Ezra - Commentaries by Unknown Author

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Ezra 2:61-63.

HOW came these names to be omitted? Was it in consequence of any neglect of these men or of their ancestors? We do not know all the particulars of the history, but the facts actually recorded are sufficient to raise some very useful reflections, even if they do not enable us to point to the real cause of the omission.

It appears that five hundred years before an ancestor of these children of Koz had married a daughter of Barzillai the Gileadite. This was the same Barzillai who entertained David and his retinue when he fled from Absalom. He was a wealthy man, “a very great man,” as the sacred history tells us.

Now, was there no connection between this wealthy marriage and the disappearance of the names of his descendants from the roll of the priests? The children of Koz, we read, were called after Barzillai. They might have been at first registered on the roll of the sons of Aaron, and probably not have ceased to be reckoned amongst the descendants of Barzillai, but it seems probable that they gradually came to regard descent from Aaron as of less importance than their position as descendants of a wealthy landowner.

The first ancestor, perhaps, loved the peaceful retirement of Gilead, and delighted to “abide among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleating of the flocks,” more than to frequent the courts of the house of the Lord.

There is but little wisdom in affecting to despise riches; they are God’s gifts, and should excite thankfulness as well as humility. They have their dangers too—the rich enter “hardly,” that is, with difficulty, into the kingdom of heaven. The man who becomes rich acquires new thoughts and feelings and prejudices, and his children are quick to catch his spirit. They are careful to maintain their position, and have their names enrolled among the wealthy, with corresponding carelessness as to being identified with those whom God has made kings and priests to Himself!

Perhaps the neglect may have occurred in Babylon, where the captives found it as hard to believe that Jerusalem would be rebuilt as their fathers to credit the prophecies of its destruction.

Jeremiah himself needed distinct encouragement to buy a field from his uncle. And the Temple! Was it ever to rise, and would the priests ever minister there?

But the appointed years of captivity come to an end—the Temple is about to be rebuilt, and the priesthood is once more in honor; and now we see the consequences of the way in which the names had been registered. The sons of Habaiah are, as polluted, put from the priesthood.

How many a one who has begun well, of Christian parentage and associations, has gradually preferred that which comes from a position in the world to the honor which comes from God only, until it can with difficulty be said where they are in their souls or what they really possess of divine things! The priest with Urim and Thummim alone can judge. “The Lord knoweth them that are His.” Meantime they lose that which is typified by eating of the most holy things.

Anon.

Morsels From Family Records, Morsels From Family Records: 3. Ezra 2:59-63

“And these were they which went up from Tel-melah, Tel-parsa, Cherub, Addan and Immer; but they could not show their father's house, and their seed, whether they were of Israel: the children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred, fifty and two. And of the children of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai (which took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their own name). These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found; therefore were they, as polluted, put from their priesthood. And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim” (Ezra 2:59-63; Neh. 7:61-65).

The above quotation conclusively proves how great was the importance to Israelites of carefully preserving their several family registers. Having drawn attention to this particular portion, we need add nothing further with respect to the same: because we rather desire to make a few remarks upon those two remarkable lists which immediately preceded those given above.

Proceeding backwards we read (Ezra 2:55; Neh. 7:57) of

“THE CHILDREN OF SOLOMON'S SERVANTS, &C., &C.”

Who these persons were descended from, is made perfectly clear in 1 Kings 9:20, 21. Of these brought before our notice as bond-servants in the glorious days of the first kingdom, on Israel's return from captivity—the children of eleven of these aborigines are honorably mentioned as sharing the fortunes of the nation. Had these eleven, whose names are recorded, specially distinguished themselves by their whole-hearted devotedness each to his particular servile task? But their children should ever be clearly distinguished from

who at the very same time occupied a very different position. We believe that it is very generally understood that these latter were descendants of those Gibeonites, who obtained a league by craft from Israel, and were by Joshua condemned to perpetual servitude, to be hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of God (Josh. 9:22, 23).

But though their first step proved thus faulty, their second step redounded to their own honor, when they, perceiving that peace with the people of God involved conflict with their neighbors on all sides, hesitated not to show that they preferred peace, with the bond-service to Israel, to returning to their old footing with their former acquaintances (Josh. 10:6). And the sun and moon stood still while Israel avenged themselves upon those who gathered themselves together for the purpose of crushing the power of Gibeon.

Because Saul slew the Gibeonites, Israel was visited with three years' famine (2 Sam. 21:1, 2). During Saul's reign, where was the ark of God? In obscurity certainly (1 Chron. 13:3), but kept in safety in Kirjath-jearim, one of the four cities of the Gibeonites (Josh. 9:17). When David reigned, where was the Tabernacle pitched? Even at Gibeon! so that, during those very critical times, to the honor of the Gibeonites it redounds, that one of their cities proved a safe resting place for the Ark, and another held the Tabernacle (2 Chron. 1:3, 4).

When Ezra would lead up a company of Israelites from Babylon, and found that no Levites were present, he sent to Iddo for “ministers for the house of our God.” Certain Levites promptly responded, and with them came 220 Nethinim, “whom David and the princes had given for the service of the Levites.” His company being now considered complete, he started, after fasting and prayer, to go up to Jerusalem.

With reference to the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, the allusion to the Nethinim is couched in language rather obscure. Whether the meaning intended to be conveyed is, that while others rebuilt the wall, the Nethinim renovated the tower of Ophel (situate on the wall, 2 Chron. 27:3) is not quite clear (Neh. 3:26).

One fact, more remarkable in itself than even the very long list of the Nethinim who returned with Zerubbabel, given in both Ezra and Nehemiah, remains to be mentioned. When gathered in solemn assembly, the covenant was sealed by the leaders of the people, the Nethinim (i.e. Amorites on Israel's first entrance into Canaan, 1 Sam. 10; 11:2) entered into a curse and an oath to walk in God's law he., and not to intermarry with the peoples of the land! For though they were actually descendants of the Amorites, they were now most thoroughly incorporated with the nation of Israel. With the faithful in Israel, these men of faith were blessed.