

Ezra 8:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And of the sons of Bebai; Zechariah the son of Bebai, and with him twenty and eight males.

Analysis

And of the sons of Bebai; Zechariah the son of Bebai, and with him twenty and eight males. The Bebai family contributed the smallest contingent—just twenty-eight males (likely 70-80 people total). Yet Scripture records them with equal dignity as families bringing hundreds. Zechariah means 'Yahweh remembers,' a profound confession that God doesn't forget His covenant despite exile's apparent abandonment. The repetition 'Zechariah son of Bebai' from 'sons of Bebai' creates emphasis—this Zechariah represented Bebai's direct lineage, perhaps suggesting leadership responsibility.

The small number—twenty-eight—might reflect various factors: family size, economic constraints limiting who could afford the journey, age demographics (fewer men of traveling age), or simply fewer who chose costly obedience. Whatever the cause, God's kingdom values their contribution equally with larger families. The widow's mite principle operates here: faithfulness matters more than magnitude. Twenty-eight men leaving Babylonian security for Jerusalem's uncertainty demonstrated genuine faith.

That the smallest family receives equal textual space as the largest teaches crucial theology: God's economy doesn't measure worth by worldly metrics. The twenty-eight males from Bebai mattered as much as Shechaniah's three hundred. Each family, regardless of size, contributed to covenant community's restoration. Kingdom work needs both the prominent and the seemingly insignificant.

Historical Context

Bebai's family sent 623 with Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:11), making the twenty-eight males with Ezra a sharp reduction. This dramatic decrease (from 623 to 28) illustrates how second-generation commitment often wanes. Those born in Babylon lacked firsthand exile memory and felt less urgency about return. The small number also highlights that Ezra's mission, while divinely ordained, wasn't universally embraced—most Jews chose to remain in Babylon's relative comfort.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does Zechariah's name ('Yahweh remembers') encourage believers feeling forgotten or abandoned in difficult seasons?
2. What does Scripture's equal treatment of Bebai's 28 males and Shechaniah's 300 teach about God's kingdom values versus worldly metrics of success?

Interlinear Text

וְעַמְּךָ	בְּבָיִ	בְּנֵי	זְכָרֵי	הָ	בְּנֵי	וְעַמְּךָ
And of the sons	of Bebai	Zechariah	And of the sons	of Bebai		
H1121	H893	H2148	H1121	H893		H5973

בְּנֵי	זְכָרִים:	וְשָׁמְנָה	הָ	עִשְׂרֵה	יָמִ
and with him twenty	and eight	males			
H6242	H8083	H2145			

Additional Cross-References

Ezra 10:28 (Parallel theme): Of the sons also of Bebai; Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, and Athlai.

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