

Ezra 8:28

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And I said unto them, Ye are holy unto the LORD; the vessels are holy also; and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering unto the LORD God of your fathers.

Analysis

And I said unto them, Ye are holy unto the LORD—אַתֶּם קִדְּשׁ לַיהוָה (atem qodesh l'YHWH, you are holy to the LORD) consecrates the treasure-bearers themselves, not just the treasure. The קִדְּשׁ (qodesh, holiness) means 'set apart for sacred purpose'—the priests and Levites aren't merely guards but sanctified servants entrusted with holy responsibility. This elevates the transport from logistical task to sacred mission. **The vessels are holy also**—הַכֵּלִים (hakelim, vessels) share the קִדְּשׁ status because they're dedicated for temple service.

And the silver and the gold are a freewill offering unto the LORD God of your fathers—נְדָבָה (nedavah, freewill offering) was voluntary gift above required sacrifices (Exodus 35:29, Leviticus 22:18-23), motivated by grateful devotion rather than legal obligation. Designating the treasure as נְדָבָה transforms it from mere wealth into worship—an act of covenant faithfulness by donors (Artaxerxes and the diaspora community). The phrase אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם (Elohei avoteikhem, God of your fathers) roots the offering in covenant continuity: Abraham's, Isaac's, and Jacob's God still receives worship from their descendants.

Historical Context

Freewill offerings had deep significance in Israel's worship—the tabernacle was built entirely from voluntary gifts (Exodus 36:3-7), and temple dedicatory offerings were massive freewill contributions (1 Chronicles 29:6-9). By characterizing

Artaxerxes' royal donation as 'freewill offering,' Ezra theologically incorporated a pagan king's gift into covenant worship patterns. This remarkable move shows God can receive worship through any channel He sovereignly ordains, even pagan empires funding His temple.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does consecrating the treasure-bearers ('you are holy') transform duty into sacred calling?
2. What does characterizing all the treasure as 'freewill offering' teach about acceptable worship coming through unexpected sources?
3. In what ways should modern Christians view their work as 'holy service' rather than mere employment?

Interlinear Text

וָאָמַרְתִּי הֵם	אֱלֹהִים הֵם	אֵת דָּשׁ	לַיהוָה	וְהַכֵּלִים	קִדְשִׁים	
And I said	H413	H859	are holy	unto the LORD	the vessels	are holy
H559			H6944	H3068	H3627	H6944
וְהַכֵּלִים	וְהַזָּהָב	נְדָבָה	לַיהוָה	אֱלֹהֵינוּ		
also and the silver	and the gold	are a freewill offering	unto the LORD	God		
H3701	H2091	H5071	H3068	H430		
אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם:						
of your fathers						
H1						