

Ezra 10:44

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

All these had taken strange wives: and some of them had wives by whom they had children.

Analysis

All these had taken strange wives—כָּל־עֵלֶּה נָשָׂאוּ נָכְרִיּוֹת (kol-eleh nasu nashim nokriyyot, all these had taken/married foreign/strange women). The נָשָׂא (take/marry) is the same verb used in marriage formulae throughout the OT (Genesis 4:19, 6:2, 11:29). The נָכְרִיּוֹת (foreign women) doesn't merely indicate ethnicity but religious affiliation—women who worshiped other gods, making marriages theological compromise, not mere cultural diversity. Deuteronomy 7:3-4 explicitly forbade such marriages because 'they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods.'

And some of them had wives by whom they had children—וַיֵּשׁ מֵהֶם נָשִׁים וַיַּיָּאִסֻּם בָּנִים (v'yesh mehem nashim vayyasimu banim, and there were among them wives, and they had produced children). This brief clause carries immense pathos: the covenant renewal required not just divorcing foreign wives but sending away their children (10:3: 'let us make a covenant with our God to send away all these wives and those born to them'). Modern readers recoil at this apparent cruelty, yet the text insists covenant purity took precedence even over natural affection. The fathers' sin (forbidden marriage) shouldn't have permanent consequences compromising Israel's covenant identity. The children born to these unions represented ongoing connection to paganism that threatened the community's theological integrity. The truncated ending (no resolution statement, no celebration) leaves the book on somber note: covenant faithfulness sometimes requires agonizing sacrifice.

Historical Context

Ezra's book ends abruptly, without typical biblical closure formulae, perhaps because the crisis was fresh and painful, or because the book's purpose was accomplished—documenting the covenant renewal and listing those who complied. The dismissal of wives and children appears harsh but must be understood in Israel's unique covenantal context as God's chosen people through whom Messiah would come. Preserving theological purity wasn't ethnic bigotry but missionary necessity—Israel existed to witness to Yahweh's uniqueness (Deuteronomy 4:6-8). The painful measures taken in Ezra 10 enabled Israel's survival to produce Mary, who would bear Jesus Christ. The genealogy of Matthew 1 (spanning this very period) shows God's preservation of the Messianic line through the remnant's costly faithfulness.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How should Christians read OT covenant purity laws that seem harsh, recognizing Israel's unique role in redemptive history?
2. What does the book's abrupt ending without resolution suggest about the painful cost of covenant faithfulness?
3. In what ways did Israel's preservation through this crisis enable the Messiah's coming, validating the community's costly obedience?

Interlinear Text

כָּל	אֵלֶּה	נָשָׂא וְ	נָשִׁים	נִכְרִי וְ	וְ
H3605	H428	All these had taken	wives	strange	and some of them had
		H5375	H802	H5237	H3426
מֵהֶם	נָשִׁים	וּבְשֵׁם יְמוֹ	בָּנִים:		
H1992	wives	by whom they had	children		
	H802	H7760	H1121		

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