

Ezra 10:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And that whosoever would not come within three days, according to the counsel of the princes and the elders, all his substance should be forfeited, and himself separated from the congregation of those that had been carried away.

Analysis

And that whosoever would not come within three days, according to the counsel of the princes and the elders, all his substance should be forfeited, and himself separated from the congregation of those that had been carried away. The decree includes severe penalties: property confiscation (yochoram, "devoted/forfeited") and excommunication (yibbadel, "separated"). These twin sanctions address material and communal belonging. **"All his substance should be forfeited"** meant economic devastation—losing land, livestock, and possessions. **"Separated from the congregation"** meant exclusion from covenant community, temple worship, and social identity.

The three-day deadline demonstrates urgency. Some would need to travel significant distances, making this timeframe deliberately tight. The harshness aimed to compel attendance and signal the issue's seriousness. This wasn't punishing the offense itself (which would come later) but enforcing participation in the adjudication process. Refusing to appear meant refusing covenant accountability itself.

The phrase **"according to the counsel of the princes and the elders"** shows this wasn't Ezra's unilateral decree but collective leadership decision. The returned community's governance structure combined religious (priests/Levites)

and civil (princes/elders) authority. This united front made defying the summons tantamount to rejecting all legitimate authority, both secular and sacred.

Historical Context

Property forfeiture was recognized in ancient Near Eastern law as penalty for various offenses. The right to confiscate property derived from Ezra's Persian-granted authority (Ezra 7:26). Excommunication from the congregation carried both religious and social consequences—exclusion from temple worship, festivals, and the covenant community's economic and social networks.

The three-day timeframe (verse 9 shows compliance) indicates the population lived relatively close to Jerusalem. Most settlements were within a day's journey. The rainy season (verse 9) would have made travel difficult, yet the deadline remained firm. This severity reflects how existentially the leadership viewed the crisis.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What does the severity of these penalties teach about how seriously covenant community should treat corporate sin?
2. How do material consequences (property loss) combined with spiritual consequences (excommunication) address whole-person accountability?
3. Where is the line between appropriate church discipline and abusive authoritarian control?

Interlinear Text

וְכָל אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָבֹא לְשֵׁל שְׁתֵּי יָמִים
H3605 H834 H3808 H935 H7969 H3117
And that whosoever would not come within three days

כְּעֵצַת הַשָּׂרִים וְהַזִּקְנִים יִחָרֵם כָּל
H6098 H8269 H2205 H2763 H3605
according to the counsel of the princes and the elders should be forfeited

כָּל כֹּשֶׁתוֹ וְהָיָה וְיָבֵד לְמִקְוֵה לְ
H7399 H1931 H914 H6951
all his substance and himself separated from the congregation

הַגּוֹלָה:
H1473
of those that had been carried away

Additional Cross-References

Ezra 7:26 (Parallel theme): And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.