

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* (לָקַח, 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

וָקַח	וְאֶלְעָזָר	הַכֹּהֵן	אֵת	מִחַת	וְהַנֶּחֱשֵׁת	אֲשֶׁר
took	And Eleazar	the priest	H853	censers	the brasen	H834
H3947	H499	H3548		H4289	H5178	
הֵקִיר יָדָיו	הַשֹּׂרֵפִים	וְהַנֶּחֱשֵׁת	וְהַנֶּחֱשֵׁת	וְהַנֶּחֱשֵׁת	וְהַנֶּחֱשֵׁת	וְהַנֶּחֱשֵׁת
had offered	wherewith they that were burnt	and they were made broad				
H7126	H8313	H7554				
וְהַנֶּחֱשֵׁת	וְהַנֶּחֱשֵׁת	וְהַנֶּחֱשֵׁת	וְהַנֶּחֱשֵׁת	וְהַנֶּחֱשֵׁת	וְהַנֶּחֱשֵׁת	וְהַנֶּחֱשֵׁת
plates for a covering	of the altar					
H6826	H4196					

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