

Ezra 2:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and three.

Analysis

The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and three. The family of Bebai (בִּבְי) bears a name of uncertain etymology, possibly meaning 'my hollows' or derived from an Aramaic root suggesting 'fatherly.' The obscurity of the name's precise meaning reminds us that not all biblical details come with clear explanations—God's people include those whose origins are somewhat mysterious, yet whose covenant commitment is certain. Their 623 members demonstrated substantial family unit maintaining identity through captivity.

Bebai appears in post-exilic records alongside Bani, Zaccai, and others, suggesting these families formed core leadership in Babylon's Jewish community. Ezra 8:11 records another Bebai descendant (Zechariah son of Bebai) who later led 28 additional family members in the second return under Ezra himself, showing continued commitment across decades. Nehemiah 10:15 lists Bebai among those sealing covenant renewal, confirming their leadership role.

Theologically, the recurring appearance of Bebai family across multiple restoration phases teaches that God's work often spans generations. This family participated in the initial return (538 BC), Ezra's return (458 BC), and covenant renewal under Nehemiah (445 BC)—nearly a century of sustained faithfulness. This multigenerational commitment models biblical vision for family discipleship extending across time.

Historical Context

The Bebai family's participation in multiple waves of return suggests they maintained strong connections between Jerusalem and Babylon. Some family members returned initially while others remained, creating network that facilitated later migrations. This pattern was common—many Jews established themselves in both locations, maintaining ties across the empire.

The detailed genealogical records preserved through multiple returns demonstrate sophisticated record-keeping. Scribal families maintained these documents through travel, resettlement, and social upheaval—remarkable testament to commitment to identity and history.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What does Bebai's participation across three major restoration phases teach about generational faithfulness?
2. How should families today cultivate spiritual commitment that extends beyond single generation?
3. What value does genealogical precision have for understanding God's work in history?

Interlinear Text

בְּנֵי י	בְּבֵי י	שֵׁשׁ	מֵאֹת	עֶשְׂרִים	וּשְׁלֹשָׁה:
The children	of Bebai	six	hundred	twenty	and three
H1121	H893	H8337	H3967	H6242	H7969

