

Numbers 16:39

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Eleazar the priest took the brasen censers, wherewith they that were burnt had offered; and they were made broad plates for a covering of the altar:

Analysis

"Eleazar the priest took the brasen censers"—the verb laqach (לִקַּח, to take) emphasizes deliberate action. Eleazar physically gathered these instruments of judgment, showing priestly responsibility extends to handling the aftermath of divine discipline. **"Wherewith they that were burnt had offered"** indicates the censers survived the fire that consumed their bearers—a testimony to God's discriminating judgment that destroys sinners but preserves warnings.

The phrase **"they were made broad plates for a covering of the altar"** (literally "beaten out," raqa', רָקַע) describes hammering the censers into thin sheets. This violent transformation—beating rebellion's tools into worship's fixtures—parallels the prophetic vision of swords beaten into plowshares (Isaiah 2:4).

Historical Context

Bronze (actually copper alloy) was the material for the sacrificial altar itself (Exodus 27:1-2). Adding the rebels' censers to this altar created a layered memorial—every sacrifice reminded Israel that unauthorized worship leads to death, while authorized priesthood mediates life. The altar became a visual catechism of Levitical order.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does the physical transformation of rebellion's instruments into worship fixtures illustrate redemptive repurposing?
2. What does Eleazar's handling of judgment's aftermath teach about spiritual leadership's difficult responsibilities?
3. In what ways do memorials of past judgment strengthen or weaken contemporary faith?

Interlinear Text

אָשָׁר בָּנָה שְׁתִּים מְחַת וְתֵא תְּבַכָּה | אַלְעַזֵּר וְיַעֲשֵׂה
took And Eleazar the priest censers the brasen H834
H3947 H499 H3548 H4289 H5178

מִשְׁרָף יְמִינֵי יְמִינֵי
had offered wherewith they that were burnt and they were made broad
H7126 H8313 H7554

לְמִזְבֵּחַ צָפֵה
plates for a covering of the altar
H6826 H4196