

# Ezra 8:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Also of the Nethinims, whom David and the princes had appointed for the service of the Levites, two hundred and twenty Nethinims: all of them were expressed by name.

## Analysis

**Also of the Nethinims, whom David and the princes had appointed for the service of the Levites**—the נְתִינִים (Netinim, 'given ones/dedicated ones') originated when דָּוִיד (David) and הַשָּׂרִים (hasarim, the princes) formalized temple support roles, possibly incorporating Gibeonite woodcutters and water-carriers (Joshua 9:27) plus war captives into permanent service class. The phrase אֲבוֹדַת הַלְּוִיִּים (avodat haLeviyyim, service of the Levites) means they functioned as Levitical assistants, freeing Levites for teaching, music, and gatekeeping by handling menial labor.

**Two hundred and twenty Nethinims: all of them were expressed by name**—מְאַתִּים וְעֶשֶׂרִים (matayim v'esrim, 220) far outnumbered the 38 Levites recruited (vv. 18-19), suggesting Nethinim were more willing to return—perhaps because they had less economic security in Babylon than Levites. The phrase נִקְׁבוּ בְּשָׁמוֹת (niqvu v'shemot, expressed by name/designated by name) indicates careful registration, treating temple servants with dignity despite their menial status. David's original appointment gave them permanent legitimacy and honor.

## Historical Context

The Nethinim appear in Ezra-Nehemiah lists (Ezra 2:43-58, 8:20, Nehemiah 3:26, 7:46-60, 10:28, 11:3, 11:21) as a recognized temple servant class. Despite their foreign origins and low status, they're consistently included in the covenant

community and even participate in covenant renewal (Nehemiah 10:28). Their willingness to return (220 vs. only 38 Levites) is striking—perhaps their 'outsider' status made them more committed to Jerusalem than assimilated Levites were.

## Related Passages

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**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

## Study Questions

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1. What does the careful registration of Nethinim 'by name' teach about God's valuing of seemingly insignificant servants?
2. How does the Nethinim's greater willingness to return (vs. Levites) challenge assumptions about status and commitment?
3. In what ways do modern churches honor or dishonor 'behind the scenes' servants who enable visible ministry?

## Interlinear Text

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וּפְשָׁרִים      אֲלֹמִין      שְׁפָתִים      נְתִינִים      יְמִין  
H4480      **Also of the Nethinims**      H5411      H5414      H1732      H8269  
had appointed      whom David      and the princes

וְעִשְׂרֵה      מֵאָתָה      יְמִין      נְתִינִים      כְּלֹי  
H6242      and twenty      H3967      H5411      H3881      H5656  
two hundred      two hundred      Also of the Nethinims      of the Levites      for the service

בְּשִׁמּוֹת:      נִקְרָב וְכָל  
H8034      by name      H5344      all of them were expressed      H3605

## Additional Cross-References

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

**Ezra 7:7** (Parallel theme): And there went up some of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king.

**1 Chronicles 9:2** (Parallel theme): Now the first inhabitants that dwelt in their possessions in their cities were, the Israelites, the priests, Levites, and the Nethinims.

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