

Ezra 10:42

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Shallum, Amariah, and Joseph.

Analysis

Shallum, Amariah, and Joseph—שָׁלָל (Shallum, 'the rewarded one' or 'peaceful'), אָמְרֵיה (Amaryah, 'Yahweh has said/promised'), יוֹסֵף (Yosef, 'he will add'—the patriarch Joseph's name). The continuation of the list maintains the pattern: brief enumeration without editorial comment, allowing the names themselves to testify. Joseph is particularly poignant—bearing the name of Israel's deliverer who remained faithful in pagan Egypt (Genesis 39:9: 'How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?'), yet this Joseph compromised through forbidden marriage.

The brevity of verses 41-43 (just listing names) reflects the list's function as legal record rather than narrative. Yet each name represents a family crisis: a man divorcing his wife and sending away children born to her (v. 44). Modern readers struggle with this seemingly harsh measure, but the text insists it was necessary to preserve Israel's theological identity as Yahweh's holy people, set apart from the nations (Leviticus 20:26). The alternative—assimilation through intermarriage—would erase Israel's distinct witness and nullify God's covenant purposes.

Historical Context

The dismissal of foreign wives and their children (10:3, 10:44) appears harsh by modern standards but addressed existential threat to post-exilic Israel's survival. The community was small (perhaps 50,000 total), economically struggling, and surrounded by hostile neighbors. Mixed marriages threatened to replay the pre-exilic apostasy that provoked Babylonian judgment—Solomon's foreign wives

turned his heart to idols (1 Kings 11:1-8), and widespread intermarriage contributed to Israel's covenant unfaithfulness (Malachi 2:11-12). The covenant renewal, though traumatic, was necessary amputation to prevent gangrene from destroying the body.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How should modern readers understand OT covenant purity laws without either dismissing them as irrelevant or misapplying them to the church?
2. What does the tragic irony of 'Joseph' (named for a model of faithfulness) compromising teach about presuming on spiritual heritage?
3. In what ways does the church face similar tensions between cultural engagement and maintaining distinct theological identity?

Interlinear Text

יְהֹוָה אֶמְרָא הַשְׁלָמָה

Shallum **Amariah** **and Joseph**

H7967

H568

H3130

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