

Joshua 22:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thus saith the whole congregation of the LORD, What trespass is this that ye have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following the LORD, in that ye have builded you an altar, that ye might rebel this day against the LORD?

Analysis

What trespass is this that ye have committed against the God of Israel—The Hebrew word for trespass (*תַּעַמֵּד*, *ma'al*) denotes covenant unfaithfulness or treachery, the same term used for Achan's sin (Joshua 7:1). The accusation is grave: not merely a mistake, but covenant breaking.

To turn away this day from following the LORD, in that ye have builded you an altar—Deuteronomy 12:13-14 explicitly forbade multiple altars for sacrifice: "Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place... But in the place which the LORD shall choose." The delegation reasonably assumed this altar violated the centralized worship commanded by Moses, potentially establishing a rival worship center that would split the nation.

Historical Context

The Mosaic law mandated one legitimate altar at the tabernacle (later the temple) to prevent the syncretism that plagued the Canaanites. Multiple altars historically led to idolatry (1 Kings 12:28-33, where Jeroboam's rival altars destroyed the northern kingdom).

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 – Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does concern for theological purity sometimes lead to misunderstanding brothers who share the same faith?
 2. What distinguishes righteous zeal for God's worship from destructive suspicion of fellow believers?
 3. How should we balance guarding orthodoxy with assuming the best about brothers' motives?

Interlinear Text

מִהָּ בִּיהִתָּה: עַד תְּכִלָּה אָמַר וְכָה H3541 **Thus saith** H3605 **the whole congregation** against the LORD H4100

בְּאֱלֹהִים מְעַלְתֶּם אֲשֶׁר בָּזֶה הַמְעַלְתָּם בְּעַל הַמְעַלְתָּם
against the God is this that ye have committed that is over against the God
H41603 H834 H2088 What trespass H41604

בִּיהִנָּה מִאָחָר יְמֵי וּלְשׁוֹן וּבְיָמֵי לִשְׁבָּא לְיִשְׁרָאֵל of Israel to turn away this day from following against the LORD H3478 H7725 H3117 H310 H3068

בְּיַהֲוָה:
against the LORD
H3068

