

Lesson 14 - Abbreviated Genealogy

Goal:

- Students will figure out how “resumptive repetition” works.
- Students will chart a family tree in order to uncover how peculiarities in the way the tree is narrated point to the important people in the tree.

Activity:

1. Have students fill out this worksheet in pairs.

Preparation for Perek 6:10-7:7

1. What is missing in the dialogue of pesukim 10-13?
2. Make an outline of the structure of 6:10-7:7? (Do pesukim 29-30 sound familiar?)
3. Can you explain the repetition in this perek? See Rashi for help:
דש"י שמות ו, יד - ודבר הצווי מהו, מפורש בפרשה שניה לאחר סדר היחס, אלא מתוך שהזכיר משה ואהרן הפסיק הענין באלה ראשי בית אבותם (פסוק יד) ללמדנו היאך נולדו משה ואהרן ובמי נתיחסו:
4. Draw a family tree of the genealogy. Draw a square around those whose ages are mentioned. Draw a triangle around those who the pesukim mention as getting married.
5. Why is this genealogy here at all? See Seforno.
ספורנו שמות ו כו - הוא אהרן ומשה. ואלה הנכבדים מכל בית אבותם הם האנשים שבדין ובראוי אמר ה' להם הוציאו את בני ישראל, כי היו ראויים להיות דבריהם נשמעים אצל כל ישראל:
6. Try to figure out the why some people are listed and others are left out. Why are only some people given ages? Why are the wives of only some people mentioned?

2. Review the answers:

Hashem's response is missing in pasuk 10:13. However, pesukim 11-12 are repeated at 29-30, after which Hashem does provide a lengthy response. The structure of the perek should look something like this:

6:10-13 Conversation between Hashem and Moshe
6:14-27 Genealogy
6:28-7:7 Conversations between Hashem and Moshe

As Rashi points out, 29-30 repeat 11-12 almost verbatim because that conversation was interrupted by the genealogy and a small amount of repetition is necessary in order to get back on track. This is an example of “resumptive repetition” where the text goes on a tangent and then repeats the last item before the tangent once it resumes the main plot. A good example of this is Bereshit 39:1, which repeats 37:36 after the interruption of the Yehudah and Tamar narrative in order to resume the Yosef story. There are many examples of this literary device in Tanakh. (Other examples include Shemot 1:15-16, Vayikra 16:1-2, and Vayikra 26:46 and 27:34.)

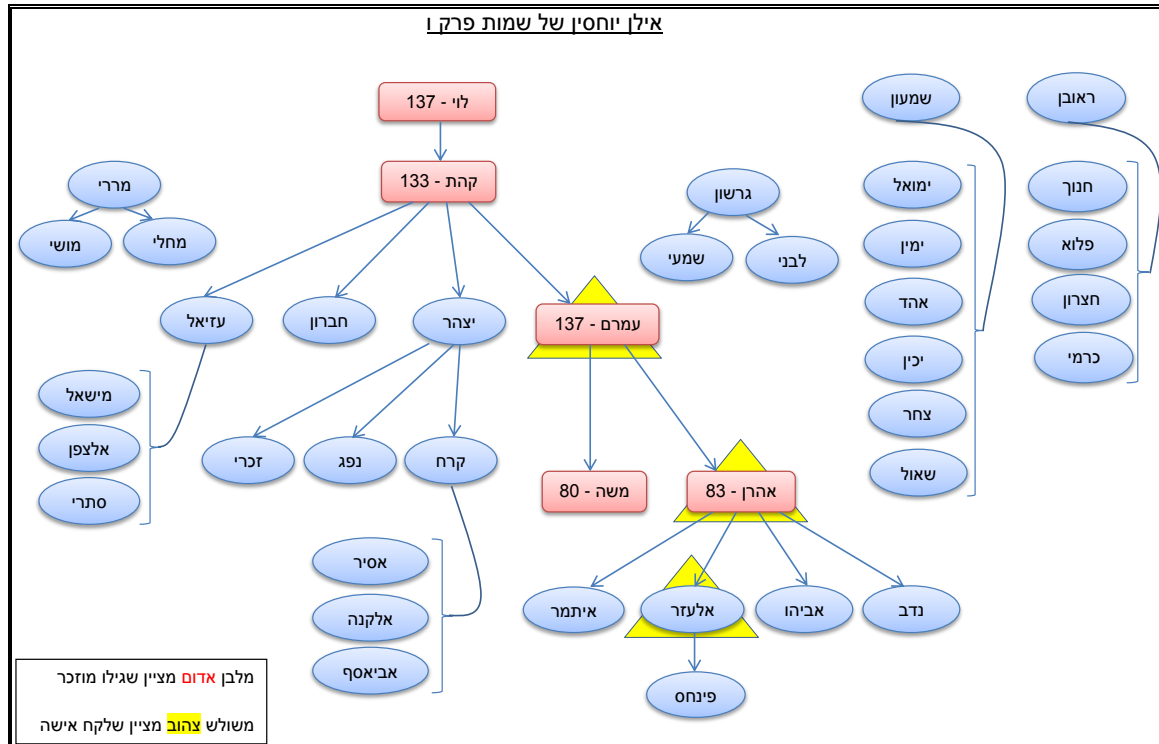
It should be clear from the family tree that this is an abbreviated and very selective genealogy. Its goal is to introduce the main characters that we will encounter in the coming perakim. In so doing, it begins at the beginning with Reuven and Shimon but only provides one generation for them. It concentrates on Levi, whose descendants are the targets of this tree, and stops once that goal is complete, leaving out the rest of the tribes. The most important characters are highlighted by means of providing their ages and their marriages.

Tracking those who have ages, we see the lineage of Aharon and Moshe, whose ages are mentioned in 7:7. That they are the primary target of this genealogy is explicit in 6:26-28. Note that if we connect this genealogy to those in Bereshit, which similarly include ages, then Moshe is the 26th generation from Adam (10 from Adam until Noah, 10 from Noah until Abraham, 2 for Yishak and Yaakov, and 4 more here). This connects well with the number symbolism in the previous lesson.

A second lineage is that indicated by people married: Amram, Aharon, and Eleazar who begets Pinehas, the only person mentioned from the 6th generation. This traces the line of the *kahuna gedolah*, which will be granted to Pinehas after his zealotry in Bemidbar 25.

The only other line that is extended further than expected is Korah and his sons. This reflects the important role they will play in their rebellion. The sons of Korah are specifically mentioned in Bemidbar 26:11: וַיִּבְנֵי קֹרַח לֹא מָתוּ. See Ibn Ezra (long commentary) for further elaboration.

As Seforno says, this genealogy serves to legitimate Moshe and Aharon’s authority as the proper leaders of the nation and incidentally mentions Korah who will claim illegitimate leadership later on. It is important to accomplish this here, right in the middle of Hashem’s sending them on this most important mission, in order to call attention to their central role in the redemption and future leadership of Bnei Yisrael. See also Ralbag on why this genealogy could not have come earlier.



3. Advanced Questions

Advanced Questions:

1. Why does the Torah switch the order of Moshe and Aharon in pesukim 26 and 27? See Rashi, Rashbam and Ibn Ezra. Any other reason?

2. Does pasuk 28 logically connect to the preceding pasuk or the following pasuk? If so, can you explain the *parasha setuma*? See Rashi and Ibn Ezra's long commentary. Then analyze this Midrash:

מכילתא דרבי ישמעאל בא - מסכתא דפסחא פרשה א
 ויאמר יי' אל משה ואל אהרן בארץ מצרים לאמר. שומע אני שהיה הדבר למשה ולאהרן כשהוא אומר ויהי
 ביום דבר יי' אל משה בארץ מצרים (שמות ו כח) למשה היה הדבר ולא לאהרן. א"כ מה תלמוד לומר אל משה
 ואל אהרן. אלא מלמד שכשם שהיה משה כלל לדברות כך היה אהרן כלל לדברות. ומפני מה לא נדבר עמו
 מפני כבודו של משה.

3. Does Moshe's complaint at 6:12 and 30 sound familiar? What other repetitions can you find? How can you account for these repetitions?

Question 1 - There may be a simply literary explanation for the switch in the order of names. הוא אהרן ומשה at the beginning of pasuk 26 and הוא משה ואהרן at the end of pasuk 27 form an envelope structure that sets of these two pesukim as a unit. This unit explains the reason why this whole genealogy is placed here.

Question 2 - Pasuk 28 clearly introduces what comes next by telling us to resume the narrative that was begun before the genealogy. Rashi and Ibn Ezra are puzzled by it. The answer can be found at the very beginning of Mekhilta deRabbi Yishmael. The Midrash notices that that in 6:13 Hashem speaks to both Moshe and Aharon, a fact that is repeated in 6:26 but is contradicted in 6:28. The Midrash resolves the contradiction by explaining that the prophecy was addressed to both Moshe and Aharon, as 6:13 and 26 state, since they are both messengers to Pharaoh; however, only Moshe actually heard the prophecy and he repeated it to his brother. 6:28 is therefore connected to the previous pesukim, even against the logical flow, because it needs to correct the false impression that we might have gotten from 6:13 and 26. In fact, Hashem only actually spoke to Moshe. This is an interesting and rare case of where the Massoretic text is influenced by the Midrash.

Question 3 – Moshe's complaint of having a speech impediment is almost the same at 4:10. In both contexts, Hashem responds that Aharon will be his spokesman. In both contexts, this conversation comes after Hashem tells Moshe that he sees the suffering of Bnei Yisrael (3:7 and 6:8) and then tells Moshe to be a messenger to both Bnei Yisrael and Pharaoh. Rabbi Yosef Bekhor Shor (12th cent. Tosafist) has the following comment on 6:29:

אני ה' דבר אל פרעה: בסנה אמר לו כן והוא ענה שהוא ערל שפתיים, ובלשון קצר הוא מספר עתה, כדי לסדר כל מעשה פרעה על סדר אחד.

According to the Bekhor Shor, perek 6 describes in summary form the very same conversation that occurred at the *seneh* and repeats it in order that it should immediately precede the main story of the ten plagues.

Another possibility, however, is that this is a second conversation. The first charge to Moshe was in the desert at the *seneh*. Moshe and Aharon do go to Pharaoh in perek 5 but their mission is a failure and even makes the situation worse. Moshe returns to Hashem (perhaps still in Egypt or perhaps back to the *seneh*) in 5:22 feeling dejected and wanting to give up. Hashem reassures Moshe that He will fulfill his promise and sends Moshe back to Bnei Yisrael (6:1-8). While Bnei Yisrael did believe Moshe the first time around (4:31), now they reject him. It is therefore understandable why Moshe would again bring up his inability to speak well. He tried and, despite Hashem's reassurances, he failed to convince either Bnei Yisrael or Pharaoh. Perek 6:10-7:7 is therefore a new charge to Moshe and Aharon to overcome their disappointment, renew their hope, and return again to their mission.