

Ezra 10:36

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib,

Analysis

Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib. These names appear in the painful roster of men who married foreign wives, violating the covenant command against intermarriage with pagan nations (Ezra 9:1-2). Each name carries theological irony: Vaniah ('Yahweh is worthy'), Meremoth ('elevations/heights'), Eliashib ('God restores'). Their names testified to covenant identity even as their marriages compromised it.

The stark listing without narrative detail emphasizes the gravity of covenant violation. These weren't anonymous statistics but named individuals whose sin threatened community holiness. The Hebrew simply lists names (shêmôth), creating a solemn registry of guilt. This public documentation served both accountability and deterrence—future generations would know who compromised the restoration.

Theologically, this demonstrates that covenant membership brings heightened responsibility. Those whose very names proclaimed Yahweh's character faced greater accountability for compromising His standards. The list preserves both divine justice (naming the guilty) and mercy (opportunity for repentance through divorce).

Historical Context

This list concludes Ezra's reform (458-457 BC) addressing the crisis of mixed marriages. The problem was spiritual, not ethnic—marriage to pagan women threatened to reintroduce idolatry that had caused the original exile. Ezra 9:1

specifies marriages to Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians, and Amorites—the very nations Israel was commanded to avoid (Deuteronomy 7:1-4).

The investigation took three months (Ezra 10:16-17), examining each case individually. This wasn't hasty judgment but careful adjudication. Of approximately 30,000 returnees, 113 men were found guilty (less than 0.4%), showing most maintained covenant fidelity despite exile's pressures.

The requirement to divorce foreign wives and their children appears harsh by modern standards but reflects ancient Near Eastern understanding that religious identity passed through family lines. Mixed marriages created syncretistic households teaching children polytheistic worship.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How do believers balance grace toward individual failures with maintaining corporate holiness?
2. What does the public naming of covenant violators teach about accountability versus anonymity in church discipline?
3. How should contemporary Christians apply principles of separation from worldliness without legalistic xenophobia?

Interlinear Text

אֶלְיָשִׁיב: מְרֵמֹת וְנִיָּה

Vaniah

H2057

Meremoth

H4822

Eliashib

H475

