

Netinim

The word in the Hebrew is the same Netinim meaning “The Given Ones or Set Apart Ones” or in our bible it’s translated as “The temple slaves” and it comes from the Hebrew root Netan meaning “To Give”. They were originally foreign slaves, most likely prisoners of war and later adding to their numbers that were already established, were formally given by David to the Levites (**Ezra 8:20**). Their job was to carry out the menial duties of the House of Yahweh working under and serving the Levites. We can also see one of the possible earliest mention of them in the book of Joshua when he was tricked by the Gibeonites to enter into covenant with them so that they may live. **Joshua 9:3-6; 15-16; 22-23; 27**: So we see the Gibeonites most likely could have been a part of the Netinim. We also see the sons of Solomon’s servants were numbered with the temple slaves (**Ezra 2:58**), so they also could have been counted as a part of the Netinim.

After the time Judah was exiled into Babylon, only 612 Netinim came back to land. 392 accompanied Zerubbabel at the first return in 538 BC (**Ezra 2:58; Nehemiah 7:60**) and then with Ezra about 80 years later 220 (**Ezra 8:20**). They were given a part of the city in Ophel, opposite the Water-gate (**Nehemiah 3:26**) to dwell in and they were also included in the same privileges/immunities under the guidelines of King Artaxerxes’ letter to Ezra. **Ezra 7:24** “Also we notify you that in regard to any of the priests and the Levites, singers, gatekeepers, temple-slaves (Netinim), or ministers of the house of Elohoi, it shall not be lawful to impose toll, taxes, or forced labor on them”.