

The God Who Makes His Name Known (Through Names)
Exodus 6:14–7:7
January 11, 2026

Today's text is full of names, names in a genealogy. We'll begin this sermon talking about names, names in a genealogy.

This week I received a phone call from a doctor's office. I answered that call like this, "Hello, this is Matt." And then I heard the confused pause I've heard many, many times before. But eventually the young lady said, "I was *actually* looking for Joseph." So, I told her, with a sigh, "Oh yeah, that's me."

Many of you know that my first name is Joseph. You probably *don't* know that I'm named after my great-grandfather on my father's side—Joseph Sliger. But he's not the *only* Joseph in my family tree. In fact, I could tell a few stories from my ancestry.com *just* using the name Joseph. First, on my mother's side,¹ my great, great, great, great grandfather was named Joseph Patrick. He was actually the *first* one in my family to move to Shelby County—way back in 1835.²

But speaking of 19th century Memphis, there's *another* Joseph I might bring up. Because also on my mother's side,³ my great, great, great grandfather is named Morris *Joseph* Peres. The Peres family came to Memphis from the Netherlands. And they were Jewish. In fact, Morris's brother Jacob *Joseph* Peres was the first rabbi of Temple Israel.

Now, what did I just do? I didn't list *every* name in my family tree. I only told you a few, centered on the name Joseph, but also with ties to Memphis. I chose names with a particular aim.

Again, today's passage is full of names, names from a genealogy. But, likewise, it's not *every* name possible. These names are here for a purpose. And it's the *same* purpose the entire book serves—that is, to make *God's* name known.

1. God Works Through Names (6:14-27)⁴

Maybe you're reading through Genesis in January. And if you are, then I'd imagine you've encountered at *least* one list of names. And maybe, when you come to a list of "begats," you've demonstrated some impressive speed-reading ability. We can't *pronounce* the names, so why even pause on them?

Understanding the impulse, let me give a couple introductory comments. First, might we be reminded of 2 Timothy 3:16: **All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.** Paul wrote *that* about a body of literature that *includes* quite a few lists of names. He asserts that those lists are inspired by God *and* are profitable for teaching and training.

And yet, Paul didn't write any genealogies. I think there's a reason for that, one we'll come back to. Yet, one who didn't write a single genealogy tells us that every jot and thought of Scripture is able to mature us and make us wise.

Secondly, let me re-emphasize the point made in the introduction. Virtually all Old Testament genealogies are selective.⁵ *Every* name isn't listed. For example, in our text today we'll note

¹ My mom's dad's side, to be clear.

² Sidenote: Joseph's son was ordained as an elder at a church in Cordova in 1886. I've stood behind a pulpit he built.

³ My mother's mom's side, to be clear.

⁴ I could footnote people every week, but this week's sermon was helped in particular by Chris, Jim, and David—as well as by my pastor friends Ben Williams and Lawson Harlow. And the family tree research was done over decades by my mother and my aunt Mary.

⁵ Douglas Stuart, *Exodus*, NAC, 176; Desmond Alexander, *Exodus*, AOTC, 134.

that those who descended from Reuben and Simeon are only listed for *one* generation; and yet the list of Levi's descendants advances five generations. If you skim the names, you'd miss that. But it's quite obvious. And, again, selective naming suggests purpose.⁶

In one sense, I've given you the punchline, but let's actually look at the list together. Verse 14: **These are the heads of their fathers' households. The sons of Reuben, Israel's firstborn.** Let me pause there. *Some* of the purpose of this list is to link *later* names—in particular Moses and Aaron—with Israel. And by Israel, we mean Jacob, the Jacob that moved to Egypt after his son Joseph rose to power—the Jacob God also called “Israel.”

So, while it may not be the *primary* purpose, that's *one* purpose of this list, to connect Moses and Aaron with the Jacob of Genesis. And typical of genealogies, this list of Jacob's sons is going to begin with his firstborn. We do similar things. If someone asks you the ages of your children, most likely you'll start from the top. And the firstborn son of Jacob—or Israel—is Reuben. Verse 14 then lists Reuben's sons: **Hanoch and Pallu, Hezron and Carmi; these are the families of Reuben.**

What *else* is Moses going to write about Reuben? Nothing. He *begins* with him, because he is Jacob's firstborn. But he goes down to Reuben's children, and then *stops*, for the simple reason that Moses and Aaron were *not* descended from Reuben.⁷ Again, the list is far from exhaustive.

So, who comes after Jacob's firstborn? His second born, in verse 15: **The sons of Simeon: Jemuel and Jamin and Ohad and Jachin and Zohar and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman; these are the families of Simeon.** We could ask the same question I asked a moment ago. What else is Moses going to write about Simeon? Nothing. He won't say anything other than the names of Simeon's children for the simple reason that Moses and Aaron were *not* descended from Simeon.

There's no Bible Code here, demanding that you combine the first letters of each name into a new word and overlay that word on a map of the Nile at mile marker 6 and 15 to find the hidden message. You don't even have to know Hebrew to pick up what Moses is doing.

And to do so, note what he does when he gets to the third-born son, Levi. Verse 16: **These are the names of the sons of Levi according to their generations: Gershon and Kohath and Merari; and the length of Levi's life was one hundred and thirty-seven years.** Now, I assume you noticed some variance from the pattern. And if this were small group class, I'd ask, “What does Moses do differently with Levi than what he did with Reuben and Simeon?” If I asked that, you'd look down at your Bible and quickly someone would point out the phrase “according to their generations” and the fact that Moses also chooses to give us Levi's life-span.

It's *sort of* subtle, but not *really*. And what comes next is *far* from subtle. Like I chose “Joseph” in my family tree earlier to make a point, the author of this genealogy has someone he wants us to think about. As he did with Reuben and Simeon, he lists Levi's three sons: **Gershon and Kohath and Merari.** But *then* in verse 17 he goes one step farther, listing the sons of Gershon. Then in verse 18 he lists the sons of Kohath. Then in verse 19 he lists the sons of Merari.

Once the list made it from Reuben and Simeon to Levi, the timeline moves forward by generations. Is this genealogy going to list Jacob's *fourth* son? No. Because its point was to get to Levi.

Maybe you noticed something *else* in those verses. Not only is this the first time we read the names of grandchildren, we're even told the age that one of the grandchildren of Levi died. Verse 18: **and the length of Kohath's life was one hundred and thirty-three years.** Do we know any of the other grandchildren's length of years? No. So, why are we told Kohath's? Because out of Levi's grandsons, this is the one Moses wants us to notice. Because one of Kohath's sons was named

⁶ Alexander, 138.

⁷ Stuart, 177.

Amram. And in verse 20 we read that Amram married a young lady named Jochebed, **and she bore him Aaron and Moses.**

At this point, maybe you're thinking, "Matt, you spent ten years of your life in seminary. We all think you're a bit of a nerd. Of course this is interesting to you." And, frankly, genealogies are something of a hobby horse. However, it's *not* because I think where I *come* from determines who I am. Some people might think that. But the Scriptures do a much better job defining identity.

However, what looking at a genealogy can *do*—both our own and the Bible's—is it can help deliver us from an obsession with the present—from myopic, tunnel-vision navel gazing fixation. For example, in *my* case, Joseph Patrick left the Outer Banks of North Carolina in January of 1835 to head west. In April of that year, after roughly 800–1000 miles in a wagon—over the Appalachian Mountains, crossing river after river—they stopped in Shelby County, just a few miles from where I grew up.⁸

That's not merely personal history; it's the unfolding of providence. Thinking about it helps me consider God's purposes in ways I hadn't before.

This kind of thing ought to happen as we read through the Old Testament. Again, I hope you're finishing last year's plan, or you've begun a new one—*not* to mark something off a list, nor to earn some sort of righteousness. But to learn of the God that's made Himself known.

For example, this past week I'd nearly forgotten that in Genesis 12—after a famine—Abraham meets Pharaoh in Egypt. Then, a few chapters later, God tells Abraham about the Exodus, *hundreds* of years before it happens. Then Abraham had Isaac. Isaac had Jacob. Jacob had Levi. Eventually Kohath was born from that line. So was Amram. And Amram had Aaron and Moses.

None of this—not even the list of names—is random haphazard story; it's the meticulous ordering of God's decrees for a people—to bring Himself glory in revealing Himself as sovereign. What all does paying attention to that kind of sovereignty affect in my thinking? How many ways does *that* apply? I dare not limit it.

This genealogy looks backward, connecting Moses and Aaron to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And then it also looks forward from *there*, tracing the Levitical line—the priestly line—through them for five generations. And, as we'll soon see, *that* matters because Exodus is going to teach Israel how a holy God can dwell with an unholy people. To that end, the priesthood is *central*. Sinai is ahead; so is the tabernacle.

From here I'll just hit a couple highlights. Verses 21 and 22 list Moses and Aaron's cousins. Korah is the name you probably know best; he's the Korah from the rebellion. And then from verses 23 to 25 you have Aaron's children and grandchildren listed. Two notable names would be Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu listed in verse 23. You know them from their death in Leviticus 10.

But one of Aaron's sons that lived—Eleazar—is mentioned in verse 25. He's high priest during the book of Numbers. You probably know *his* name, as well as the name of his son—Phinehas. *He* was known for his zeal, and for serving as high priest during the days of Joshua.⁹

Again, we're told about one generation from Reuben and Simeon's line. But, from verses 16–25, we're told five generations of Levi's, the priestly line. Verse after verse is selective, but selective on purpose, intending to draw for us Levitical lineage—where it began, how it ran through Moses and Aaron, and then how it proceeded from there.

With all that done, verse 26 reads: **It was the same Aaron and Moses to whom the LORD said, "Bring out the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their hosts."** In short, *these* are the men we're talking about. The genealogy gave a little backstory, but these are the

⁸ Once again, a Joseph came from the east and settled in a rural area near a massive river outside a city named Memphis.

⁹ Numbers 21; Joshua 22.

guys you're reading about, the ones you'll hear about for chapters to come. Verse 27 continues along that line: **They were the ones who spoke to Pharaoh king of Egypt about bringing out the sons of Israel from Egypt; it was the same Moses and Aaron.**

From verse 14 to verse 25, Moses lists 47 names. God worked *in* and *through* those names.

2. To Make His Name Known (6:28-7:5)

Verses 28–30 are going to sound quite familiar. I do *not* think this is an entirely different protest from the one we heard at the end of last week's text—*before* the genealogy. Moses seems to know that his readers (and especially those only *hearing* this) might lose track of the story a bit when he lists all those names. So, while there are new nuances or shades to verses 28–30, for the reader he *repeats* much of what already happened.¹⁰

“On the day” seems to indicate this “looking back” recollection. Verse 28: **Now it came about on the day when the LORD spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, that the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “I am the LORD; speak to Pharaoh king of Egypt all that I speak to you.”** To pause there, and remind us, Moses isn't being asked to be clever, or even to be a gifted persuader.¹¹ He's *merely* told to speak what God speaks. And yet, he responds in verse 30: **But Moses said before the LORD, “Behold, I am unskilled in speech; how then will Pharaoh listen to me?”**

This repetition highlights something *else* worth pointing out. Not only does Moses choose carefully which names to include in his genealogy, he also chooses carefully *where* to put this genealogy in the book itself. Some have called it a literary device, marking off one section of this book from another.¹² Right where the story reaches a certain point—a memorable one—Moses pauses the action with the genealogy.

Because if we were to sum up the tale of deliverance thus far, the story is one of unavailing human effort. Since the beginning of the book Moses has failed repeatedly. First in chapter 2 by getting ahead of the Lord by 40 years, and thereby failing to deliver. Then, in chapter 5 Moses failing to speak—at least with precision—the words the Lord gave him to speak, and yet again failing to deliver. Then, only a few verses later, *after* Pharaoh increased the burden on God's people, Moses asked the Lord why He ever sent him (Ex. 5:22).

Which seems to lead Moses toward the wrong conclusion, that is, thinking the deliverance ahead would depend in *some* sense on his eloquence (Ex. 6:12). That's how last week's text ended; and it's what's repeated in our verses today. It's a memorable moment, a good place to pause. Maybe you've read books where the chapter breaks occur right at the most cliff hanging moment. Or maybe for those that grew up pre-internet, Doug Stuart's illustration will land: “Right at the point where Moses said, in effect, “I can't do it,” . . . (this is) the ideal point for a commercial.”¹³

In one sense, the genealogy marks off the prior section of the book. So that *after* Moses paused the action and gave us a list of names, he might restart the narrative. Because the story ahead—at least until chapter 19—is *much* less focused on the inadequacies of Moses. In fact, verses 1 to 5 are full of first-person verbs, spoken by the Lord, reiterating what *He* would do. Verse 1: **Then the LORD said to Moses, “See, I make you as God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall speak to Pharaoh that he let the sons of Israel go out of his land.”**

¹⁰ Stuart, 181; Alexander, 141.

¹¹ Stuart, 180.

¹² Alexander, 134.

¹³ Stuart, 175.

Much of this material is similar to what we've heard before, but one slight nuance between *these* verses and *last* week's text is the audience. Last week the LORD told Moses to speak to the **sons of Israel** (Ex. 6:6). *This* week Moses is as God, and Aaron his prophet, but to Pharaoh. The audience isn't the Hebrews; it's Egypt.

The Lord says they are to **speak all that I command you**.¹⁴ It's God acting, *through* His people.

In verse 3 God tells us *another* thing that He will do: **But I will harden Pharaoh's heart**. As you likely know, throughout the chapters ahead we're going to hear two *seemingly* contradictory things. That is, God saying, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart," and the phrase, "Pharaoh hardened his heart." We'll discuss this more, but the question, "Which one is it?" is the wrong question. Because the answer is not *either*, but *both*. And the answer is *both* because the Bible says *both* things.¹⁵

But in verse 3 we're also told *why* God does what *He* does. Verse 3: **But I will harden Pharaoh's heart that I may multiply My signs and wonders in the land of Egypt**. Of course, God *could* have forced Pharaoh's hand with one stroke, but *instead* He sends a *series* of signs and wonders.¹⁶ His purpose includes not a singular sign, but the *multiplication* of them. And again, as we've said before, a sign is not the thing itself; signs intend to point to something else.¹⁷

Which is what verses 4 and 5 guide us to. What is the overarching aim of this book, the purpose of what God is doing? Verse 4: **When Pharaoh does not listen to you, then I will lay My hand on Egypt and bring out My hosts, My people the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt by great judgments. The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD**.

The title for this sermon is on the bulletin. But I told the guys this week I was tempted to title it: "The God Who Makes Himself Known: Part 11." Because the theme of this book is just *that* obvious.

The name of the LORD was, in one sense, revealed in *last* week's text. And God told the sons of Israel that when He delivered them, **you shall know that I am the LORD**. But this week He makes clear that, by the end of this series of signs, the Egyptians will know it as well. They will soon be convinced of His supremacy over humanity, of His supremacy over nature, and of His supremacy over the false gods they bowed before—including Pharaoh.¹⁸

And verse 4 makes clear that *one* of the ways He makes Himself known is through judgment. The powers of evil will soon be defeated and appropriately punished.¹⁹ Which is good news. Because alongside that judgment—in tandem with it—is deliverance. Verse 5: **The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst**.

Back in Exodus 6, God said that He would deliver Israel from Egypt so that *they* will know that He is Yahweh. But here in Exodus 7, God said that He'll judge Egypt so that the Egyptians will know that He is Yahweh.²⁰ Through judgment, as well as salvation, God makes Himself known.²¹ This is what He's purposed.

¹⁴ So, there's priesthood hinted at in the lineage; and there's prophet delineated in the function.

¹⁵ More broadly, we might say: God is sovereign; *and* man is responsible. If you want more on this, J. I. Packer's *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* is a favorite resource. For more on Pharaoh's hardening, see Romans 9. And for a detailed exposition of Romans 9, including Pharaoh's heart, see John Piper's *The Justification of God*.

¹⁶ Alexander, 145.

¹⁷ Alexander, 143.

¹⁸ See Ross Blackburn, *The God Who Makes Himself Known*.

¹⁹ Alexander, 145.

²⁰ Jim Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgment*, 91.

²¹ Alexander, 145.

Which leads us to our final point. God works through names, to make His Name known, in the *way* He names.

3. In the Way He Names (7:6-7)

We might say, “chooses” or in the way He “purposes.” Verses 6 and 7 form the end of a section, a section that probably began in chapter 3 at the burning bush.²² And, if we zoom out broadly, verse 6 seems to be a turning point for Moses.²³ Verse 6: **So Moses and Aaron did it; as the Lord commanded them, thus they did.**

Now, if we just dropped into our passage today, and were *completely* unaware of what happened before in the narrative, we *might* miss the significance of this sentence. But since we’ve walked with Moses for 11 sermons now, beginning back in the fall, we know his flaws, his shortcomings, his fear.

Moses put that genealogy in there to—in one sense—*turn* the page. Moses was no longer saying, “What can *I myself* do? What am I skilled enough to accomplish?” Now he had more clarity. God Himself would bring all this about; and that’s true even in the particulars. It would all be brought about in His way.

Verse 7 ends: **Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three, when they spoke to Pharaoh.** It’s *almost* as if verse 7 is the conclusion to the genealogy. Levi lived 137 years. Kohath, his son, lived 133 years. Amram also lived 137 years. And when Moses was 80, and Aaron 83, God’s hand would work mightily; and He would do it *through* them.

Conclusion

Of course, His purposes had been working themselves out for generations at this point. And by observing this genealogy, later readers could see this. They could be sure that Moses and Aaron had the right lineage, as it were.

Hebrews 7 actually picks up on this, even on the requirement to be part of the Levitical line to serve as priest. And *then* Hebrews tells us *why* all that existed, why God put it in place. All this existed so that God’s people might be pointed to something better—not merely in *degree*, but in *kind*—pointing us to the One qualified, **not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life** (Heb. 7:16).

So, yes, the Levitical priesthood gave us categories—categories we needed. Yet, those categories are most helpful to the degree they point us to an intercession *not* based on genealogy, nor bound by generation.

The New Testament unpacks this truth repeatedly; in fact, it assumes it. For example, Matthew 1 has a list of names *like* the one in our passage. Luke’s birth narrative has one as well. But, beyond those two lists, the New Testament no longer drives the story forward by a list of begats. Why? Because the One all those names pointed to came and dwelt among us. And when He put on flesh, the need for genealogy ceased.

Jacob had Joseph, who was the husband of Mary, who was the mother of Christ.

²² Stuart, 105. Peter Enns and John Durham agree with this structure.

²³ Alec Motyer says this, in *Exodus*, BST, 95.