

Ezra 1:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem.

Analysis

Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem. This verse identifies the respondents. The phrase 'rose up' (qum) indicates decisive action. Leadership came from Judah and Benjamin—tribes comprising the southern kingdom.

The inclusion of 'priests and Levites' emphasizes the religious nature of the return. These groups had special responsibility for temple service, making their participation essential. Without priestly leadership, temple rebuilding would lack both expertise and spiritual authority.

The crucial phrase 'whose spirit God had raised' uses the same verb applied to Cyrus in verse 1. God's sovereign work operates at two levels—moving pagan rulers and moving His people's hearts. Not everyone returned, showing that despite favorable conditions, spiritual response requires God's work in individual hearts.

Historical Context

The two-generation exile meant many returnees had been born in Babylon and never seen Jerusalem. The 'fathers' (clan leaders) provided connection to pre-exilic tribal structure, maintaining genealogical records that preserved identity. These records became crucial for establishing land rights and priestly credentials.

The prominence of priests and Levites reflected exile community structure. Without temple or sacrificial system, these groups maintained religious identity through Torah study, prayer, and community gathering—patterns that influenced Judaism permanently.

The selective nature of the return created tension that persisted for generations. Those who remained often prospered, establishing significant Jewish communities that produced later leaders like Nehemiah and Esther.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How can believers discern between mere opportunity and genuine divine calling?
2. What does the selective nature of the return teach about varied levels of commitment among God's people?
3. How should churches balance maintenance of tradition with dynamic spiritual renewal?

Interlinear Text

וַיָּקֶם וְמוֹ	כֹּאשִׁי י	הָאָבֻת	לְיְהוּדָה	וּבִנְיָמִן	וְהַכֹּהֲנִים
Then rose up	the chief	of the fathers	of Judah	and Benjamin	and the priests
H6965	H7218	H1	H3063	H1144	H3548
וְהַלְוִיִּם	לְכָל ל	יָעִיר	הָאֱלֹהִים	אֶת	רוּחַ וְ
and the Levites		had raised	God		with all them whose spirit
H3881	H3605	H5782	H430	H853	H7307
לָעֵל וְ	לְבַנּוּ וְ	אֶת	בֵּית יְהוָה	אֲשֶׁר	בִּירוּשָׁלַם:
to go up	to build		the house		of the LORD
H5927	H1129	H853	H1004	H834	H3389
			of the LORD		which is in Jerusalem
			H3068		

Additional Cross-References

Ezra 1:1 (Spirit): Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

2 Corinthians 8:16 (References God): But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you.

Philippians 2:13 (References God): For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.