

Ezra 9:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites.

Analysis

The phrase 'when these things were done' marks transition from travel narrative to spiritual crisis. The 'princes' who approached Ezra demonstrate that knowledge of sin came from within the leadership, not external accusation. The accusation —'have not separated themselves from the people of the lands'—identifies the core problem: failure to maintain covenant distinctiveness. The catalogue of nations ('Canaanites, Hittites,' etc.) echoes Deuteronomy 7:1-3's prohibited peoples. The specific mention of 'abominations' (to'evot) indicates not just cultural mixing but adoption of pagan religious practices that God declared detestable. The climactic statement 'yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass' reveals that leaders led in covenant breaking.

Historical Context

This crisis occurred approximately four months after Ezra's arrival (Ezra 7:9; 10:9). The mixed marriages weren't new but had developed over the decades since the original return (538 BC). The problem affected all levels of society, including religious and civil leadership. The listed nations represent the pre-conquest inhabitants whose idolatrous practices God explicitly prohibited (Deuteronomy

7:1-5). Though many of these peoples no longer existed as distinct groups, the terminology indicates adoption of Canaanite religious practices that survived among the region's population. Archaeological evidence shows syncretistic worship practices were common in the Persian period, making this intermarriage a serious threat to monotheistic faith.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What does leadership's 'chief' role in sin teach about the responsibility and influence of those in authority?
2. How does the description of pagan practices as 'abominations' reflect God's absolute standards of holiness?
3. In what ways does failure to maintain spiritual distinctiveness threaten the church's witness and faithfulness today?

Interlinear Text

וְכַלּוּ וְתָ	וְנָשׁוּ וְאֵלָהָ	אֵלָיו	הַשָּׂרִים		
Now when these things were done	H428	came	H413 the princes		
H3615		H5066	H8269		
לֵאמֹר	לֹא	נִבְדָּל וְ	מֵעַמּוֹ	יִשְׂרָאֵל	וְהַכֹּהֲנִים
to me saying	H3808	have not separated	The people	of Israel	and the priests
H559		H914	H5971	H3478	H3548
וְהַלְוִיִּם	מֵעַמּוֹ	הָאֲרָצוֹת	כִּי תוֹעֲבֹתֵיהֶם		
and the Levites	The people	of the lands	doing according to their abominations		
H3881	H5971	H776	H8441		
לְכַנָּעַן	הַחִתִּים	הַפְּרִזִּים	הַיְבוּסִים	הָעַמּוֹנִים	
even of the Canaanites	the Hittites	the Perizzites	the Jebusites	the Ammonites	
H3669	H2850	H6522	H2983	H5984	
הַמּוֹאָבִים	הַמִּצְרִים	וְהָעַמּוֹרִים			
the Moabites	the Egyptians	and the Amorites			
H4125	H4713	H567			

Additional Cross-References

Nehemiah 9:2 (References Israel): And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers.

Exodus 33:16 (Parallel theme): For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.