

Ezra 2:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety and eight.

Analysis

The children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety and eight. This entry identifies returnees from Ater's family, specifically **of Hezekiah** (חִזְקִיָּה, Chizqiyah, 'Yahweh strengthens'). The name Ater (אָטֶר, Ater, 'bound' or 'shut') contrasts with Hezekiah's meaning—spiritual bondage versus divine strengthening. The genealogical specification distinguishes this Ater from another family with the same name (verse 42), showing careful differentiation in record-keeping.

The association with Hezekiah's name evoked Judah's reformer-king who cleansed the temple, celebrated Passover, and trusted God against Assyrian invasion (2 Kings 18-20). Families bearing such names carried legacy expectations—they descended from or associated with righteous leadership. Names weren't arbitrary labels but identity markers connecting present generations to covenant history.

The relatively small size (98 members) didn't diminish significance. Zerubbabel's leadership of the entire return came from small family stock. God's economy values faithful remnants over compromised multitudes. Every family willing to abandon Babylonian comfort for uncertain restoration contributed to prophetic fulfillment.

Historical Context

The qualifier 'of Hezekiah' likely indicates descent from or association with the royal line, as Hezekiah was Judah's king (715-686 BC). Royal genealogies maintained special status even after monarchy's end, preserving Davidic line

through which Messiah would come. Jesus's genealogy (Matthew 1, Luke 3) depends on such careful record-keeping.

Small families faced particular challenges in ancient agrarian society. Without large kinship networks, they lacked economic safety nets and political influence. Yet their return demonstrated that covenant commitment transcended pragmatic calculation. They risked everything for promises, not prosperity—the essence of biblical faith.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How do family names and legacies shape spiritual identity and expectations for faithfulness?
2. What does the preservation of royal genealogy through exile teach about God's long-term kingdom purposes?
3. How can small congregations or ministries resist discouragement and embrace God's valuing of faithful remnants?

Interlinear Text

The children	of Ater	of Hezekiah	ninety	and eight
H1121	H333	H3169	H8673	H8083

וְשָׁמְנָה: תָּשִׁע עִם לִיחִזְקִי ה אֶת ר בָּנָי

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