

Ezra 10:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing.

Analysis

And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Bani, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. Shechaniah's confession demonstrates covenant awareness. The verb 'trespassed' (ma'alnu, מָעַלְנוּ) indicates breach of trust or faithlessness, not merely rule-breaking. The confession 'we have trespassed against our God' personalizes the offense—sin isn't merely social problem but violation of covenant relationship. The phrase 'strange wives' (nashim nochriyot, נָשִׁים נָכְרִיּוֹת) means 'foreign wives,' specifically pagan women whose religious allegiance threatened Israel's worship.

The crucial phrase 'yet now there is hope' introduces possibility of restoration despite sin. The Hebrew yesh miqwah (יש מִקְוָה) means 'there exists hope' or 'there is ground for hope,' suggesting that confession creates opportunity for remedy. Hope doesn't minimize sin but trusts God's covenant mercy to restore upon repentance. This balanced theology acknowledges sin's severity while affirming God's gracious willingness to forgive and restore genuinely repentant sinners.

Theologically, this verse illustrates the gospel pattern: acknowledging sin precedes experiencing grace. Shechaniah didn't excuse ('everyone does it') or minimize ('it's not that bad') but confessed fully while trusting divine mercy. This models

Reformed understanding that genuine repentance includes both contrition (sorrow over sin) and faith (trust in God's forgiveness). Hope exists not because sin is minor but because God is merciful.

Historical Context

Intermarriage with Canaanites had been Israel's recurring sin throughout its history. The pattern appears in Judges repeatedly: Israelites marry Canaanites, adopt idolatry, suffer oppression, cry out, and experience deliverance—only to repeat the cycle. The post-exilic community faced the same temptation despite having just returned from exile caused partly by this very sin (Ezra 9:7).

The stringent response to mixed marriages (dissolving them, Ezra 10:3) seems harsh to modern readers but reflected survival necessity. The community was small, vulnerable, and surrounded by paganism. Compromise would lead to assimilation and loss of covenant identity. The issue wasn't ethnic purity but religious faithfulness. Converts to Judaism could and did join Israel (Ezra 6:21), but syncretistic marriages threatened the community's survival.

Shechaniah's willingness to lead confession despite personal cost (his own family included violators, Ezra 10:26) demonstrated courage and covenant loyalty. His leadership helped transform a crisis into a renewal opportunity, showing how individuals can catalyze corporate repentance when they prioritize God's honor over personal comfort or family loyalty.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Shechaniah's confession model the balance between acknowledging sin's severity and trusting God's mercy?

- What does the phrase 'yet now there is hope' teach about the possibility of restoration after serious covenant violation?
- How can churches cultivate cultures where confession leads to hope rather than mere condemnation?

Interlinear Text

וַיַּעֲשֵׂה	מִבְנֵי	יְחִיאָה	לְמִבְנֵי	שְׁכָנִי	הַמְבָנִי	וְעַלְםָן
answered	And Shechaniah	one of the sons	of Jehiel	one of the sons	of Elam	
H6030	H7935	H1121	H3171	H1121	H5867	
בְּאֶלְהָהָ יָנוּ	מִעַד	לְנַעֲצָה	אָבִן	חָנוּ	לְנַעֲצָה	אָמַר
and said	unto Ezra		H587		We have trespassed	against our God
H559	H5830				H4603	H430
וְעַתָּה	הַ	בְּאֶלְהָהָ	כִּי	מִעַמָּה	וְתִּשְׁבַּחַת	
and have taken	wives	strange	of the people	of the land		H6258
H3427	H802	H5237	H5971	H776		
וְעַתָּה	עַל	לִישְׁרָאֵל	לְמִקְדֵּם	הַ	יְשָׁרָאֵל	
yet now there is	hope	in Israel				H2063
H3426	H4723	H3478				

Additional Cross-References

Nehemiah 13:27 (References God): Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God in marrying strange wives?

Ezra 9:2 (Parallel theme): For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass.

Exodus 34:12 (Parallel theme): Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee:

