

Ezra 2:46

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The children of Hagab, the children of Shalmi, the children of Hanan,

Analysis

The children of Hagab, the children of Shalmi, the children of Hanan—The Nethinim census continues with three additional families. **Hagab** (חָגַב, hagab)—related to Hagabah in verse 45—again means "locust" or "grasshopper," reinforcing the theme of smallness and humility. The repetition of locust-related names among Nethinim suggests either a common ancestral event or self-identification with humility before God.

Shalmi (שָׁלְמִי, possibly from shalom, "peace" or "recompense") carries positive connotations. That a servant family bore a name meaning peace suggests their role brought rest to others—their labor freed priests and Levites for higher duties, creating shalom (wholeness, completeness) in temple function. **Hanan** (חָנַן, from chanan, "gracious" or "he has shown favor") directly references divine grace. That Nethinim families carried names celebrating God's favor demonstrates their integration into Israel's theological life despite foreign ancestry.

The juxtaposition of "locust" (smallness, insignificance) with "gracious" (divine favor) encapsulates gospel paradox: God delights to show favor to the small, overlooked, and humble. These names preach theology—the Nethinim embodied truth that "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5).

Historical Context

The clustering of locust-related names (Hagabah, Hagab) among Nethinim families may indicate a specific historical event when a group entered temple service, or it may reflect the community's theological self-understanding. Ancient naming conventions often reflected circumstances at birth or later life-defining moments. Families could adopt names expressing their spiritual identity.

Hanan was a common name in post-exilic period, appearing among priests, Levites, and laypeople (Nehemiah 8:7; 10:10; 13:13). That Nethinim shared names with other Israelite groups demonstrates social integration despite distinct service roles. The returnees functioned as unified community, not rigidly separated castes. This unity enabled effective temple reconstruction and worship restoration.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What does the pairing of 'locust' and 'gracious' names teach about God's character in showing favor to the humble and small?
2. How can modern believers cultivate the Nethinim's attitude of finding dignity in humble service rather than seeking recognition and status?
3. What does the shared use of common Israelite names across service classes teach about biblical community and the breaking down of social barriers in God's household?

Interlinear Text

בְּנֵי	חֶגֶב	בְּנֵי	שְׁמַי	בְּנֵי	חֲנָן:
The children	of Hagab	The children	of Shalmay	The children	of Hanan
H1121	H2285	H1121	H8073	H1121	H2605

