to function in terms of their original purpose, after becoming frozen in written form. They were, therefore, preserved for other reasons. Genesis 36 seems to be one of these “frozen” types, perhaps functioning only for historiographical purposes.³⁸

Genealogy itself, in terms of expressing kinship relationships, can take two forms: the list form and genealogical narrative (see below). The list form is more common and focuses on descent, of which there are two types. In the first, a genealogy traces only one line of descent from a living member to a single individual in the past. This is known as a linear genealogy. In the second, the genealogy expresses more than one line of descent from a single ancestor to two or more living individuals. This is called a segmented genealogy³⁹ (See Table 1). This second type of genealogy is very common in tribal (*šebet* or *matteh*) societies such as was ancient Israel. Here, the concept of kinship extends beyond the nuclear family (*bēt 'ab*), and is the basis on which larger family units called lineages (*mišpaḥah*) were organized. Lineages consist of all those individuals who claim descent from a common ancestor, whether maternal or paternal, the latter in terms of Israel.⁴⁰

Another feature of list-type genealogies is depth, or the number of generations between the founding ancestor and its living members. In segmented genealogies, the smallest functioning lineage is usually three to five generations in depth (cf. e.g., Exod 6:16–25, where the descendants of

³⁷ Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 54–55; 132–33.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 198–200.

³⁹ R. Fox, *Kinship and Marriage* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1967) 123, 126–27. Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 9. See also Wilson, “Between ‘Azel’ and ‘Azel’: Interpreting the Biblical Genealogies,” *BA* 42 (1979): 12.

⁴⁰ Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 18–20, R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961) 13, 21; L. E. Stager, “The Archaeology of the Family in Ancient Israel,” *BASOR* 260 (1985): 20–22. See also W. Osborne, *The Genealogies of Chronicles 1–9* (PhD diss., Dropsie University, 1979), 147–48; B.S.J. Isserlin, *The Israelites* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1998), 100–101; and P. J. King and L. E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2001), 37–40.

Levi are traced for three generations), while the largest seldom traces descent back further than ten to fourteen generations, the average being twelve. Lineages which exceed twelve generations in depth are usually in linear form, the most common examples being king lists presented as genealogies.⁴¹ A biblical example of this can be seen in 1 Chr 3:10–14, where 15 of the kings of Judah from Solomon through Josiah are given in linear form, followed in vv. 15–17 by three kings and their descendants in a segmented genealogy.

Depth is related to another characteristic feature of genealogies called fluidity. This occurs because genealogies, which are “owned” by a living group must fluctuate over time due to constant changes within its structure. As such there are three basic types of fluidity.⁴² The first type is due to relationship changes. This is reflected in such forms as the changing of the order of names within a generation, or names being moved from one generation to another. Some biblical examples follow: In Gen 11:27 Abram is listed first (due to his prominence, or theologically his relationship with God) although he was not actually the first born son of Terah. In Gen 36:9–14, the sons of Esau’s wife, Oholibamah, are listed with his grandsons instead of his sons, perhaps since Oholibamah was a wife taken from a subjugated people (cf. vv. 2, 20, 24–25; Deut 2:12, 22).

A second type of fluidity consists of the addition of names to a genealogy, whether from simple births or from the addition of previously unrelated individuals. A biblical example of the latter suggests itself where Caleb (and his relations, cf. 1 Chr 4:13–15), who was a non-Israelite (Num 32:12), was included into the tribe of Judah (Num 13:6; 1 Chr 4:15) due to faithfulness to Yahweh. From the perspective of the NT, the Gentiles are included or grafted into the “genealogy” of Israel (cf. Rom 11), when they become partakers of the covenant.

The third form of fluidity consists of omission,⁴³ either by only citing the relevant portion of the genealogy relative to a situation, in which case that portion is said to be “temporarily” lost, or through telescoping, where individuals of the same name are combined into a single figure. Typical reasons for omission include death, the lack of an offspring, deliberate suppression, simple forgetting, or loss of function. These reasons serve to

⁴¹ Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 21–26.

⁴² Wilson, *Ibid.*, 27–37.

⁴³ Noted as early as 1890, cf. W. H. Green, “Primeval Chronology,” *Classical Evangelical Essays in Old Testament Interpretation*, ed. W. C. Kaiser (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1972), 18–19.

show that names are not omitted capriciously. Fluidity is not to be equated with invention.⁴⁴ The most logical place for names to be omitted are in the middle of genealogies, especially in the linear type. This is due to the fact that those individuals at the beginning of the genealogy are the founding ancestors, and are never forgotten, and the individuals at the end are living members and those within living memory. Hence, it is usually only those members in the middle who have done something special or who were connected with something important that are remembered.⁴⁵

A few examples of the less obvious types of omission should be mentioned. An example of deliberate suppression of names from a genealogy would be the exclusion of the priestly line of Eli through Abiathar in the genealogy of Levi. This must be reconstructed from the biblical narrative (cf. 1 Sam 1:3; 14:3; 22:20; see Table 2). Omission of entire genealogies which have lost function might be seen in 1 Chr 1–9, where the genealogies of both Dan and Zebulun are lacking among the twelve tribes. For a case where a person has the same name, status and position, and where it is difficult to know the exact number of individuals bearing it, might be seen in Neh 12:11 with Jaddua.⁴⁶

Yet another aspect of genealogy is function. When a genealogy is cited, it is done so for a specific purpose. The form that it takes cannot be separated from its function, by which it is both influenced and limited.⁴⁷ The three basic functions are domestic (dealing with social order, i.e., position and status); political-jural (e.g., king lists); and religious. The first type usually takes the form of a segmented genealogy, while the latter two usually take the linear form. Biblical examples of the above include Num 27:1, cf. Num 26:29–34, where the genealogy functions for the purpose of establishing property rights (cf. Num 27:2–4); the king list/genealogy of 1 Chr 3:10–14; and the priestly genealogies of Levi in 1 Chr 6:1–15, Ezra 7:1–5, Neh 11:11; 12:10–11.

Some genealogies can have more than one function. In so doing their form is altered, resulting in seemingly “conflicting” versions.⁴⁸ A good biblical example of this is Ezra 7:1–5, where the genealogy functions as both a method to legitimize the position and status of Ezra, as well as to show continuity with the preexilic priesthood. In so doing, it was not necessary to

⁴⁴ Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 55.

⁴⁵ Wilson, “Azal,” 12.

⁴⁶ Josephus, *Antiquities* 11.8.4–5.

⁴⁷ Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 18, 23.

⁴⁸ Wilson, *Ibid.*, 46–47.

reproduce the Levitical (priestly) genealogy with every name back to Aaron, and thus it is seemingly in conflict with other and longer versions of the genealogy (cf. 1 Chr 6:1–15, 50–53).

Change in any of the types discussed above may become hindered by the genealogy's being recorded in written form. This, of course, is the way that all of the biblical and extra-biblical genealogies appear. As a result, they may cease to function, and therefore serve as historiographical information, or may yet serve a further function (as in king lists and priestly genealogies in their linear forms), by the continual addition of names until they reach their final form.⁴⁹

In Table 2, which follows, we attempt a reconstruction of three genealogies which are temporally parallel (individuals at both the beginning and the end of the genealogies are known contemporaries, as is also the case at one point in the middle, cf. Exod 6:23). All three, begin as segmented genealogies, but soon take a linear form. They each exhibit a depth of two to three generations in their segmentary form, and from ten to fourteen, with a longer variation of twenty-two generations, in their linear form.

Fluidity is also exhibited in the form of telescoping. As elsewhere, Korah (Num 16:1), a contemporary of Moses is combined with the founder of one of the lineages of Levi (Exod 6:21) as is Amram, the founder of one of the lineages of Levi, with the father of Moses and Aaron (Exod 2:1; 6:18, 20). The focus in the genealogy of Judah is primarily on those individuals at its beginning and end. However, in the middle are three individuals who were connected with the Exodus and Conquest⁵⁰ events as well as two well-known names from the period of the Judges (cf. Ruth 4:18–22). Much the same can be said for the priestly genealogy of Levi. The much longer Levitical genealogy of the sons of Heman the singer, seems, on the other hand, to be as complete as possible. In our reconstruction, at least for the genealogy of Judah, a figure of 50 years per generation (average) is used for pre-Exodus individuals, and a 25 year generational average is used for those who lived after the Exodus (see above). An Exodus date of ca. 1450 BCE and a long

⁴⁹ Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 47.

⁵⁰ Matthew 1:5 connects Salmon with the conquest period and Rehab of Jericho. Scholars are divided on their acceptance or non-acceptance of this late detail, e.g., see J. D. Quinn, "Is 'Rahab in Mt 1,5 Rehab of Jericho?' *Bib* 62 (1981): 225–28, who denied the equation; and R. E. Brown, "Rehab in Mt 1,5: Probably is Rehab of Jericho," *Bib* 63 (1982): 79–80, who accepts it. The latter's arguments seem to the present writer to be more cogent.

sojourn of Israel in Egypt are assumed, and reflected in the dating.⁵¹ For the rationale behind the missing links in the first part of the priestly genealogy, see our earlier work on this genealogy.⁵² Also reconstructed here is the deliberately suppressed section of the genealogy from Eli through Abiathar.⁵³

Finally, these genealogies also have a functional component. The priestly genealogy is the most obvious, as its function is religious. The levitical genealogy also has a religious function as its members performed various duties in the Temple. The reason for its relative completeness⁵⁴ is unknown, as this is the exception, rather than the rule. It might be suggested that since this material appears within a postexilic-period book, the emphasis on genealogical purity and continuity, especially for the priests and Levites, that the Temple functionaries at this time went out of their way to be exact. The function of the genealogy of Judah seems to reflect the continuity of the Patriarchs with King David. Since it also forms the basis of the beginning of the king list/genealogy, it also has a theological function in terms of the Messiah.

Recent Research

There have been a number of studies in recent years dealing with biblical genealogy. We will comment on their contributions without any attempt at being exhaustive. Several of these studies have focused on genealogical narrative, which is narrative that focuses on genealogy (kinship relationships are expressed) rather than narrative which merely contains a genealogy.⁵⁵ It has been recognized that in the book of Genesis, there is an alteration between genealogy in list form as expressed in the *tôledôt* formula and genealogical narrative, which focuses on family relationships as

⁵¹ W. H. Shea, "Exodus, Date of," *ISBE* 2:230–38, P. J. Ray, "The Duration of the Israelite Sojourn in Egypt," *AUSS* 24 (1986): 231–48. The dating of Perez, Salmon and Boaz call for some explanation. Perez was born (Gen 38:29) before Israel moved to Egypt (ca. 1880 BCE). Salmon seems to have married Rehab (Matt 1:5, see note 50, above). It is assumed here that this occurred after the conquest and quite some time after her acceptance into the covenant community. As for Boaz, the story of Ruth seems to fit best in the early part of the period of the Judges, cf. P. J. Ray. "The Story of Ruth: A Chronological and Genealogical Perspective," *JATS* 20 (2009): 3–18.

⁵² Ray, "Duration," 237–38, Table 2 on p. 239 and Excurses B, on pp. 247–48.

⁵³ For more details, see Ray, "Ruth," 14–15.

⁵⁴ Though not actually in this genealogy, we have added Bukkiah, the son of Heman, a contemporary of David (1 Chr 25:1, 4) for sake of a more exact temporal comparison.

⁵⁵ Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 9.

mediated by the promise (covenant).⁵⁶ Thus, Genealogy and narrative can be seen as reinforcing each other. In fact Steinberg⁵⁷ has gone so far as to say that “Genesis is a book whose plot is genealogy.” Renaud⁵⁸ has noted another element, universalism, which ultimately results in a choice or selection process. In these studies, there is a move toward looking at the book of Genesis as a whole rather than in fragments (Alexander, cf. also E. Fox⁵⁹), whether from theological (Alexander, Renaud), or from literary (Robinson, Steinberg) interests.

Another group of studies are anthropological in nature, some of which have many helpful insights into understanding the kinship relationships found in the narratives (Prewitt,⁶⁰ in terms of matrilineal cross-cousin marriage and the endogamous preference of the patriarchs, Donaldson,⁶¹ on wife-exchange alliances, and Oden,⁶² on the avunculate relationship). All of these studies have as their basis the works of Levi-Strauss⁶³ and Leach.⁶⁴ Andriolo’s study,⁶⁵ though even earlier than Wilson, makes an important contribution by noting that there is an element of choice which balances out any lop-sided emphasis on determinism in the status of the heir.

Other studies have focused on various tangents, and must be dealt with separately. A number of writers⁶⁶ have found a correspondence between the *Apkallu* or the seven antediluvian sages, the Sumerian king list and the genealogies of Genesis 4 and 5. These genealogies are usually seen as being

⁵⁶ R. B. Robinson, “Literary Functions of the Genealogies of Genesis,” *CBQ* 48 (1986): 595–608; N. Steinberg, “The Genealogical Framework of the Family Stories in Genesis,” *Semeia* 46 (1989): 41–49; T. D. Alexander, “From Adam to Judah: The Significance of the Family Tree in Genesis,” *EvQ* 61 (1989): 5–19; and B. Renaud, “Les genealogies et la structure de l’histoire sacerdotale dans le livre de la Genese,” *RB* 97 (1990): 5–30.

⁵⁷ Steinberg, “Genealogical Framework,” 41.

⁵⁸ Renaud, “Les genealogies et la structure,” 29.

⁵⁹ E. Fox, “Can Genesis Be Read as a Book?” *Semeia* 46 (1989): 31–40, who saw the structure of the book in the form of a chiasm.

⁶⁰ T. J. Prewitt, “Kinship Structures and the Genesis Genealogies,” *JNES* 40 (1981): 87–98.

⁶¹ M. E. Donaldson, “Kinship Theory in the Patriarchal Narrative: The Case of the Barren Wife,” *JAAR* 49 (1981): 77–87.

⁶² R. A. Oden, “Jacob as Father, Husband, and Nephew: Kinship Studies and the Patriarchal Narratives,” *JBL* 102 (1983): 189–205.

⁶³ C. Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, trans. C. Jacobson and B. G. Schoepf (New York: Basic Books, 1963).

⁶⁴ E. Leach, *Genesis as Myth and Other Essays* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969).

⁶⁵ K. R. Andriolo, “A Structural Analysis of Genesis and Worldview in the Old Testament,” *American Anthropologist* 57 (1973): 1657–69.

⁶⁶ Johnson, *Purpose*, 7; Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 149–63; and D. T. Bryan, “A Reevaluation of Gen 4 and 5 in the Light of Recent Studies in Genealogical Fluidity,” *ZAW* 99 (1987): 180–88.

variations of the same *Vorlage* (Johnson and Wilson from the point of view of fluidity). Bryan followed Wilson, but suggested that rather than being from the same *Vorlage*, they were instead two separate genealogies which have later been conflated. Shea's study⁶⁷ though not dealing directly with the issue of *Vorlage* is far more enlightening.

Oded's study⁶⁸ on the Table of Nations, in Genesis 10, moves beyond organizing the table on the principle of ethnicity or geography, which leave numerous problems. Instead, he argued that the table is organized on the basis of types of communities or lifestyles: those nations linked with Shem are seen as nomads on the basis of v. 21 where Shem is said to be the father of all the children of Eber (*ʿbr*). In contrast, those associated with Ham, the father of Canaan, the traditional enemies of Israel, must therefore be the sedentary populations, or those who dwell in cities. Lastly, those connected with Japheth represent the maritime nations (cf. v. 5). Levin⁶⁹ emphasized the importance of context in determining the meaning of biblical genealogies and noted that most of the short linear genealogies in the historical books introduce a central character into the narrative. Finlay⁷⁰ focused on the birth report, consisting of conception, naming and so-called "etiological" elements in the narrative. Many times the latter are introduced with the *wattōmer* formula in a speech preceding the naming element, indicating the significance of the name or the circumstances surrounding the birth of the child.

The study by Rendsburg⁷¹ on the consistency and reliability of the biblical genealogies is a disappointment and brakes no new ground. It is too simplistic, assuming that because most of the genealogies from the Patriarchs to the Exodus range consistently between three to six generations, that they are therefore complete. He also assumed that those genealogies covering the same time frame, but are longer, such as the genealogy of Ephraim (Num 26:35–36; 1 Chr 7:20–27) and that of Heman the singer (1 Chr 6:33–38), have many names which were added. Although he cited Wilson, he did not

⁶⁷ W. H. Shea, "The Antidiluvians," *Origins* 18 (1991): 10–26.

⁶⁸ B. Oded, "The Table of Nations (Genesis 10)—A Socio-cultural Approach," *ZAW* 98 (1986): 14–31.

⁶⁹ Y. Levin, "Understanding Biblical Genealogies," *Currents in Research* 9 (2001): 33–34.

⁷⁰ T. D. Findlay, *The Birth Report Genre in the Hebrew Bible* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 24, 36.

⁷¹ G. A. Rendsburg, "The Internal Consistency and Historical Reliability of the Biblical Genealogies," *VT* 40 (1990): 185–206.

seem to have learned anything from those studies, moving out on his own in a different and rather unlikely direction.

Solomon's study,⁷² on Chronicles sees the structure of these books as being patterned after the Pentateuch. While there is nothing necessarily wrong with this the idea per se, and although she has several useful insights, Solomon's methodology is at best questionable and her connections between the two sections of the biblical text, in the opinion of the present writer, are forced. Levin's studies⁷³ on the genealogical material in Chronicles are more fruitful in that the genealogical material itself is used to elucidate the social setting of the author. He noted that the Chronicler employed a genre (i.e., genealogy) that his audience was familiar with and transferred the more usual oral form into a grand literary work depicting all humanity, with Israel at its center. Levin also attempted to discern chronological aspects within the genealogies in Chronicles by focusing on the literary devices the author used to tell the story, especially within the linear sections of the genealogies.

The Functions of the Biblical Genealogy

After analyzing the textual data, looking into how genealogy is employed, and reviewing what others have said about it, we now attempt to say something about the functions that the biblical genealogies played in the text of the OT, and finally if possible, to narrow down these functions to a single (central) role. We propose to do so on the basis of the above-mentioned data-sets.

The simplest and most obvious function of the genealogies is succession or descent. The focus here is the family, and this can be seen by the basic structure of the genealogies in list form. This has been pointed out in several of the studies mentioned above.⁷⁴ Closely akin to this, is the function of continuity. This again is obvious and is reflected in the successive genealogies from earliest mankind, through the Flood to the Patriarchs, and from there through the sojourn in Egypt, the Exodus and up to the beginning of the monarchy (see Table 1).⁷⁵ Another good example is the census of Num 26,

⁷² A. M. Solomon, "The Structure of the Chronicler's History: A Key to the Organization of the Pentateuch," *Semeia* 46 (1989): 51–64.

⁷³ Y. Levin, "Who Was the Chronicler's Audience? A Hint from His Genealogies." *JBL* 122.2 (2003): 242–45 and "From Lists to History," 611–35.

⁷⁴ Harrison, "Genealogy," 425; Alexander, "Significance," 8; Renaud, "Structure de l'histoire sacerdotale," 10–15; and Steinberg, "Genealogical Framework," 47.

⁷⁵ Johnson, *Purpose*, 22–23; Renaud, "Structure de l'histoire sacerdotale," 27; Robinson, "Literary Functions," 595, 607, and Steinberg, "Genealogical Framework," 43.

where the continuity of God's people after the Exodus is expressed by making a connection with the patriarchs (Gen 46). Johnson⁷⁶ pointed out that this is the same function as in the books of Chronicles and Ezra/Nehemiah. In the former, the Chronicler goes back to the Table of Nations and the patriarchal genealogies (1 Chr 1–9), and attaches these people groups, tribes and individuals to the period of the monarchy, and finally Ezra/Nehemiah bring things one step further by insisting on the continuity of the postexilic community with that of the old "Theocracy."

The genealogies also function to show the existing relations between the people of God and their neighbors. The most obvious example is the Table of Nations.⁷⁷ Another interesting example of this is that Israel and Edom are connected through Issac (Gen 25:26, cf. Gen 36) as brothers, but are disassociated with each other in Ezek 25:12–14 and other places due to treachery (no longer brothers). This is sometimes seen as a political or apologetic function.⁷⁸

Legitimacy plays an important function in terms of genealogical relationships on several levels: individual, office (Kingship, priesthood, cf. Table 2), property, and purity of race.⁷⁹ We have already looked at several examples. Johnson⁸⁰ has pointed out several aspects of this function in the postexilic period. In fact, he claimed that the main purpose of the genealogies in Ezra/Nehemiah is legitimacy as well as the continuity of the priesthood and the theocracy. One could perhaps extend that as well to the genealogies in 1 Chr 1–9, where the author spends 100 verses on Judah, another 47 verses on Benjamin (the kingly genealogies), and 81 verses on Levi (the priesthood). The amount of space dedicated to the other genealogies (less Dan and Zebulun which are absent), ranges from 1–20 verses.

Other aspects include the continual updating of an authoritative (accurate) contemporary list of families (*bêt 'abôt*), cf. 1 Chr 6:15, Neh 12:22–23; genealogical purity being much more explicit in Ezra/Nehemiah (Ezra 9:2, 8, 11; 10:10; Neh 9:2; 13:1–3) than in the rest of the OT; and the need for the Holy seed not to be mixed with the people of the land(s), with the genealogy functioning to safeguard that purity. Genealogy also has a

⁷⁶ Johnson, *Purpose*, 42.

⁷⁷ These connections may have more to do with the type of community rather than the degree of kinship perceived, if Oded, "Table," 14–19, is correct.

⁷⁸ Johnson, *Purpose*, 7.

⁷⁹ Harrison, *Genealogy*, 425; Johnson, *Purpose*, 79.

⁸⁰ Johnson, *Purpose*, 43–47.

theological function. The genealogies in Genesis 4 and 5 differentiate between the sinful and righteous lines.⁸¹ Renaud,⁸² as mentioned above, has pointed out the universal aspect to the genealogies in Genesis. This would indicate that God is interested in all nations and peoples. In fact, another look at Table 1 shows that there is a continual alternation between segmented and linear genealogies. The initial focus on mankind was broad (segmented), but continually narrowed in focus (linear) to a specific genealogical line, due to sin. Although with each new generation there was potentially an opportunity to broaden (segmented) again, with further inroads of sin there were few (usually only one line), that maintained faith in God and become heirs to the covenant promises (linear).

Closely aligned to the previous function is that of relationship by choice.⁸³ One might object that this choice was arbitrary, based upon a selection by God; or by culture, based on primogeniture or reactions to it, resulting in various types of usurpations, usually by younger siblings. Nevertheless, we have already implied that this choice was based rather on a faith relationship. The choice of the heir of the covenant promises then, belongs to those who belong to God in a real sense. The rejection of the other siblings (whether older or younger), was thus based on their own rejection of God, and not arbitrary. It is of interest to note that the genealogies and other accounts of relationships in Genesis seem to alternate between those who accepted and were accepted (+) and those who did not and were not (-): Heavens and Earth/Adam (Gen 2 +), Cain (Gen 4 -), Seth/Noah (Gen 5–6 +), Table of Nations (Gen 10 ±), Terah/Abraham (Gen 11 +), Ishmael (Gen 25a -), Isaac (Gen 25b +), Esau (Gen 36ab -), Jacob (Gen 37:2, 46 +).

The genealogies also function variously for such laudatory usages as announcing the founders of various cultural and technological events (Gen 4 and 10),⁸⁴ as well as such mundane, administrative purposes as military organization (Num 1:3; 1 Chr 7:4, 11, 40), taxes and offerings (Num 7:11–89) and ordinary censuses (Num 26).⁸⁵ In addition, the genealogies serve a structural function. This can be seen in the book of Genesis, where they alternate with genealogical narrative, extend into other historical books

⁸¹ Johnson, *Purpose*, 10; Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 154–56, 164–65.

⁸² Renaud, “Structure de l’histoire sacerdotale,” 29.

⁸³ Renaud, *ibid.*, 29, his “progressive selection process”; cf. Andriolo, “Structural Analysis,” 1162.

⁸⁴ Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 148; Harrison, “Genealogy,” 425.

⁸⁵ Harrison, “Genealogy,” 425; Johnson, *Purpose*, 63–65, 78–79.

(Exodus, Numbers and Ruth), sit at the head of the books of Chronicles, and again alternate with genealogical narrative in Ezra/Nehemiah.⁸⁶ In so doing, they trace a family history. Even later, when the focus became political and national, it is nevertheless still spoken of in terms of family (Edom as the brother of Israel, cf. Amos 1:11; Obad 10).⁸⁷

A final function of genealogy, though there are perhaps others, is that of movement in Creation.⁸⁸ God created mankind and intended for them to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1:28). Even though the Flood interrupted this divine intention, Genesis 9:1 reveals that this was still very much a part of God's plan. It is brought out most forcefully in Genesis 1:26–27; 5:1–3. In the former section mankind is created in God's image (a) and likeness (b), and this is picked up again in 5:1–2. Then, in v. 3, Adam bears a son in his own likeness (b') and according to his image (a'), with the elements presented chiasmatically. It has been pointed out by Robinson⁸⁹ that Adam in Gen 1:26–27 is generic, in Gen 5:3 he is definitely an individual, and in Gen 5:1–2 there is a transition between the two. Genesis 5 thus takes up creation where Genesis 1 left off. However, there is also an irony in between. While the emphasis of genealogy is life, the genealogy of Cain (Genesis 4), both begins and ends with murder.

The Role of Biblical Genealogy

In coming to a central role or function which the genealogies play in the biblical text, we would like to suggest as the center (*Mitte*), the theme of covenant, much the same as others have seen as the central theme in biblical theology.⁹⁰ Promise, or better covenant, has been seen as one of the functions that genealogies play,⁹¹ but to the knowledge of the present writer it has not been suggested as its basic or central function.⁹² If one takes seriously the implications of Gen 3:15 as covenant terminology without the use of the word

⁸⁶ Harrison, "Genealogy," 424; with some qualifications, cf. Gilchrist, "yālad," 380; Renaud, "Structure de l'histoire sacerdotale," 27–30; Alexander, "Significance," 6; Robinson, "Literary Functions," 588–89; and Steinberg, "Genealogical Framework," 47.

⁸⁷ Robinson, "Literary Functions," 607.

⁸⁸ Robinson, *ibid.*, 599–601; Renaud, "Structure de l'histoire sacerdotale," 29.

⁸⁹ Robinson, *ibid.*, 599–600.

⁹⁰ G. Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1948); J. B. Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1962).

⁹¹ Harrison, "Genealogy," 425–26; Alexander, "Significance," 8–19; Robinson, "Literary Functions," 604.

⁹² Alexander, "Significance," 5–19 focused on "seed" as a major theme holding together the Book of Genesis, even extending it to the Book of Ruth in passing. However, if we understand him correctly, he did not see it as the central role of genealogy, in general.

itself, then covenant would seem to be the key to the central role of the biblical genealogies. In this verse there is one of the central themes of the covenant, that of the promised seed (*zera*^c). Alexander⁹³ pointed out that the noun seed (according to him it is used 165, actually 229 times in the OT)⁹⁴ occurs 56 times in Genesis, or approximately one fourth of its total usage.

The basic function of genealogies, as pointed out above is simple biological succession. The noun seed (*zera*^c) is a collective, but seen as plural in terms of God's people. Ultimately, however, a single seed is reached in terms of the Messiah. We have already pointed out the extension of the *tôlêdôt* formula outside of Genesis leading up to David, or the type of the Messiah. Certainly this was no mere coincidence. Similarly, two other aspects of the covenant, i.e., land/nation and blessing (Gen 12; 15; 17) also point to the Messiah.

Seed (*zera*^c) is particularly adept in showing how the genealogies help to reinforce the covenant theme. However one wishes to treat Gen 4:1, it would seem that Eve was somehow hoping that her child would be the promised seed. After she lost both Cain and Abel through murder and lack of fidelity to God, she rejoiced that she was given yet another seed (*zera*^c) in Seth (Gen 4:25). In what follows in the biblical text it can be seen that through the medium of genealogy, both in list form and in genealogical narrative, that there is a single line, a biological offspring leading from Adam, through Abraham and David and many others to the Messiah.

God has a plan, and he will fulfill it. Individuals may foul it up and lose out on the covenant blessing, and hence be left out of the genealogy, or develop deviant lines, but ultimately, God will fulfill his plan through those who love him and allow him to do so. The covenant promises must be conveyed personally and concretely from one generation to the next.⁹⁵ Human choice is maintained, but God is ultimately in control. The unconditionality on God's part of the covenant, ultimately to fulfill his end, can thus be seen in genealogical narrative, where such things as barrenness, wife/sister problems, the child begotten by a slave syndrome, the wife taken by a foreign king or any other choice that his people make are no match for his resources. God protects the genealogical line despite men's attempts to take care of things in their own way.⁹⁶ History is governed and ordered by

⁹³ Alexander, "Significance," 8n6.

⁹⁴ Even-Shoshan, *Concordance*, 340-42.

⁹⁵ Robinson, "Literary Functions," 606.

⁹⁶ Robinson, *ibid.*, 604-5, 608.

God. His foreknowledge and election assure that his plan will ultimately be fulfilled. In terms of fulfillment, the genealogies both in list and narrative form culminate in the NT, with Jesus. Once Jesus' mission on earth was successful, his return was assured. There is thus an eschatological aspect to the genealogies as well.

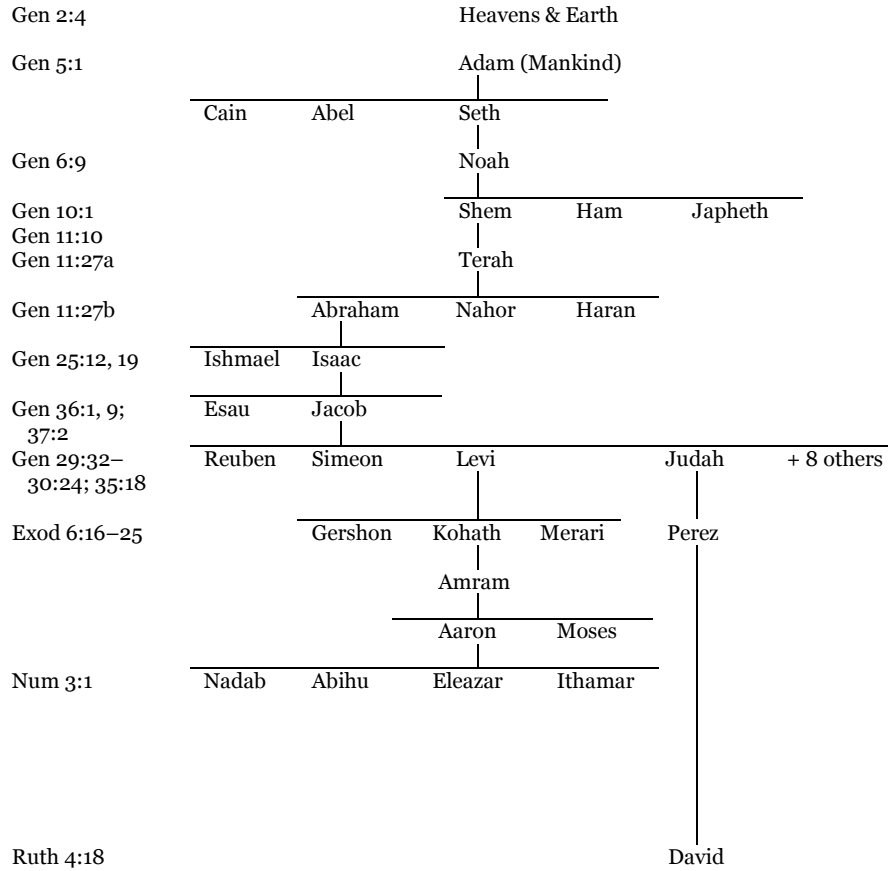
Summary

The history of the treatment of the biblical genealogies has gone from a position of assumed complete accuracy and uncritical acceptance, to one of assumed unreliability and the view that they were mere fabrications, to that of cautious acceptance of authenticity and historical usefulness. This has come about, at least in part, because of Wilson's 1977 monograph, which compares modern oral genealogies, and ancient extrabiblical written genealogies from the ancient Near East with the biblical genealogies. The conclusion made there was, that although in none of these cases were the genealogies created for historical purposes, they are nevertheless considered accurate statements of existing relationships, and therefore, are of value to the modern historian for the reconstruction of Israel's history.

In the present study we have not only followed up on Wilson's conclusions and applied them in a more extensive way to the biblical genealogies, but have also analyzed the biblical terminology for indications of its own thoughts on the subject and have tried to make some tentative conclusions. Finally, we have identified a number of ways that they functioned and posited an overall role of genealogy in the biblical text. In so doing, we have also taken a look at many of the contributions that have already been made since Wilson's work in an effort to round out the study.

We have found, as have others, that the book of Genesis presents an alternating structure of genealogy in list form with that of genealogical narrative. This is also extended in its broadest form into the rest of the historical literature of the Bible, as Israel's history no matter how complicated, is always described in terms of family. Even in the NT, the Gentiles are grafted into the family of Israel (Rom 11), and genealogy in list form is interspersed in at least a couple of places. The Messiah is the goal of this family-oriented literature, and as such genealogy has an eschatological aspect. We have suggested that the overall *mitte* of genealogy is covenant, the same as others have seen as the central theme of biblical theology. This focuses more specifically on the seed (*zera*^c), leading through the various generations of God's people and ultimately to the Messiah.

Table 1



| Linear Genealogies
 — Segmented Genealogies

Table 2

	1 Chr 6:33–38; 25:1, 4	Num 16:1	1 Chr 6:1–8	1 Sam 1:3; 14:3; 22:20	Ruth 4:18–22; 1Chr 2:3–5; 9–15
1	<i>Levi</i> *		<i>Levi</i> * (1923– 1786)+		<i>Judah</i> * (1922)
2	<i>Kohath</i>		<i>Kohath</i>		<i>Perez</i> (ca. 1882)
3	<i>Izhar</i>	<i>Izhar</i>	<i>Amran</i>		<i>Hezron</i> (ca. 1832)
4	Korah	Korah	?		<i>Ram</i> (ca.1782)
5	Ebiasaph	?	?		? (ca.1732)
6	Assir	?	?		? (ca. 1682)
7	Tahath	?	?		? (ca. 1632)
8	Zephaniah	?	Amran (?)		Amminadab (ca. 1582)
9	Azariah	Korah	Aaron (1534– 1411)		Nahshon (ca. 1532)
10	Joel		Eleazar	Ithamar	? (ca. 1482)
11	Elkanah		Phinehas		Salmon (ca. 1432)
12	Amasai		Abishua		Boaz (ca. 1370)
13	Mahath		Bukki		Obed (ca. 1310)
14	Elkanah		Uzzi		? (ca. 1285)
15	Zuph		Zerahiah		? (ca. 1260)
16	Toah		Meraioth		? (ca. 1235)
17	Eliel		Amariah		? (ca. 1210)
18	Jeroham		Ahitub		? (ca. 1185)
19	Elkanah		?	Eli (1168–1070)	? (ca. 1160)
20	Samuel		?	Phinehas (?– 1070)	? (ca. 1135)
21	Joel		?	Ahitub	? (ca. 1110)
22	Heman		?	Ahimelech	Jesse (ca. 1085)
23	Bukkiah		Zadok	Abiathar	David (1040–970)

*Lineage Founder

Founders of Families (lineage segments)

+ in dates BCE