

Ezra 4:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Asnappar brought over, and set in the cities of Samaria, and the rest that are on this side the river, and at such a time.

Analysis

And the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Asnappar brought over, and set in the cities of Samaria, and the rest that are on this side the river, and at such a time. This verse concludes the coalition listing by referencing 'Asnappar,' likely Ashurbanipal (669-627 BC), the last great Assyrian king. The respectful title 'great and noble' reflects Persian diplomatic practice when referencing previous imperial powers, but also ironically acknowledges the imperial policies that created this problematic situation. Ashurbanipal's deportations continued Assyrian strategies of breaking ethnic cohesion through forced resettlement.

The phrase 'cities of Samaria' identifies the geographic center of opposition. Samaria was once Israel's northern kingdom capital, but now housed a mixed population hostile to Judah's restoration. 'On this side the river' refers to the Trans-Euphrates province (Abar Nahara), the Persian administrative district including Syria, Phoenicia, and Palestine. This vast region's diverse populations all endorsed the letter, magnifying its apparent weight.

The closing phrase 'at such a time' serves as a conventional epistolary formula (like 'sincerely' in modern letters). However, it also emphasizes the letter's official, formal character. Every element—from coalition breadth to diplomatic courtesy—was calculated to maximize credibility and influence the king toward anti-Jewish policy.

Historical Context

Ashurbanipal was one of Assyria's most powerful rulers, known for both military might and cultural patronage (he established a famous library at Nineveh). His deportation policies continued those of predecessors like Sargon II and Sennacherib. By Ezra's time, these deportations had occurred over a century earlier, yet their consequences persisted in creating a hostile, mixed population in Samaria.

The Trans-Euphrates province (Abar Nahara) was one of several satrapies into which Persia divided its empire. Judah was a minor district within this larger province, placing the Jewish community under provincial authorities who often proved hostile. This administrative structure meant local opposition could invoke broader provincial and imperial concerns, as this letter demonstrates.

The layered administrative structure—from local opponents through provincial officials to the imperial center—created multiple levels where God's work faced potential obstruction. The returnees needed divine favor not just locally but at every governmental level. This political complexity made their vulnerable position even more precarious.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How do past injustices and systemic problems create present obstacles to God's work?
2. What wisdom is needed to address entrenched opposition rooted in long-standing structural realities?
3. How should Christians navigate complex situations where historical wrongs affect current ministry?

Interlinear Text

וְשָׁאָר	אֲמֵי א	דִּי	הַגְּלִי	אַסְנַפָּר	רַב א	וְלִקְיָא א
And the rest	of the nations	whom	brought over	Asnappar	the great	and noble
H7606	H524	H1768	H1541	H620	H7229	H3358
וְשָׁאָר	וְהוֹת ב	בְּקִרְיָה	דִּי	שְׁמֹכַיִן		
and set	H1994	in the cities	whom	of Samaria	And the rest	
H3488		H7149	H1768	H8115	H7606	
עַבְרָא	נַהֲרָה	וּכְעֵת:				
that are on this side	the river	and at such a time				
H5675	H5103	H3706				

Additional Cross-References

Ezra 4:17 (Parallel theme): Then sent the king an answer unto Rehum the chancellor, and to Shimshai the scribe, and to the rest of their companions that dwell in Samaria, and unto the rest beyond the river, Peace, and at such a time.

Ezra 7:12 (Parallel theme): Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect peace, and at such a time.

Ezra 4:11 (Parallel theme): This is the copy of the letter that they sent unto him, even unto Artaxerxes the king; Thy servants the men on this side the river, and at such a time.