

Ezra 8:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiiah of the sons of Merari,
his brethren and their sons, twenty;

Analysis

And Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiiah of the sons of Merari—חֲשַׁבְיָה (Chashabyah, 'Yahweh has considered/esteemed') and יֵשַׁעְיָה (Yesha'yah, 'Yahweh is salvation') are both Merarite Levites (בְּנֵי מֵרָרִי, benei Merari). The Merarites handled the tabernacle's structural framework—frames, bars, pillars, bases (Numbers 3:36-37, 4:29-33)—heavy labor requiring strength and organizational skill. Their willingness to return suggests they understood the rebuilt temple needed not just priests for sacrifice but Levites for maintenance and logistics.

His brethren and their sons, twenty—the enumeration (eighteen in v. 18, twenty here) emphasizes these weren't individuals but family units with multi-generational commitment. The אֲחִים (achim, brothers/kinsmen) and בְּנֵיהֶם (beneihem, their sons) indicate entire clans making permanent relocation decisions. This family solidarity strengthened the fragile Jerusalem community—they brought not just workers but future generations committed to temple service.

Historical Context

The Merarites' specialized role in temple infrastructure made them especially valuable to Jerusalem's struggling community. The temple was complete but likely needed ongoing maintenance and expansion. Bringing skilled craftsmen committed to sacred service addressed practical needs while also ensuring continuity of proper Levitical functions according to Mosaic law. These families would become

part of the permanent Levitical establishment serving in rotation (1 Chronicles 24-26).

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What does the recruitment of entire families rather than individuals teach about sustainable ministry?
2. How does the Merarites' specialized role (structural maintenance) illustrate the diversity of gifts needed in God's work?
3. In what ways do modern churches neglect 'support roles' (Merarites) while prioritizing 'visible roles' (priests)?

Interlinear Text

וְאֶת־	חֲשָׁבִיָּה	וְאֶת־	יֵשַׁעִיָּה	וּבְנֵיהֶם	מֶרָרִי
H853	And Hashabiah	H854	and with him Jeshaiiah	and their sons	of Merari
	H2811		H3470	H1121	H4847
אֶחָיו	וּבְנֵיהֶם	עֶשְׂרִים:			
his brethren	and their sons	twenty			
H251	H1121	H6242			

Additional Cross-References

1 Chronicles 6:1 (Parallel theme): The sons of Levi; Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

1 Chronicles 6:16 (Parallel theme): The sons of Levi; Gershom, Kohath, and Merari.

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