

Joshua 22:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh answered, and said unto the heads of the thousands of Israel,

Analysis

Then the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh answered, and said unto the heads of the thousands of Israel—

The Transjordan tribes respond with a formal, carefully structured defense. The repetition of all three tribal groups emphasizes their unified response—this was not a rogue action by one tribe but a deliberate decision by all the eastern tribes together.

The phrase "**heads of the thousands**" (רָאשֵׁי אֲלֵפֵי, rashei alpei) mirrors the delegation's composition (verse 14), showing mutual respect. The accused tribes take the charges seriously enough to answer the highest authorities, not dismissing the concern as irrelevant.

Historical Context

This verse marks the turning point from accusation to explanation. The eastern tribes' willingness to engage respectfully rather than responding defensively demonstrates the strength of Israel's covenant bonds even across geographical separation.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does this model of respectful response to accusations, even wrongful ones, show spiritual maturity?
2. Why is it significant that all three tribes answered together rather than individually?
3. What does their measured response teach about defending yourself when misunderstood by fellow believers?

Interlinear Text

וַעֲנוּ	וּבְנֵי	רְאוּבֵן	וּבְנֵי	גַּד	וְחֶצֶל
answered	Then the children	of Reuben	Then the children	of Gad	and the half
H6030	H1121	H7205	H1121	H1410	H2677
שֵׁבֶט	הַמְנַשֶּׁה	וַיֹּדְבֵר וְ	אֶת	רִאשֵׁי	אֲלֵפֵי
tribe	of Manasseh	and said	H853	unto the heads	of the thousands
H7626	H4519	H1696		H7218	H505
					יִשְׂרָאֵל:
					of Israel
					H3478

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