

# Ezra 8:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then I separated twelve of the chief of the priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them,

## Analysis

**Then I separated twelve of the chief of the priests**—va'avdilah, then I separated/set apart) uses the verb בָּדַל (badal) meaning to divide, distinguish, select for special purpose—the same term for God separating light from darkness (Genesis 1:4) and Israel from the nations (Leviticus 20:26). The שְׁנַיִם עֲשָׂר (sheneim asar, twelve) intentionally echoes the twelve tribes, symbolizing all Israel. These weren't merely guards but שְׂרֵי הַכֹּהֲנִים (sarei hakohanim, chiefs of the priests)—senior religious leaders.

**Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them**—the two named Levites (previously recruited in vv. 18-19) plus ten others formed a second group of twelve. The dual groups of twelve (priests and Levites) represent comprehensive spiritual leadership overseeing the treasure transport. Assigning priests and Levites (not warriors) to guard sacred wealth makes theological statement: temple treasures belong to God's sanctuary personnel, and their transport is sacred trust requiring spiritual authority, not merely military power. The treasure bearers' identity as religious leaders reinforced that this was holy mission, not secular transport.

## Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern temple treasures were enormous—kings deposited wealth in temples for safekeeping (functioning as banks), and temples accumulated precious metals through offerings and tribute. Ezra transported royal donations plus

diaspora community gifts (7:15-16, 8:25), totaling approximately 24 tons of silver and 3.75 tons of gold (vv. 26-27). The value in modern terms would be tens of millions of dollars. Entrusting such wealth to priests rather than professional guards shows Ezra's conviction that spiritual integrity outweighed military might.

## Related Passages

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**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

## Study Questions

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1. What does selecting spiritual leaders (not soldiers) to guard treasures teach about the nature of sacred trust?
2. How does the symbolic use of 'twelve' (echoing Israel's tribes) transform a logistical task into theological statement?
3. In what ways should modern ministry leaders distinguish between secular pragmatism and sacred calling in handling resources?

## Interlinear Text

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לְשָׁרְבֵּי הָעֵשׂ רְשִׁנְיָם מִשְׁרֵי פְּכַדְנִי יְמָנֵי אֶבֶד יְלָה  
Then I separated of the chief of the priests twelve Sherebiah  
H914 H8269 H3548 H8147 H6240 H8274

עֲשָׂרָה: מִשְׁבֵּן הַמְּאַחֲרִים מִעַמָּם כְּשָׁבֵן  
Hashabiah of their brethren and ten  
H2811 H5973 H251 H6235