

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

Psalm 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

לֹא	אָשָׁר	רַכְבָּל	וְבָרָא	שְׁתִּים	לְשָׁלֵל	שְׁתִּים	בְּמִים
H3605	H834	H3808	And that whosoever would not come	H935	within three	H7969	days
							H3117
כְּלָל	יְחִיבּוּ	מִפְזְּקָה	יְמִינָה	פְּנִים	כְּלָל	יְחִיבּוּ	מִפְזְּקָה
according to the counsel	of the princes	and the elders	should be forfeited	H2205	H2763	H3605	
H6098	H8269						
מִקְרָבּוּ	לְ	וְבָרָא	רַכְבָּל	וְהַ	מִקְרָבּוּ	לְ	מִקְרָבּוּ
all his substance	H1931	and himself separated	from the congregation	H914	H6951		
H7399							
הַגּוֹלָה:							
of those that had been carried away	H1473						

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.

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