

Ezra 7:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and of his priests and Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own freewill to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee.

Analysis

The decree—"I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and of his priests and Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their free will to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee"—grants permission for voluntary emigration. The phrase 'of their free will' emphasizes that participation must be voluntary, not coerced. This respects human agency while providing divine authorization and imperial permission. True spiritual response requires willing hearts, not forced compliance.

Historical Context

By 458 BC, most Jews had lived in Babylon for three or four generations. Many had established successful lives, businesses, and community ties. Artaxerxes' permission allowed but didn't require return. Approximately 1,500 men responded (Ezra 8:1-14)—a small fraction of Babylon's Jewish population. This selective response demonstrates that genuine faith requires costly choice. Those who went abandoned security for uncertainty, showing faith in God's promises over present comfort.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What does the voluntary nature of return teach about authentic faith versus cultural or coerced religious affiliation?
2. How does the small response demonstrate that true discipleship requires costly choice, not just convenient participation?

Interlinear Text

מִתְנַצֵּב כִּי יְמִינֵךְ
that all which are minded of their own freewill
H1768 H3606 H5069

בְּמַלְכָּתִי וְהַמְּלָכָה וְהַמְּלָכָה
in my realm I the people of Israel and of his priests and Levites go
H4437 H4481 H5972 H3479 H3549 H3879 H1946

לִירוּשָׁלָם עִמָּךְ יְמִינְךָ
to Jerusalem with thee go
H3390 H5974 H1946

Additional Cross-References

Ezra 6:1 (Parallel theme): Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in the house of the rolls, where the treasures were laid up in Babylon.

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