

Ezra 2:42

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The children of the porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Ater, the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of Hatita, the children of Shobai, in all an hundred thirty and nine.

Analysis

The children of the porters (בְּנֵי הַשְּׁעָרִים)—The term sho'arim (gatekeepers/doorkeepers) describes those guarding temple entrances, controlling access to sacred space. Six families are named—Shallum ('recompense'), Ater ('bound/shut'), Talmon ('oppressor'), Akkub ('insidious/cunning'), Hatita ('exploring'), and Shobai ('captor')—totaling 139 gatekeepers. These names ironically describe barriers and restraints, fitting for those who managed boundaries between holy and common.

Gatekeepers determined who entered God's presence, making them guardians of holiness. Their role anticipates Christ as 'the door' (John 10:9)—the ultimate Gatekeeper who grants access to the Father. The specific enumeration of six families (vs. Asaph's single family of singers) suggests specialized gate assignments. First Chronicles 9:22 notes David and Samuel established this office 'in their set office'—showing gatekeeping's prophetic origins and enduring importance for regulating worship access.

Historical Context

Gatekeepers guarded temple entrances day and night (1 Chronicles 9:23-27), managing temple treasuries, sacred vessels, and controlling who could enter which courts. During the monarchy they numbered 4,000 (1 Chronicles 23:5),

making the return of only 139 a drastic reduction—requiring longer shifts and harder work. Their low numbers meant each gatekeeper bore greater responsibility for maintaining sanctuary boundaries.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What does the gatekeeper role—controlling access to sacred space—teach about the importance of boundaries in spiritual life and church discipline?
2. How do the gatekeepers' names (describing barriers and restraints) reflect the necessary 'negative' function of excluding what defiles holiness?
3. In what ways does Christ as 'the door' both fulfill and transform the gatekeepers' function—making access both more exclusive (only through Him) and more universal (to all who believe)?

Interlinear Text

בְּנֵי י	הַשָּׁעָרִים	בְּנֵי י	שָׁל וֹם	בְּנֵי י	אֶטֶר
The children	of the porters	The children	of Shallum	The children	of Ater
H1121	H7778	H1121	H7967	H1121	H333
בְּנֵי י	טַלְמֹן	בְּנֵי י	עַק וֹב	בְּנֵי י	חֲטִיטָּא
The children	of Talmon	The children	of Akkub	The children	of Hatita
H1121	H2929	H1121	H6126	H1121	H2410
בְּנֵי י	שׁוֹבַי	הַכֹּל	יָמָא הַ	שְׁלֹשִׁים	וְתִשְׁעָה:
The children	of Shobai	H3605	in all an hundred	thirty	and nine
H1121	H7630		H3967	H7970	H8672

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