

Ezra 8:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And I sent them with commandment unto Iddo the chief at the place Casiphia, and I told them what they should say unto Iddo, and to his brethren the Nethinims, at the place Casiphia, that they should bring unto us ministers for the house of our God.

Analysis

And I sent them with commandment unto Iddo the chief at the place Casiphia—צִוָּה (tsivvah, commanded) indicates Ezra's apostolic authority, not mere request. אִדּוֹ (Iddo, 'timely' or 'His witness') is הָרֹאשׁ (harosh, the chief/leader), suggesting he headed a significant Levitical settlement at כַּסְפִּיָּה (Casiphia, 'silvery' or 'silver place'), possibly named for refining activity or economic function. This location apparently housed an organized Levitical community with recognized leadership structure.

And I told them what they should say unto Iddo, and to his brethren the Nethinims—נְתִינִים (Netinim, 'given ones') were temple servants descended from Gibeonites (Joshua 9:27) and other groups 'given' to assist Levites (Numbers 3:9, 8:19). **That they should bring unto us ministers for the house of our God**—מְשָׁרְתִים (mesharetim, ministers/servants) for בֵּית־אֱלֹהֵינוּ (beit-Eloheinu, house of our God). Ezra's diplomatic approach—working through recognized leaders rather than direct conscription—shows wisdom in mobilizing volunteers for challenging service.

Historical Context

Casiphia represents one of several organized Jewish communities in Babylon that chose not to return to Judah. The presence of both Levites and Nethinim suggests it functioned as a religious center, perhaps with its own synagogue or teaching facility. The prosperity and security of Babylonian Jewish life (reflected in Nehemiah's high position as cupbearer, Nehemiah 1:11) created disincentive to return to war-torn, economically depressed Judah. Ezra needed to persuade men to abandon comfortable lives for hardship.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What does Ezra's diplomatic approach through recognized leaders teach about mobilizing people for difficult ministry?
2. How does the existence of thriving diaspora communities (like Casiphia) challenge simplistic notions of obedience as geographic return?
3. In what ways do modern believers face similar tensions between comfortable assimilation and costly kingdom service?

Interlinear Text

הַמֶּקֶד וּמִבְּכֻסְפֵּי אֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר
And I sent H853 **unto Iddo** H5921 **the chief** H7218 **Casiphia** H3703 **at the place** H4725
H6680

אֶל אֶדּוֹ וְלִדְבַר יֵדְבָר יֵדְבָר יֵדְבָר
and I told H6310 **them what** H1697 **they should say** H413 **unto Iddo** H112
H7760

לְהָבִיא הַמֶּקֶד וּמִבְּכֻסְפֵּי אֶרֶץ הַנֶּתִּינִים
and to his brethren H251 **the Nethinims** H5411 **Casiphia** H3703 **at the place** H4725 **that they should bring** H935
H5411

אֶלֹהֵינוּ: לְבֵית יֵדְבָר יֵדְבָר יֵדְבָר
H0 **unto us ministers** H8334 **for the house** H1004 **of our God** H430

Additional Cross-References

Ezra 2:43 (Parallel theme): The Nethinims: the children of Ziha, the children of Hasupha, the children of Tabbaoth,