

Ezra 2:68

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And some of the chief of the fathers, when they came to the house of the LORD which is at Jerusalem, offered freely for the house of God to set it up in his place:

Analysis

Voluntary Offerings for God's House

This verse captures a remarkable moment of sacrificial generosity: the leaders (roshei ha'avot, "heads of the fathers") giving freely (hitnaddavu—from the root nadav, meaning "to volunteer" or "offer willingly") for the rebuilding of the temple. The phrase "offered freely" emphasizes the spontaneous, cheerful nature of their giving—not compelled by law but motivated by love for God's house.

The location is significant: "when they came to the house of the LORD which is at Jerusalem." Though the temple lay in ruins after Babylonian destruction (586 BC), the site itself remained holy. Standing on the desolate temple mount, these leaders envisioned restoration and opened their treasuries. Their goal was clear: "to set it up in his place" (lehaamido al-mekono), restoring God's dwelling to its proper location.

This voluntary giving prefigures the New Testament principle that God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7). These leaders didn't wait for a building program or fundraising campaign; confronted with the ruined house of God, they immediately responded with generosity. Their example demonstrates that material resources become sacred when dedicated to establishing God's presence among His people.

Historical Context

The First Return from Babylonian Exile

Ezra 2 records the historic return of Jewish exiles under Zerubbabel's leadership in 538 BC, following Cyrus the Great's decree permitting the rebuilding of Jerusalem's temple (Ezra 1:1-4). Approximately 50,000 people made the arduous 900-mile journey from Babylon to Jerusalem, arriving to find their ancestral city in ruins after nearly 50 years of desolation.

The temple, Solomon's magnificent structure destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC, had been the center of Jewish worship and national identity. Its destruction symbolized God's judgment and Israel's exile. Now, standing before the ruined site, the returning leaders faced an overwhelming reconstruction task. Their voluntary offerings (detailed in verse 69 as 61,000 drams of gold and 5,000 pounds of silver) demonstrated faith that God would restore what had been lost. This moment parallels other Scripture passages where leaders give first—like David's contributions for the temple (1 Chronicles 29:1-9)—inspiring the people to follow their example of generous worship.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What motivated these leaders to give freely when they themselves were returning from exile with limited resources?
2. How does their immediate generosity upon seeing the ruined temple challenge our own responses to God's work?
3. Why is voluntary giving more pleasing to God than compulsory contributions?
4. What does it mean to establish God's house 'in his place' both physically and spiritually in our lives today?

5. How can church leaders today model sacrificial generosity that inspires others to support God's work?

Interlinear Text

וּמְרָאֵשִׁי בְּבֹא מִקָּבֵב וְתִבְאֵת יְהִי הַלְּבָב יְהִי
 And some of the chief of the fathers when they came for the house of the LORD
 H7218 H1 H935 H1004 H3068

אֲשֶׁר בַּיְרֹשֶׁלְמִן הַתְּנִדְבָּר לְבִבְאֵת יְהִי אֱלֹהֵים
 which is at Jerusalem offered freely for the house of God
 H834 H3389 H5068 H1004 H430

לְפָעֵמִיד וְעַל מִכְלָנוֹן
 to set it up in his place
 H5975 H5921 H4349

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 9:7 (References God): Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

Exodus 36:3 (Parallel theme): And they received of Moses all the offering, which the children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of the sanctuary, to make it withal. And they brought yet unto him free offerings every morning.

Exodus 35:29 (References Lord): The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the LORD, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work, which the LORD had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses.

2 Corinthians 8:3 (Parallel theme): For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;