

Ezra 9:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass.

Analysis

The crisis of intermarriage: 'For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass.' The phrase 'holy seed' (zera ha-qodesh) refers to Israel, set apart for God (Exodus 19:6, Deuteronomy 7:6). 'Mingled' (hit'arevu) indicates mixing that compromises distinctiveness—marriage with pagans threatened covenant identity because it typically led to idolatry (as Solomon's case proved, 1 Kings 11:1-8). The prohibition wasn't racial but theological: preventing syncretism (Deuteronomy 7:3-4). That 'princes and rulers' led this sin aggravates it—leaders modeling covenant breaking. Ezra's response (9:3-15) shows anguish over sin threatening the restored community's spiritual integrity. This principle applies: believers shouldn't form primary bonds with unbelievers where spiritual compromise is likely (2 Corinthians 6:14).

Historical Context

The returned exiles, meant to rebuild a faithful community, were repeating pre-exilic sins. Deuteronomy 7:1-4 forbade marriage with Canaanite nations specifically to prevent idolatry—exactly what happened before exile. The 'people of those lands' (v. 1) included Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, etc.—same groups

Israel should have driven out centuries earlier. That leadership participated demonstrates how pervasive the problem was. Ezra's prayer (9:6-15) and subsequent action (chapter 10: putting away foreign wives) seems harsh but reflects crisis thinking: the community's survival as God's people was at stake. This wasn't ethnic prejudice but theological preservation. New Testament parallel: believers shouldn't be 'unequally yoked' (2 Corinthians 6:14) in ways compromising faith.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What relationships or alliances do I form that compromise my distinct identity as God's person?
2. How seriously do I take the call to be 'holy'—set apart for God—versus conforming to surrounding culture?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	נָשָׂא ו	מִבְּנוֹתֶיהָ	לָהֶם	
H3588	For they have taken	of their daughters	H1992	
	H5375	H1323		
וּלְבָנֶיהָ	וְהִתְעַרְבוּ	זֶרַע	הַקֹּדֶשׁ	
for themselves and for their sons	have mingled	seed	so that the holy	
H1121	H6148	H2233	H6944	
בָּעַמִּי	הָאֲרָצוֹת	וְיָד	הַשָּׂרִים	וְהַסֹּגְדִים
themselves with the people	of those lands	yea the hand	of the princes	and rulers
H5971	H776	H3027	H8269	H5461
הָיְתָה	בַּיָּד	הָיְתָה	רֹאשׁוֹנָה:	
H1961	in this trespass	H2088	hath been chief	
	H4604		H7223	

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 34:16 (Parallel theme): And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods.

Deuteronomy 7:6 (Holy): For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.

Ezra 10:2 (Parallel theme): And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing.

Exodus 22:31 (Holy): And ye shall be holy men unto me: neither shall ye eat any flesh that is torn of beasts in the field; ye shall cast it to the dogs.

Exodus 19:6 (Holy): And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

1 Corinthians 7:14 (Holy): For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.

Deuteronomy 14:2 (Holy): For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.

Malachi 2:15 (Parallel theme): And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.

Malachi 2:11 (Holy): Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god.

2 Corinthians 6:14 (Parallel theme): Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?