

Ezra 2:41

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The singers: the children of Asaph, an hundred twenty and eight.

Analysis

The singers: the children of Asaph, an hundred twenty and eight (הַמְשֹׁרְרִים) (מְשֹׁרְרֵי אֲסָפָה)—The term meshorerim (singers) designates temple musicians, with Asaph (אֲסָפָה, 'collector/gatherer') being David's chief musician who authored 12 psalms (Psalms 50, 73-83). That 128 singers returned—nearly double the 74 Levites—demonstrates worship's priority in restoration. Music wasn't auxiliary but essential to rebuilding spiritual infrastructure.

Asaph's Psalms often deal with national crisis, theodicy, and covenant faithfulness—perfectly suited for the return generation's struggles. These 128 singers carried not just musical skill but theological memory, teaching theology through song. Their prominence in the list (mentioned before gatekeepers) reflects worship's primacy. Jesus later quoted Asaph's Psalm 78:2 (Matthew 13:35), connecting Israel's past deliverance to Messiah's teaching—these singers preserved the very traditions through which God would reveal His Son.

Historical Context

David established Asaph and his descendants as perpetual temple musicians (1 Chronicles 25:1-2), with Asaph serving as chief cymbal-player and seer (2 Chronicles 29:30). The family maintained their calling through exile, remarkably preserving musical and poetic traditions without a functioning temple. Their return ratio (128 singers vs. 74 Levites) suggests music's importance to exilic worship in Babylonian synagogues.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What does the singers' prominence (128 vs. 74 Levites) teach about worship's role in spiritual restoration efforts?
2. How did Asaph's descendants preserve their musical and theological heritage through 70 years without a temple—and what does that suggest about worship's independence from buildings?
3. In what ways does theology communicated through song (Asaph's Psalms) shape communities more effectively than mere instruction?

Interlinear Text

הַמְשִׁיחִים יִם	בְּנֵי י	אֲסָפִי	מֵאָה	עֶשְׂרִים יִם	וּשְׁמֹנֶה:
The singers	the children	of Asaph	an hundred	twenty	and eight
H7891	H1121	H623	H3967	H6242	H8083

Additional Cross-References

1 Chronicles 6:39 (Parallel theme): And his brother Asaph, who stood on his right hand, even Asaph the son of Berachiah, the son of Shimea,