THE FUNCTION OF THE CHRONICLER’S GENEALOGIES:

ESTABLISHING COVENANT CONTINUITY

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by
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The evolution of Chronicles studies in the past century has been significant for both an understanding of the Old Testament as a whole and the theology of the Chronicler. As the 20th century began, the majority of Old Testament scholarship, both critical and conservative, recognized the books of Ezra-Nehemiah-Chronicles as the work of a single author, known as the Chronicler. However, the latter half of the century saw challenges to this position, most notably from Sara Japhet and H.G.M. Williamson. Since the publication of her article, “The Supposed Common Authorship of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah Investigated Anew,” Japhet’s conclusions of separate authorship have been widely accepted and the issue has largely been put to rest.¹

With the general consensus shifting to the Chronicler as author only of Chronicles, and new studies in the theology of the Chronicler (apart from Ezra-Nehemiah) have emerged, interpreters have renewed their interest in the purpose of the lengthy genealogical introduction. Though scholars such as D.N. Freedman have suggested that the genealogies provide little insight into the author’s purpose,² a strong case can be made otherwise. One likely reason for Freedman and others to deny such relation between the purpose of the genealogies and the narrative is the seemingly missing link between the two. As Robert Wilson writes, “In contrast to the genealogies in


Genesis, the genealogies in 1 Chron. 1-9 are not linked to narratives in Chronicles containing names also found in the genealogies. As a result 1 Chron. 1-9 can provide little new information on the relation of genealogy to narrative. This paper will propose, in contrast to Wilson, that the Chronicler’s genealogies do in fact exhibit a relationship between genealogy and narrative, but in a manner previously underappreciated. This paper will argue that the Chronicler has composed his genealogies in such a way as to direct the reader’s attention back to the Mosaic Pentateuch, particularly Genesis, for the purpose of establishing covenant continuity between the covenant with David and the covenant with Abraham. The Chronicler accomplishes this task by using his genealogical data in a similar manner to the author of Genesis, making commentary within the genealogy that sets the context for the narratives. In order to support this thesis, this paper will address the usage of the genealogies in Genesis, provide an appraisal of the Chronicler’s use of genealogies, and show how the anticipated fulfillment of the Davidic covenant is a primary theme in Chronicles. Beginning with an appraisal of various current approaches to these genealogies will help set the foundation for a defense of this thesis.


4 Though opposition has significantly diminished, some still argue against the role of the genealogies in the whole book of Chronicles on the basis that the genealogies are secondary to the composition. For a strong defense of the inclusion of the genealogies in the original composition, see Marshall D. Johnson, The Purpose of Biblical Genealogies, 2nd ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 44-55. Johnson ultimately concludes that the genealogies are “an integral part of the Chronicler’s work” (55). C.f. Robert R. Wilson, Genealogy and History. Similarly, some scholars also reject the unity of the genealogies within themselves. They argue that while the Chronicler may have included them in his composition, they are simply appropriated from their original sources with little intentionality. Against this view, see James T. Sparks, The Chronicler’s Genealogies: Towards an Understanding of 1 Chronicles 1-9, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008). Sparks argues on two grounds. First, he points out that the diversity of the genealogies in terms of geography, tribe, and time period suggest that they “would never have operated as a united genealogy within the societies of Israel,
Survey of Approaches

Though genealogies permeate much of the narrative of the Old Testament, nowhere is such a large section of genealogy found uninterrupted as in the opening nine chapters of Chronicles. Why would the Chronicler choose to introduce the ensuing narratives with such lengthy genealogy? Scholars have proposed numerous answers. Most notable among these responses are the positions set forth by Marshall Johnson, Robert R. Wilson, Yigal Levin, and most recently James Sparks.

In his book, *The Purpose of Biblical Genealogies*, Marshall Johnson notes three main concerns in the Chronicler’s genealogy: the pre-eminence of Judah, the prominence of Levi, and the geographical notes which show interest in the land of Israel. Johnson suggests that the significance of these geographical notes regarding the land are not primarily related to the promises of land to Abraham or Moses, but rather “the conviction that the land over which David ruled—from Beersheba to Dan—was to be the inheritance of David’s sons forever. In short, it is a picture of the ideal theocracy of Israel.” Building upon this conclusion, Johnson posits that the survey of all Israel in the genealogy is meant to assert “the principle of continuity of the people of God through a period of

Judah, or Yehud” (22). He thus concludes that the genealogies of chapters 1-9 are the work of a single author. Second, he argues for unity on the basis of a proposed chiasm. If he is correct, then the issue of the unity of the genealogies could be dismissed. However, this author hesitates to accept Sparks’ view on the chiastic structure of the genealogies. Gershon Galil argues that Sparks’ chiastic proposal fails first of all because the third level of the chiasm is unbalanced. The genealogies of Judah in chapters 2-4 are 990 words in the Hebrew text, while the genealogies of Benjamin in chapter 8 contain only 290 words. Moreover, Sparks cannot account for the genealogies of Benjamin in 7:6-12a in his chiastic structure. See the review of Sparks’ book by Gershon Galil, “A Review of The Chronicler’s Genealogies”, *RBL* 7 (2009) [http://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/6682_7246.pdf]. Nevertheless, one should accept Sparks’ conclusion that “meaning is not to be found in the individual blocks read and analysed in isolation from one another, but in the total structure created by the combination of all the genealogies.” Sparks, *The Chronicler’s Genealogies*, 22.

5Johnson, *The Purpose of Biblical Genealogies*, 74-75.
national disruption.”⁶ Thus, the genealogy exists mostly for political reasons, reminding a people coming out of such a difficult situation of the former glory and unity of Israel.

Robert R. Wilson, whose many publications on genealogies has made him one of the foremost authorities on the subject, has made his primary contribution to this field with respect to the purpose of genealogies. One manner in which Wilson has addressed the purpose of the genealogies is by noting how previous studies on genealogies dealt only with the structure or form of the lists and not their function.⁷ Moreover, while recognizing that they are historically accurate, he concludes that they are not primarily intended for the purpose of conveying historical information, but rather “for domestic, politico-jural, and religious purposes.”⁸ Thus, Wilson recognizes the historical accuracy of the Chronicler’s genealogies (primarily because they are drawn from Genesis), but would suggest that they serve a religious or political purpose.

Another significant addition to this conversation has been the work of Yigal Levin. In his article, “Who Was the Chronicler’s Audience,” Levin makes valuable contributions to the understanding of the Chronicler’s audience through an appraisal of the tribal genealogies. Levin concludes that the Chronicler’s audience was familiar with the genealogical formulation because it was a part of daily life. He argues that such widespread use of genealogy on the village level would naturally transfer to the national

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⁶ Ibid., 80. This conclusion has become the majority position according to Roddy Braun, who states “There is little controversy concerning the general purpose of the genealogies of 1 Chronicles 1-9” before quoting Johnson’s position. [Roddy Braun, “1 Chronicles 1-9 and the Reconstruction of the History of Israel: Thoughts on the Use of Genealogical Data in Chronicles in the Reconstruction of the History of Israel,” in The Chronicler as Historian, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 98].


⁸ Wilson, Genealogy and History, 199.
level as well. He suggests that “just as an individual’s status is determined by one’s place in the family lineage, so is the clan’s or tribe’s determined by its pedigree, and so are nations' positions determined by their place in the family of humankind.”

Levin builds upon this foundational position in a later article, suggesting that while the segmented portions of genealogies are meant to link individuals and mark relationships within clans, linear genealogies serve two purposes: “placing specific characters in the context of their pedigree and providing a chronological frame of reference for those characters.”

The Chronicler’s genealogies contain both, and though quite varied at times, Levin notes a central movement in the genealogies. In chapter one, the Chronicler sets the stage for Israel in the broader landscape of human history. In the tribal genealogies, the Chronicler preserves the genealogical lists so much as he has them available. For the tribe of Judah, which Levin notes is central to the Chronicler’s ideology, the list is more expansive.

Finally, “in ch. 9, having brought each individual tribe as far as he could, the Chronicler then comes full circle, mentioning the exile and showing that in the restored community, all parts of the nation would once again have a share.” Consequently, one can see Levin’s contribution with respect to the integral relationship between the various genealogies, but he develops little with respect to how these genealogies are integrally related to the ensuing narratives.

In the past few years, James Sparks has published a work devoted entirely to the

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11 Ibid., 635-636.
genealogies of 1 Chronicles 1-9. Sparks agrees with Wilson’s assertion that genealogies serve primarily a religious or political purpose above an historical one.\textsuperscript{12} Sparks proposes that the genealogies are composed with a chiastic structure. He purports that by recognizing this structure, one sees better parallels between individual genealogical accounts which are on equal chiastic levels. Most importantly, the chiastic structure highlights the middle of the chiasm as the most prominent and theologically important point. In this chiastic structure, he notes that Levi is at the middle. Consequently, Sparks concludes that by means of the genealogies the author stresses above all else “the authorised cultic personnel performing the authorised cultic functions in the authorised cultic place.”\textsuperscript{13}

**Genealogy: Establishing Covenant Continuity**

These four positions are representative of a multitude of different approaches to this topic. Building upon some of the basic foundations of Levin’s position, namely that the day to day use of genealogy was to mark pedigree, this paper will argue that the primary function of the Chronicler’s genealogies is to establish covenant continuity by setting the Davidic covenant in the context of YHWH’s promises to Abraham, and ultimately all Israel, in the Pentateuch.

The primary way in which the Chronicler attempts to set this context is by drawing upon the narratives behind the names listed in the genealogies. He is not simply recording a list of names for historiographic or political reasons; he is rather making a

\textsuperscript{12}Sparks, *The Chronicler’s Genealogies*, 21.

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., 32.
theological point by drawing on the narratives associated with these individuals recorded in the Pentateuch. It is the purpose of the ensuing section to defend this claim, but it should first be noted that such a conclusion is not entirely without precedent. William Johnstone, for example, argues that the genealogies of Chronicles “presuppose the content of these earlier works and are referring to them here in a kind of shorthand.”

Moreover, he proposes that by using the genealogy the author could bring “to mind in the most condensed form possible the stories of the primeval and patriarchal periods.” John Goldingay appears to make the same assertion, arguing that the genealogies serve as abbreviated history and that the Chronicler held as a fundamental presupposition that one must “understand the present by understanding the past.” Though Roddy Braun ultimately sides with Johnson’s view of the Chronicler’s genealogy, he comes close to this position in his explanation of the genealogies of Jesus in Matthew. He writes, “the genealogy at the beginning of Matthew’s Gospel should be understood as a kind of historical narrative embodying Israel’s history from Abraham to Jesus.” The most explicit defense of this use by the Chronicler comes from Levin, who notes the following with respect to the Chronicler’s use of genealogy in chapter one:

Beyond the structure and content of the individual sections, we can see that the Chronicler has used these linear genealogies to carry us over from one period to the next: from creation to Noah and sons, from Noah to Abraham to Jacob. However, in

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15 Ibid., 25.


17 Braun, “1 Chronicles 1-9 and the Reconstruction of the History of Israel,” 92.
doing this he presupposes that the readers are familiar with the stories of creation, Cain and Abel (he goes from Adam directly to Seth), the deluge and the "separation" of the nations (see the etymology of Peleg in v. 19), without actually mentioning any of these events themselves. This, as we shall see, is typical of the way the Chronicler uses his sources in building up his story.18

One might also notice that not only have various biblical scholars recognized this approach to genealogies as legitimate, but it is a common practice in modern conversation. For example, a discussion of ancestry may lead one to trace his roots back to George Washington. For those two or three generations immediately after George Washington, the link to him most likely would have been more personal. They would have associated with him as father, or grandfather, rather than as president or general. However, subsequent generations that trace their ancestry to him would not do so out of a personal relationship with him, but perhaps to lend credibility to their patriotism, or to boast, or any number of other reasons. Regardless of the reason that one chooses to bring this information to light, when the name of George Washington is brought into the discussion, the listener and speaker both have in mind stories related to this man. It is not some empty name lacking meaning other than the great-great-great-grandfather of so and so. Rather, one will immediately be reminded of all one has learned or heard about him, and will likely make a judgment of the significance of such a link.19

This contextual proposal for the Chronicler’s genealogies works similarly. When the post-exilic Israelite community reads that their lineage leads back to Adam, Noah, and Abraham, they are likewise reminded of the biblical narratives related to these men.

18 Levin, “From Lists to History,” 609.

19 See a similar argument regarding the purpose of modern genealogies with an example from South Africa in Gerrie Snyman, “A Possible World of Text Production for the Genealogy in 1 Chronicles 2.3-4.23,” in The Chronicler as Theologian, (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 32-60.
They are not empty names, but names possessing great significance because of God’s covenant promises. Moreover, in reading the Chronicler’s genealogies through this lens, two significant points arise. First, the post-exilic composition of Chronicles grants the Chronicler the ability to presuppose the whole of Old Testament history and the majority of Hebrew Scripture when constructing both his genealogies and his narrative. Second, it becomes important that the Chronicler pulls nearly the whole of his primeval and patriarchal genealogies from the book of Genesis. Such literary dependence upon Genesis strengthens the previous suggestion that the Chronicler’s readers will and are supposed to be reminded of the Scriptural narratives of the Pentateuch.\(^\text{20}\) Scholars widely recognize that the Genesis account is primarily is in the Chronicler’s view. Johnson goes so far as to suggest that one goal of the Chronicler is “to incorporate in his work all the genealogical data contained in Genesis.”\(^\text{21}\) Such appropriation of the genealogies needs explanation, but before arguing for the reason that the Chronicler has used such data, an analysis of the purpose of the genealogies in Genesis will help lay the foundation.

The Toledoth Structure of Genesis

Numerous scholars have proposed a structure of the book of Genesis that is centered on what are known as the toledoth formulas (“these are the generations of”). The

\(^{20}\) I have in mind the Mosaic Pentateuch that was likely circulated and canonized by this point. Noth posits that frequent references to the Law of Moses in Chronicles, coupled with the lack of introduction of the historical figure of Moses as well as a lack of explanation as to the nature of the Law, points towards the conclusion that the Law of Moses is the completed Pentateuch of his day. Though, he admits that one could not decidedly refute one who claims it was a collection of laws of unknown character. Nevertheless, the burden of proof would rest on the one who denies that the completed Pentateuch is in view. Martin Noth, The Chronicler’s History, Translated by H.G.M. Williamson, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), 84, c.f. endnote on 169.

\(^{21}\) Johnson, The Purpose of Biblical Genealogies, 74.
first of these is found in Genesis 2:4, speaking of the heavens and the earth. Understandably, this statement comes immediately after the creation account and before the more specific explanation of the creation of man in 2:5-25. Subsequent occurrences of this formula are Genesis 5:1 (Adam); 6:9 (Noah); 10:1 (sons of Noah); 11:10 (Shem); 11:27 (Terah); 25:12 (Ishmael); 25:19 (Isaac); 36:1, 9 (Esau); 37:2 (Jacob). As it is not possible to address all of these issues in a paper of this nature, a few of the more key points will be discussed to give a picture of the usage throughout the book.

The genealogy in Genesis 5 begins with Adam passing down his own image to his son, Seth, just as God passed on His divine image to Adam (Genesis 1:26-27). As Wilson writes, “Adam genealogically transmits the divine image and the blessing to his son. The entire linear genealogy thus deals with the transmission of the divine image and the blessing through a series of firstborn sons. The genealogy thus has a theological function.”

In addition to the theological point of the transmission of the divine image through the line of Seth, there are several interesting features of this genealogy. For example, the normal formulation of this chapter is the following: (1) when $x$ had lived $y$ years, (2) he fathered $z$, (3) he lived after he fathered $z$ $y$ years, (4) he fathered sons and daughters, (5) thus all the days of $x$ were $y$ years, (6) then he died. There are two primary breaks from this formula in chapter 5: Enoch and Noah. Enoch is said to have “walked with God” after he bore Methuselah 300 years, rather than the typical “lived after.” Noah likewise is said to walk with God. Of greater significance for this discussion is the lack of

22 Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 164. Dempster similarly writes: “By juxtaposing the divine creation of Adam in the image of God and the subsequent human creation of Seth in the image of Adam, the transmission of the image of God through this genealogical line is implied, as well as the link between sonship and the image of God.” [Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 58].
Noah’s death in the genealogy. However, one finds that in 9:28 the author writes, “And Noah lived after the flood 350 years. Thus all the days of Noah were 950 years, and then he died.” 23 The genealogy picks up exactly where it left off in 5:32, changing only “lived after the flood” rather than “lived after he fathered.”

What, then, is the significance of this narrative interlude in the genealogy? Wilson suggests, “The effect of this division of Noah’s biographical narrative is to present the flood story as an expansion of the biographical narrative and thus as an expansion of the Sethite genealogy itself.” 24 This narrative interlude in the genealogy is not isolated to this passage, however. Consider 10:8-12 where there is a brief change in the formula to highlight Nimrod. The reason for highlighting Nimrod here seems to be the same as the highlighting of Noah in chapter 5—to set up the ensuing narrative. Just as Noah was highlighted in the genealogy leading up to the flood narrative, so Nimrod, the founder of Babel (10:10), sets up the narrative of the tower of Babel in chapter 11. Likewise, the notation in 10:25 that during the days of Peleg the earth was divided points to the scattering of the peoples from Babel through the whole earth in 11:9. Yet again, the generations of Shem (11:10-26) lead to Terah, who is the father of Abram. In the genealogy of Terah (11:27-32), some emphasis is given to Lot, the son of Abram’s brother Nahor, but there is again an inserted note regarding Sarah’s barrenness. Once again, the ensuing narrative deals primarily with Abram, and the barrenness of Sarah is central to the fulfillment of God’s covenant promises to Abram in chapters 12, 15, and 17. The brief interruption of the Abrahamic narrative, chapter 19, relates to Lot, and

23 Author's translation.

24 Wilson, Genealogy and History, 161.
ultimately is seen to be a picture of God’s merciful nature in rescuing Lot from the
destruction of Sodom in response to Abram’s plea in 18:22-33.

This brief overview should give some understanding regarding the way the
genealogies of Genesis function in relation to the narratives. Departures from the
genealogical norm highlight something to be expounded upon in an ensuing narrative,
and the narratives are seen as a theological portrait that expounds upon the genealogy.
Essentially, the two cooperate in a manner reminiscent of the hermeneutical spiral—each
informs the other and cannot be understood properly in isolation.

**How the Chronicler Uses His Genealogy to Allude to Genesis**

Having noted the way the genealogies are used in Genesis, the next question to
answer is for what purpose the Chronicler has appropriated them in his own work. The
most significant way that the Chronicler uses the Genesis account is in chapter one. Three
main points help show this relationship. It is in these ways, contrary to Wilson’s
statement, that the genealogy of Chronicles does in fact shed important light on the way
that genealogy relates to narrative.\(^\text{25}\)

1. **1 Chronicles 1—Universal Leads to the Particular\(^\text{26}\)**

   The most popular view of the opening chapter of Chronicles is that the genealogy
begins with Adam to express both the universal and the particular. More specifically,
Gary Knoppers posits that the text begins with Adam to set the background of Israel

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\(^{25}\) Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 137.

\(^{26}\) Gary N. Knoppers, "Shem, Ham, and Japheth: The Universal and the Particular in the
Genealogy of Nations," in *The Chronicler as Theologian*, ed. M. Patrick Graham, Steven L. McKenzie, and
within a larger human context. Brian Kelly goes further to suggest that the link with Adam helps portray Israel as the goal and purpose of God’s creation. Knoppers, while rightly recognizing the universal, loses sight of the focus on Israel; similarly, Kelly’s assessment, while recognizing the importance of Israel as the elect nation, loses sight of the Chronicler’s concern for other nations. The two views require balance, which Andrew Hill illustrates well when he notes that the Chronicler’s inclusion of other nations, women, and foreigners points to “at least partial fulfillment of God’s covenant promise to bless the nations through Abraham’s descendants.” In setting Israel in the context of the nations in this manner, the Chronicler begins to point toward Israel’s role to the nations promised Abraham in Genesis 12.

(2) Shem, Ham, and Japheth

If one were not familiar with the narratives of Genesis, the linear genealogy which appears to continue through verse 4 would suggest that Shem was the father of Ham who was the father of Japheth. However, those familiar with the narratives of Genesis know that Shem, Ham, and Japheth are the three sons of Noah, and thus are introduced in principle as a segmented genealogy, though they take the form of a linear one. What might be the purpose for such an alteration in the norm of genealogical structure? Japhet suggests that verses 1-4 and 24-27 act as an inclusio around verses 5-23. Japhet posits that the first four verses are generations from creation to the flood, while verses 24-27

are post-diluvian generations from Shem to Abraham. Within this inclusio is a portrait of the post-diluvian world. The problem of the linear appearance of the genealogy of the sons of Noah is thus answered for Japhet in that they serve “to define the first list as a concise genealogy of humankind from creation to the flood.” Knoppers agrees with Japhet’s proposal, adding to her findings that the nations within the inclusio number seventy.

(3) Numerical Symbolism and the Blessing of Abraham

The conclusions of Japhet, though detailed, have more significance than she develops. The first point she overlooks is the way in which the Chronicler uses this technique of inclusio to remind the reader of the Genesis narratives and genealogies. In his odd formation of the sons of Noah and the inclusio of the seventy nations, the Chronicler points the reader back to the book of Genesis. In reading the lists of the sons of Noah in Genesis 10:1-32, Sailhamer makes the same observation as Knoppers does of the Chronicles account: there are seventy nations. Sailhamer, however, arguing upon the basis of the selectivity of genealogies, suggests that the list is representative of “numerical symbolism in which the concept of a totality of nations is expressed in the number seventy.” Knappers recognizes similar numerical symbolism in the Chronicler’s account, noting numerical symbolism in lists from Adam to Noah, sons/descendants of Japheth, Cush, Mizraim, Canaan and his offspring, Seir, Eliphaz, and

30 Japhet, 1 & 2 Chronicles, 55-56.
32 Sailhamer, The Pentateuch as Narrative, 130.
the sons of Ishmael and Israel.\textsuperscript{33} Such consistency between the Chronicler’s use of numerical symbolism and that of the Genesis account suggests that the Chronicler may be making use of the genealogies in the same manner as the author of the Pentateuch.

What, then, is the significance of this numerical symbolism? It seems that there are two main reasons for the symbolism, and both lead to Abraham. The first is the number seventy. Just as there were seventy nations from Noah, so also the book of Genesis ends with Abraham’s descendants numbering seventy.\textsuperscript{34} In maintaining the numerical symbolism of Noah, it is possible the Chronicler also has in mind its parallel with Abraham’s descendents at the end of Genesis, since that is the next point in his genealogy in which he gives interpretive comment (1 Chr. 1:27).

Secondly, the framing of the seventy post-diluvian nations in the Chronicler’s account culminates in verse 27 with Abraham. This again has two significant implications. First, Sailhamer asserts that the Genesis genealogy shows how out of the one humanity through Noah, God will call Abraham.\textsuperscript{35} Second, Sailhamer posits that the correlation between the number of nations and the number of Abraham’s descendants is an attempt by the author to hold “Abraham’s ‘seed’ before the reader as a new humanity and Abraham himself as a kind of second Adam, the ‘father of many nations.’”\textsuperscript{36} In considering 1 Chronicles 1:27, the Chronicler emphasizes the “seed” simply by adding to Abram the phrase, “that is, Abraham.” As noted previously, the Chronicler seems to be

\textsuperscript{33}Knoppers, “Shem, Ham and Japheth,” 19.

\textsuperscript{34}Sailhamer, \textit{The Pentateuch as Narrative}, 131.

\textsuperscript{35}Ibid., 130.

\textsuperscript{36}Ibid., 131.
making use of genealogy in the same way as the Genesis author. Thus, just as in Genesis, for a linear genealogy as structured as 1 Chronicles 1 is, any alteration of the normal formula should suggest to the reader something in the narrative that the author intends to highlight. In Genesis, the author goes on to tell the narrative, but in Chronicles the Chronicler is drawing upon this account merely by noting the name change. Thus, in reminding the reader of the name change, the reader should be immediately reflective upon this narrative in Genesis 17 and the preceding call of Abraham in Genesis 12. In Genesis 12, God promises Abraham, among other things, that in him all the families of the earth will be blessed. In Genesis 17, the promise is extended in two ways: kings will come from him and the covenant is an everlasting covenant.

In making use of the same genealogical technique as the author of Genesis, then, the Chronicler is able to set before the reader the Abrahamic covenant and its special attention on Abraham’s seed and its role for blessing all nations. Moreover, in tracing the genealogy back to Adam, the Chronicler is also able to set before the reader the hope of redemption through the seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15).

**Further Support for Chronicler’s Use of Genesis**

Stephen Dempster also attempts to show the Chronicler’s purposeful use of Genesis by noting the literary and thematic consistency between the books. Beyond the use of much of the genealogical material, Dempster additionally notes how the ending of Chronicles is similar to the ending of Genesis. Just as Joseph tells of a day when God will visit (יִבָּרֵךְ) Israel and bring them up out (יִבְרָאָל) of the land to the land he swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen. 50:24), so likewise the Edict of Cyrus which closes the Chronicler’s account says that YHWH has charged (יִבְרָאָל) him to build a house at
Jerusalem, and he anticipates the one who will go up (מעלה) to accomplish this task (2 Chr. 36:23). The similarities between the endings of these two books suggest the Chronicler may have the context of the whole of Genesis in view.\(^{37}\)

**Additional Discussion of Chapter 1**

Having discussed the Chronicler’s use of chapter one, an additional discussion is necessary to defend against an opposing view that Sparks has posited. Drawing on his chiastic assessment of the genealogy, he relates chapter one to chapter nine, as they are in the same “chiastic level.” He notes the vitality of chapter nine, with its totals for certain tribes and full genealogical lists, is contrasted strongly with the “barrenness” of chapter one.\(^{38}\) Thus, the contrast is meant to highlight the restored community after the exile in contrast to the barrenness of the exilic portrait of chapter one. While Sparks is right in his assessment of the disparity in detail in these two chapters, it seems that the reason for this sparse treatment of individuals in 1 Chronicles 1 rather supports the Chronicler’s intention to allude to the narratives of Genesis. Much like the structure of the Pentateuch, the Chronicler begins with more individualistic genealogies, focusing only on major players in the narrative, before extending his scope when it relates to Israel (i.e. the way the Pentateuch expands in Numbers). Sparks’ position, in seeking the unity of his proposed chiastic structure, does not account for intentional allusions to the Genesis account.

Sparks builds upon his conclusion about the barrenness/vitality contrast of

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\(^{38}\) Sparks, *The Chronicler’s Genealogies*, 326.
chapters one and nine positing that in the genealogies “there is a narrowing focus in the genealogies from the world, to Israel, Jerusalem, and finally the temple.” He suggests that this is meant to highlight the authorized cultic personnel. Again, the opposite seems to be the case. In moving from world to Israel to Jerusalem to temple, the genealogy has actually moved from individual to corporate. Such a move is not to highlight the idealized restored Israel, but rather to emphasize the growing need for the return to an individual in the covenant relationship with Adam, Noah, and Abraham through the line of Judah. Though the genealogies become more and more segmented, they still inevitably move in a descending fashion. Given the Chronicler’s emphasis on the Judahite kings in the narratives that ensue, the best understanding of the descending genealogies is that he anticipates the one who will conclude the genealogy by fulfilling the covenant promises made by YHWH to the patriarchs and to David.

**Genealogy of David and His Descendants**

While the purpose of chapter one is to look back toward the narratives of the Patriarchs in Genesis, beginning with chapter two the Chronicler begins to shift his focus to the anticipation of the narratives in his own work (much like Genesis sets the context for its narratives). Consequently, it is significant that the Chronicler moves so quickly to the genealogy of David. After listing the generations from Abraham to Isaac (1:28-34), then tracing the Edomite kings that come from Esau (1:35-54), chapter two begins by listing the sons of Israel. Beginning in verse 3, the Chronicler begins not with Reuben, the firstborn, but with Judah, and gives the sons of Judah, the sons of Perez, and the sons

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39 Ibid., 331.
of Hezron. Among the sons of Hezron are recounted Ram, Amminadab, Nahshon, Salmon, Boaz, Obed, Jesse, and then David, who is listed as the seventh son of Jesse (2:13). The mention of David as the seventh son is significant here, as David is recognized as the eighth son of Jesse in 1 Samuel 16:10-11. Thus, one can see the selectivity of the Chronicler in making David the seventh son, a number that oftentimes in Scripture is symbolic. As David becomes for the Chronicler the standard by which all ensuing kings are measured, his prominence here is significant.40

That David is the focus of the Judahite genealogy seems plain, though Sparks denies this conclusion.41 Gershon Galil argues convincingly that the focus on David in the Judahite genealogy is directly linked to the idea of election that is explicitly stated in 1 Chronicles 28:4. David himself says, “The Lord God of Israel chose me out of all my father’s house to be king over all Israel forever, for he chose Judah to be ruler, and of the family of Judah, my father’s house; and of my father’s house, he preferred to make me king over all Israel.”42 Such links between the genealogical emphasis on David and the Chronicler’s theology, particularly God’s covenant promise with David, only serve to support the present thesis that the Chronicler’s genealogy anticipates the importance of the Davidic covenant.

Moreover, chapter three carries on this significance by listing David’s

40 Later Judahite kings are often compared to David to test their faithfulness in service before the Lord. Consider 2 Chr. 11:17; 17:3; 28:1; 29:2; 34:2.

41 Sparks, The Chronicler’s Genealogies, 247.

descendants, those who will be the main characters throughout the rest of Chronicles. An interesting note about this list is the strict, linear structure that it follows through Josiah in verse 14. After Josiah, however, several sons are mentioned and the list becomes more segmented. As the nation of Judah becomes more and more unstable approaching the exile, there is more and more unrest and uncertainty. Once they are exiled, seemingly all hope of God’s promises to David is lost. Though the exile clearly delays these promises, the Chronicler maintains hope that one will still come to fulfill these promises. The genealogy here in chapter three highlights this same uncertainty, yet hope. That the Chronicler’s genealogy has this in mind here is hinted at by the addition to Jeconiah in verse 17—he is Jeconiah, the captive. Though in bondage and exile, God continues to preserve the line of David.

**Judah Takes Preeminence over his Brothers**

After the genealogies of chapters 2 and 3 which deal with David and his descendents, the Chronicler returns in chapter 4 to give a detailed list of the sons of Israel. The list, however, begins not with Reuben, the firstborn, but with Judah, which again acts as a theological emphasis on Judah’s preeminence over his brothers. The Chronicler assumes here in chapter four and makes explicit in 1 Chronicles 5:1-2 that the reason for Judah’s preeminence and Reuben’s loss of birthright is rooted in Genesis 48-49, in which Reuben is said to have forfeited his birthright due to his sin while the brothers will bow before Judah. The Chronicler once again uses nuances in his genealogy to remind the reader of past narratives and in that way present the themes of

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43 Note that the Chronicler has already given Judah preeminence in chapter 2 so as to highlight David.
those former narratives. In 1 Chronicles 2-5, then, the emphasis time and again returns to Judah, because through Judah comes David and the ruling tribe.\footnote{The Chronicler’s mention of the loss of Reuben’s birthright, drawn from Genesis 48-49, also serves to support this point. In Genesis 49, in Jacob’s blessing to Judah, he says that his brother will bow to him (v. 8) and the scepter shall not depart from him (v. 10). Each of these anticipate the kingship from the line of Judah, which is emphasized in the Chronicler’s genealogies and certainly a central point in his narrative.}

The interpretation of this significance is less clear, however, than the recognition of it. Later, this paper will propose a messianic reading of Chronicles as rooted in the covenant continuity expressed in the genealogies and the idealized portrait of David and some of the successive Judahite kings. In contrast, though Knoppers recognizes the Chronicler’s emphasis on Judah (especially David), he does not think that royal and messianic interpretations adequately consider all the genealogical evidence.\footnote{Knoppers, \textit{1 Chronicles 1-9}, 263.} Galil agrees, quoting Knoppers to suggest that messianic readings are just as one-sided and incorrect as Sparks’ proposal.\footnote{Galil, “Review: The Chronicler’s Genealogies.”} However, in linking the genealogical emphasis on David with the election of David in 1 Chronicles 28:4 (c.f. 1 Chr. 17), Galil has already given this view some credibility. The discussion regarding chapter 1 has already gone some way toward accomplishing this task as well. It would appear, then, that some warrant exists for such a view on the basis of the genealogies in chapters one through five alone, but one very large obstacle remains in the way: the extensive genealogical data of Levi.

**Levi Among the 12 Tribes**

Of final interest for this discussion of the Chronicler’s use of the genealogies is the emphasis on Levi. That Levi is mentioned among the twelve tribes at all is

\footnote{The Chronicler’s mention of the loss of Reuben’s birthright, drawn from Genesis 48-49, also serves to support this point. In Genesis 49, in Jacob’s blessing to Judah, he says that his brother will bow to him (v. 8) and the scepter shall not depart from him (v. 10). Each of these anticipate the kingship from the line of Judah, which is emphasized in the Chronicler’s genealogies and certainly a central point in his narrative.}

\footnote{Knoppers, \textit{1 Chronicles 1-9}, 263.}

\footnote{Galil, “Review: The Chronicler’s Genealogies.”}
significant, as they are the priests and are not mentioned among the twelve tribes in typical lists. Not only is Levi mentioned, however, but it is given a lengthy section (all of chapter 6; 81 verses). Explanations for this material typically highlight the need for the legitimization of the priestly line for the post-exilic community.\textsuperscript{47} It is entirely possible that this material may aid in such an endeavor, though any genealogy which is so selective, as 1 Chronicles 1-9 is, makes it difficult for this to be the primary function of this list, for one would expect that there would be some who are not listed in the genealogy that would still have sufficient evidence showing such ancestry.

It is also difficult to argue against the significance of the Levites given the extent of the genealogy. However, the manner in which the Levites are significant is a separate debate. In the narratives of Chronicles, though the Levites have a prominent place in the cultic function, it is done under the oversight of the king. In 1 Chronicles 15:16, David commands the Levites to appoint singers. In 2 Chronicles 8:4, it was under the ruling and command of David that the priests were divided for their service and the Levites for their offices. Similar statements are made in 2 Chronicles 23:18 and 2 Chronicles 29:25. Solomon is likewise seen in command over the Levites and their work. Besides 1 Chronicles 6, the only other list of Levites in the book of Chronicles (1 Chronicles 23-26) is in the context of David’s preparation for the temple. But as Braun points out, the focus of the Chronicler here is not as much on David as preparer, but rather on Solomon as divinely chosen temple builder.\textsuperscript{48} One sees, then, how the context of the Levitical cultic function is still set under the more important leadership of the king. It is the king who is

\textsuperscript{47} Sparks, \textit{The Chronicler’s Genealogy};

divinely appointed and set over even the chiefs of the Levites (1 Chr. 15:16). As previously noted, the temple becomes central in the narrative to the Chronicler’s theology. David prepares all of the materials for Solomon to construct the temple and institute the proper worship of God. The primary emphasis on the temple in the narrative is the king as temple caretaker. Each king is either good or bad, primarily based on his care for the temple by tearing down or building up the high places. Additionally, the king who will fulfill the covenant promise to David will build for YHWH a house. Though Solomon builds a house for YHWH, at the end of the book, the reader finds that the Chronicler is still searching for that king who will go up to represent the people (2 Chr. 36:22-23). The emphasis on Levi in the genealogy, though having several applications, seems to be closely related to its function in 1 Chronicles 23-26, where they are found to be servants under the leadership of the king. Their place is therefore important because it sets up the primary test for the king: will he care for the temple? 49

**Prominence of the Davidic Covenant**

Up to this point, the discussion has focused on the Chronicler’s use of genealogies. This paper has proposed that the Chronicler is drawing upon the narratives of Genesis simply by naming the characters. Moreover, the Chronicler is doing so for the purpose of setting his work in the context of the Abrahamic covenant. This paper has also proposed how the Chronicler’s emphasis on Judah in the genealogies has anticipated the central concern of his narrative: the Judahite kings and the anticipated fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant.

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49 Further support that cannot be developed here is the reversal of roles in 2 Chronicles 23-24. Jehoiada, the high priest, is buried with the kings, while Joash, the king, is not. The parallels in the passage seem to present Jehoiada the priest as the one who is most like the coming king. Consequently, even the high priest and his care for the temple are understood in royal terms hearkening back to the Davidic Covenant.
Davidic covenant. In doing so, the Chronicler’s genealogies are meant to establish
covenant continuity, setting the Davidic covenant and its fulfillment in the context of the
Abrahamic covenant and the promises to the Patriarchs. Now, it remains to be exhibited
how the genealogies serve to establish this covenant continuity. In order for this to be
possible, the theme of the Davidic covenant must be central to the book, and this claim is
not without opposition. Japhet particularly argues against the notion that the Chronicler
has a concern for the Davidic covenant. In fact, she explicitly states the opposite, writing
that the covenant with David “occupies a relatively unimportant position in the book’s
world-view” and “has no importance or theological significance in the book of
Chronicles.”

However, Japhet’s comments are largely limited to the observation that the
narrative of Chronicles lacks frequent references to the word covenant. While true, the
omission of the word covenant is by no means the only way to determine the extent to
which the Chronicler is concerned with the Davidic covenant. Consider, for one example,
the statement in the Davidic covenant found in 1 Chronicles 17:11-12. “When your days
are fulfilled to walk with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your
own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for me, and I will
establish his throne forever” (ESV). Three points regarding this statement suggest that
Japhet wrongly limits the scope of the Chronicler’s interest in the Davidic covenant.
First, unlike the author(s) of Samuel and Kings, the Chronicler’s concern is entirely on
the southern kingdom of Judah. Few references are even made regarding the northern

50 Sara Japhet, The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought,
(Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1989), 102, 459.
kingdom of Israel. The reason for this seems to be that the Chronicler has set his attention upon the sons of David in anticipation of the fulfillment of this promise. Such a conclusion is further evidenced when one considers the theme of care for the temple mentioned previously. The Davidic covenant promises that the promised one will build for YHWH a house. One would expect this house to be the temple that Solomon built, and yet the emphasis on each king’s care for the temple (or lack thereof) is still in view even to the final words of the book, where the Chronicler still hopes in this fulfillment with the decree of Cyrus.\(^1\) Third, the Davidic covenant anticipates an everlasting kingdom. However, as the united kingdom of David and Solomon begins to crumble and ultimately fail under Rehoboam, even though the narratives of Chronicles never return to a united kingdom, much less an everlasting one, still the Chronicler anticipates this result in each king and remains hopeful in his conclusion. As each king does what is right in the eyes of YHWH and walks in the ways of his father David, there is hope for fulfillment. Though this discussion only addresses one small portion of the Davidic covenant, it seems sufficiently clear that the Davidic covenant is a concern of the Chronicler throughout his work.

Another observation relates to how the Chronicler uses his genealogies in a similar manner to the author of Genesis. Though marked by segmentation, the Chronicler’s genealogies, especially in chapter one and the first part of chapter two up to David, are linear in nature. Dempster notes that linear genealogies are meant to exhibit

\(^1\) Positively: Asa’s removal of the foreign altars and high places in 2 Chr. 14:3-5, Jehoshaphat’s removal of the high places and Asherim in 2 Chr. 17:6, and Joash’s tearing down of the temple of Baal and its altars in 2 Chr. 23:17 are among a few of the examples of how the king is recognized as good based on his care for the temple. Negatively, Jehoram makes high places in 2 Chr. 21:11 and is said to be evil in the eyes of YHWH, walking in the ways of the kings of Israel.
movement toward a divine goal, and the purpose of this goal is then spelled out explicitly in the following narrative.\(^{52}\) For example, in Genesis 11, the genealogy of Terah (focused on Abram) is followed by God’s three-part covenant promise to Abram (Gen. 12, 15, and 17). It seems the Chronicler has used this same method to emphasize the Davidic Covenant in the narrative following the genealogy. Since much of the genealogy focuses on David and the line of Judah, and the narrative gives very little attention to Saul before moving to David, the Davidic covenant in 1 Chronicles 17 is very closely associated with the genealogical introduction, suggesting that the Davidic covenant is a prominent theme in Chronicles.

One further observation suggests the Chronicler’s interest in the Davidic covenant. Few would deny that the Chronicler gives an idealistic presentation of David, seeing as how the Chronicler omits from his narrative the adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah found in the Samuel account. In expecting the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant in Solomon, as David does, one might expect an idealized picture of Solomon as well, and that is in fact what the Chronicler gives the reader. Solomon is idealized in the text as a picture of what the coming king will be like: he will be a man of peace, he will receive gifts from foreign royalty, and he will be a man of wisdom. Roddy Braun argues that the Chronicler’s depiction of Solomon as a king by divine choice, a king unanimously supported by all Israel, and a king who is concerned with the cult present Solomon along with David as “two kings of equal standing before Yahweh and Israel.”\(^{53}\)

It strengthens his conclusions by noting how the majority of the Chronicler’s

\(^{52}\) Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty*, 76.

presentation of Solomon varies from his literary norm. Whereas most of the book consists
of additions and deletions with minor alterations and interpretation of his
Deuteronomistic sources, his presentation of Solomon “amounts to a virtual rewriting of
the history which shows definite signs of extensive planning.”

Despite this idealized portrayal and David’s belief that God’s promise to him will
be fulfilled in Solomon, the Chronicler makes clear through the ensuing narrative that it
is not fulfilled. As the narrative progresses, several interesting points arise which lend
support to this argument. Interestingly, Japhet notes that the structure of 2 Chronicles 10-
36 typically contains one small unit per king. However, the four longest units in this
section are in regards to Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah. Japhet, however, fails
to see the significance of this alteration in structure, namely that each of these kings is
given lengthier portions because they are kings who, for some time at least, were faithful
to YHWH. What arises in the narrative, then, is a sort of audition for the one who will
keep the commands of YHWH and thus fulfill the role of the king whom God promised
David. As the king begins faithfully, he is given an extended look, only to fail in the end
like past kings. Like Jaques in Shakespeare’s comedy, As You Like It, who says that “All
the world’s a stage,” one could view the book of Chronicles as a stage in which the kings
“have their exits and entrances” and yet all end the same, in “mere oblivion.” None
succeed, and as each king fails to fulfill the conditions of the covenant, it serves to show

54 Ibid., 509.
55 Sara Japhet, 1 & 2 Chronicles, 13.
56 William Shakespeare, As You Like It, in The Riverside Shakespeare, ed. G. Blakemore Evans
that the One who will fulfill the conditions is still yet to come.\textsuperscript{57}

Returning, then, to the notion of covenant continuity, one can see how one function of the genealogies is to look back at the Abrahamic covenant and the role of Israel in the universal reign of God. The previous discussion has also suggested that the narrative portion of Chronicles is significantly concerned with the anticipated fulfillment of the Davidic covenant. The link between the two seems to arise with the emphasis in the genealogies on Judah (David). The genealogies thus act both retrospectively with regard to the fathers, and prospectively with regard to the hope in the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant. By melding these two themes together in the genealogy, the Chronicler has implicitly set the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant in the context of the fulfillment of the promises to the fathers. But does this claim, like the emphasis on the Davidic covenant, find evidence in the narrative? Several points suggest that the answer is yes.

First, references to “YHWH God of the fathers”, or some variant form of the phrase, are found twenty-seven times in Chronicles, with no parallel in the Deuteronomistic accounts.\textsuperscript{58} Japhet notes this point and asserts that “the fact that the epithet is given in a variety of forms, depending on the context, as well as the frequency with which it appears, indicates that its use is deliberate and significant, and not merely the result of current usage.”\textsuperscript{59} However, somewhat inexplicably, Japhet then suggests that this is not an intentional link to the Patriarchs, but rather “the Chr took the epithet from

\begin{quotation}
\end{quotation}

\textsuperscript{57}\textsuperscript{Sailhamer, First and Second Chronicles, 75.}

\textsuperscript{58}\textsuperscript{Occurrences—1 Chr. 5:25; 12:17; 29:18; 2Chr 7:22; 11:16; 13:12, 18; 14:4; 15:12; 19:4; 20:6, 33; 21:10; 24:18, 24; 28: 6, 9, 25; 29:5; 30:7, 19, 22; 33:12; 34:32, 33; 36:15.}

\textsuperscript{59}\textsuperscript{Japhet, The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles, 14.}
the general linguistic pool and used it to express his own conception of God.\textsuperscript{60} She concludes that the phrase is simply interchangeable with “YHWH your God” or “YHWH God of Israel” and expresses the continuous and abiding link between YHWH and his people.\textsuperscript{61} While the phrase may in fact express such abiding relationship, it seems best to understand the foundation of that relationship in God’s revelation of himself to the Patriarchs. Japhet’s conclusion does not adequately explain why the Chronicler would have so many unparalleled uses of this phrase in addition to the concern for the fathers in the genealogies and elsewhere.

Likewise, her argument hinges upon the interchangeable nature of “YHWH God of the fathers” and “YHWH God of Israel,” but some occurrences clearly refer to the Patriarchs. One such example is 1 Chronicles 29:18, where David calls upon God to direct the people’s hearts toward Him. The Chronicler records, “O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers.” David here is making a plea to God to remain faithful to His promises to David and the people of Israel as He did to the fathers. Similar references to “YHWH God of the fathers” also relate back to narratives and themes from the Pentateuch, such as the usage in 2 Chronicles 7:22 in relation to the Exodus and in 2 Chronicles 15:12 and its likely reference to Deuteronomy 6:5. In light of such evidence, one should rather accept the more straight-forward implication that the Chronicler used this term intentionally on so many occasions because he deliberately set the context of his work in the promises to the fathers.

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 17, 19. Emphasis mine.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 17.
Some Possible Implications of this View

If in fact the current thesis is correct, that the Chronicler’s genealogies establish covenant continuity between the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants by setting the latter in the context of the former, then there are potentially significant implications for an understanding of the Chronicler’s theology. The first implication is the link between David’s seed and Abraham’s seed. God’s covenant with David is a promise which will be fulfilled by one of David’s sons, or seed. Here the understanding of the Chronicler’s genealogies as establishing covenant continuity is most important. In both the Abrahamic and Davidic covenant, the concept of seed is primary. Through Abraham’s seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed. Likewise, through David’s seed, God will establish an everlasting kingdom. If one understands the emphasis on temple worship in the context of bringing about salvation for all nations (c.f. Is. 2:2-5; Mic. 4:1-3), then the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant and the establishment of God’s house and everlasting kingdom is a continuation of God’s working to fulfill his promise to Abraham’s seed.

Second, by making use of the Abrahamic narrative and the narrative of Jacob’s blessing to his sons in Genesis 48-49, the Chronicler may very well be making a similar theological point as the author of Numbers 23-24. In Numbers 24:9b, the author makes explicit reference back to Genesis 12:3 when he writes, “Blessed are those who bless you, and cursed are those who curse you.” As argued earlier, the Chronicler has these promises to Abraham in mind through his genealogical reference to Genesis 17 and Abram’s name change. Likewise, Numbers 24:9a relates that this king of whom he is speaking “crouched, he lay down like a lion and like a lioness; who will rouse him up?” This is the same language used of Judah in Genesis 49:9, and seems to be a concern of
the Chronicler in explaining why Judah takes prominent place in his genealogy and his narrative. Still further, Numbers 24:17 speaks of the eschatological judgment of this king over his enemies in language reminiscent of Genesis 3:15, saying that he will “crush the forehead of Moab.” It is quite possible that the Chronicler has this narrative in mind in beginning his genealogy with Adam. In beginning with Adam, the Chronicler brings into focus the narrative of Adam, so it is plausible to believe that the fall narrative and the hope of Genesis 3:15 are in view as well. One final note is that the focus of Numbers 23-24 moves from corporate to individual. Whereas in Numbers 23:22, God brings them out of Egypt, in Numbers 24:8, God brings him (the king of v. 7) out of Egypt. This move from corporate to individual, taken with the references to Genesis 3, 12, and 49, suggests that the fulfillment of these promises is in the same individual who will arise from the seed of Adam, Abraham, and Judah. In using his genealogy to establish covenant continuity between the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants, the Chronicler may have in mind the idea that the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant that he anticipates will be a fulfillment of these other promises as well. While the Chronicler does not explicitly develop the fullness of these themes, his emphasis on seed as it applies to the Davidic covenant, rooted as it appears to be in the Pentateuch, is a plausible conclusion. 62

Concluding Remarks

Though a brief overview of the Chronicler’s use of genealogies, one can see how the Chronicler has used genealogies in order to set the Davidic covenant in the context of

God’s plans for the nations through Abraham. As the narrative of Chronicles progresses, the reader is anticipating the king who will fulfill all of these promises, not only to David, but as far back as Adam, Abraham, and Judah. As the Chronicler narrows the focus from the seed of the woman to the seed of Abraham to the seed of Judah to David and his descendants, one sees a pattern that leads ultimately to a single individual in whom all these promises find their fulfillment. That one is the Messiah whom the Chronicler anticipates. And as the opening words of the New Testament illustrate (perhaps not coincidentally in the form of genealogy), Jesus Christ is that One.
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