

Joshua 22:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And with him ten princes, of each chief house a prince throughout all the tribes of Israel; and each one was an head of the house of their fathers among the thousands of Israel.

Analysis

Ten princes, of each chief house a prince throughout all the tribes of Israel—This delegation represents the highest level of covenant diplomacy. The Hebrew word for prince (נֶשֶׁר, nasi) denotes a tribal leader or chieftain, emphasizing the gravity of the accusation. Phinehas the priest led ten tribal representatives, one from each of the nine and a half western tribes, creating a comprehensive witness (Deuteronomy 19:15 requires two or three witnesses, but this delegation far exceeds that standard).

Each one was an head of the house of their fathers—The term for "head" (ראש, rosh) indicates these were not minor officials but patriarchal leaders representing thousands of families. This high-level delegation demonstrates how seriously Israel treated potential covenant violations—they sent their best to investigate before rushing to civil war.

Historical Context

This incident occurred around 1400 BC, shortly after the conquest of Canaan. The tribal confederation was still fragile, and memories of divine judgment (Achan, Peor) were fresh. The delegation structure mirrors Ancient Near Eastern diplomatic protocol for resolving inter-tribal disputes.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does the composition of this delegation model proper church discipline—serious, representative, and measured rather than hasty?
2. Why is it significant that they sent leaders rather than warriors to investigate the altar?
3. What does this careful approach teach about confronting brothers in the faith (Matthew 18:15-17)?

Interlinear Text

And with him ten	chief	H5973	chief	of each	chief	of each	house
H6235	H5387	H5387	H259	H5387	H259	H1004	
a prince	H3605	throughout all the tribes	H4294	of Israel	H3478	and each one	was an head
H1				H3478	H376	H7218	
house	a prince	H1992	among the thousands	H505	of Israel		
H1004	H1				H3478		

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 1:4 (Parallel theme): And with you there shall be a man of every tribe; every one head of the house of his fathers.

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