

Joshua 22:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

That we have built us an altar to turn from following the LORD, or if to offer thereon burnt offering or meat offering, or if to offer peace offerings thereon, let the LORD himself require it;

Analysis

That we have built us an altar to turn from following the LORD, or if to offer thereon burnt offering or meat offering, or if to offer peace offerings thereon—The eastern tribes emphatically deny sacrificial intent. They list three types of offerings—olah (burnt offering, עלה), minchah (grain offering, מנחה), and shelamim (peace offerings, שלמים)—covering the entire Levitical sacrificial system, affirming they will offer NONE of these on the altar.

Let the LORD himself require it—The phrase "require it" (דָרַשׁ, darash) means to seek out and punish. They again invoke divine judgment if their altar serves sacrificial purposes, placing the matter directly in God's hands rather than human courts.

Historical Context

This categorical denial addresses the core legal issue: Deuteronomy 12 forbids sacrificial altars anywhere except the central sanctuary. By renouncing all sacrificial use, the eastern tribes claim exemption from this law—the altar serves another purpose entirely.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does their specific, detailed denial demonstrate the importance of clear communication in resolving conflict?
2. Why is it significant that they repeatedly invoke God's judgment rather than merely defending themselves to men?
3. What does this teach about addressing accusations with both truth and humility?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵם	יְהִי	הָ	מַאֲחָר	יְ	לְשָׁוֹב	מִזְבֵּחַ	לְ	כֵּן	לְבָנָה	וְתַ
That we have built		H0	us an altar		to turn		from following		the LORD	H518
	H1129			H4196		H7725		H310		H3068
וְלֹא	עַל	יְ	לְפָנָל	וְתַ	עַזְלָה	וְמִנְחָה	וְאֵם	וְתַ	לְעַשְׂרָה	וְתַ
or if to offer		H5921	thereon burnt offering		or meat offering			H518	or if to offer	H6213
	H5927			H5930		H4503				
עַלְיָה	שְׁלָמָה	יְם	זְבַח	יְ	וְאֵם	יְהִי	הָ	וְאֵם	יְבָקֵשׁ:	
offerings	peace		the LORD		H1931				himself require	
H5921		H2077							H1245	

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 18:19 (Parallel theme): And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.

1 Samuel 20:16 (References Lord): So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the LORD even require it at the hand of David's enemies.

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