

Ezra 2:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two.

Analysis

The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two. The family of Shephatiah (שֶׁפְּטָחִיָּה) bears a name meaning 'Yahweh has judged' or 'Yahweh is judge,' embodying theological testimony to God's justice and sovereignty. This name would resonate powerfully for exiles who had experienced divine judgment through captivity yet now witnessed God's merciful restoration. Their 372 members represented substantial family unit maintaining faith identity across generations.

The smaller number compared to Parosh doesn't indicate lesser significance—God values faithfulness over size. The Hebrew naming convention using divine name (Yah) testified to covenant relationship even during exile. Families preserving such names resisted Babylonian pressure to adopt pagan identities, like Daniel and his friends who maintained Hebrew names despite Babylonian renaming.

The parallel in Nehemiah 7:9 confirms this exact count, demonstrating historical precision. Each numbered individual chose to abandon established life in Mesopotamia for uncertain future in Judah—a decision requiring faith that God's presence in Jerusalem outweighed material security in Babylon.

Historical Context

Shephatiah was a common name in pre-exilic Judah, appearing in royal genealogies (2 Samuel 3:4—David's son) and among officials (Jeremiah 38:1). The family likely traced lineage to prominent ancestors, maintaining social structure

through exile. Persian administration would have recognized such clan leaders as intermediaries between imperial authority and Jewish community.

The preservation of family records through captivity required intentional effort. Without land or temple, genealogies became primary markers of identity and legitimacy. Scribal families maintained these records, a practice that influenced later Jewish emphasis on Torah study and textual preservation.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How do Christian families today maintain faith identity across generations in secular cultures?
2. What does the name 'Yahweh has judged' teach about embracing both divine justice and mercy?
3. Why might God emphasize numerical precision in recording returning families?

Interlinear Text

וּשְׁנַיִם:	שִׁבְעֵי יָמִים	מֵאָה וְ	שָׁלֹשׁ	שְׁפַטְיָה	בְּנֵי י
and two	seventy	hundred	three	of Shephatiah	The children
H8147	H7657	H3967	H7969	H8203	H1121

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