

Ezra 10:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now therefore make confession unto the LORD God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives.

Analysis

Now therefore make confession unto the LORD God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives. Ezra's address includes three imperatives: confess (tenu todah), do God's pleasure (asu retsono), and separate (hibbadelu). The phrase "**make confession unto the LORD God of your fathers**" requires acknowledging sin specifically to YHWH, the covenant God. Todah (confession) literally means "giving thanks/acknowledgment"—here acknowledging guilt, not expressing gratitude.

"Do his pleasure" (retsono) refers to God's will/delight, using language of relationship and desire. God's "pleasure" isn't arbitrary preference but holy will rooted in His character. The separation He demands flows from His holiness and covenant jealousy. Obedience is framed not as slavish duty but as aligning with what pleases the covenant Lord.

The double separation—"from the people of the land, and from the strange wives"—addresses both general syncretism and specific marriages. "**People of the land**" (ammei ha-aretz) were non-Jewish populations whose religious practices threatened covenant purity. "**Strange wives**" (nashim nokhriyyot) specifically targets foreign women married contrary to Torah. The Hebrew hibbadelu (separate) is the same root used for God's holiness—being set apart, distinct, not mixed. Israel must reflect God's separateness through covenant distinctiveness.

Historical Context

Confession (todah) was essential to covenant restoration (Leviticus 5:5, Joshua 7:19). It meant publicly acknowledging specific sin, not generic admission of imperfection. This confession would have involved admitting they knew the marriages violated Torah but proceeded anyway—confession of knowing disobedience, not innocent mistake.

"People of the land" (am ha-aretz) became a technical term in post-exilic literature for those who hadn't maintained covenant faithfulness during the exile. They may have included Israelites who remained in the land, Samaritans, and various gentile groups. Separating from them didn't mean avoiding all contact but refusing religious syncretism and covenant-violating alliances (like intermarriage).

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does true confession differ from vague admission of "mistakes" or "poor choices"?
2. What does framing obedience as "doing God's pleasure" teach about the nature of the covenant relationship?
3. How should Christians practice separation from the world without becoming isolationist or self-righteous?

Interlinear Text

אָבָתִיךְ מִ אֲלֹהִים	לְיְהוָה	תְּזַדֵּךְ הַ	תְּנַזֵּעַ וְ	וְעַמְּתָה הַ	H6258
Now therefore make	confession	unto the LORD	God	of your fathers	H5414 H8426 H3068 H430 H1
and do	his pleasure	and separate	yourselves from the people	of the land	H6213 H7522 H914 H5971 H776 H4480
wives	and from the strange				H802 H5237
הַנְּשָׁאָתָה					

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 28:13 (Parallel theme): He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

Romans 12:2 (References God): And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Joshua 7:19 (References God): And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me.

Ezra 10:3 (References God): Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law.