

Joshua 22:1-34 **Armies of the Eastern Tribes Dismissed – Altar of Witness**

Armies of Eastern Tribes Dismissed to Return Home

¹ Then Joshua called the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, ² and said to them: "You have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you. ³ You have not left your brethren these many days, up to this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God. ⁴ And now the LORD your God has given rest to your brethren, as He promised them; now therefore, return and go to your tents and to the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side of the Jordan. ⁵ But take careful heed to do the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, to keep His commandments, to hold fast to Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul."

Blessing & Spoils of War

⁶ So Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their tents.

⁷ Now to half the tribe of Manasseh Moses had given a possession in Bashan, but to the other half of it Joshua gave a possession among their brethren on this side of the Jordan, westward. And indeed, when Joshua sent them away to their tents, he blessed them, ⁸ and spoke to them, saying, "Return with much riches to your tents, with very much livestock, with silver, with gold, with bronze, with iron, and with very much clothing. Divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren."

⁹ So the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh returned, and departed from the children of Israel at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go to the country of Gilead, to the land of their possession, which they had obtained according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

Altar of Witness

¹⁰ And when they came to the region of the Jordan which is in the land of Canaan, the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh built an altar there by the Jordan--a great, impressive altar. ¹¹ Now the children of Israel heard someone say, "Behold, the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh have built an altar on the frontier of the land of Canaan, in the region of the Jordan--on the children of Israel's side."

Response of the Western Tribes

¹² And when the children of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered together at Shiloh to go to war against them.

¹³ Then the children of Israel sent Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest to the children of Reuben, to the children of Gad, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead, ¹⁴ and with him ten rulers, one ruler each from the chief house of every tribe of Israel; and each one was the head of the house of his father among the divisions of Israel.

Challenge regarding the great Altar

¹⁵ Then they came to the children of Reuben, to the children of Gad, and to half the tribe of Manasseh, to the land of Gilead, and they spoke with them, saying, ¹⁶ "Thus says the whole congregation of the LORD: 'What treachery is this that you have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following the LORD, in that you have built for yourselves an

altar, that you might rebel this day against the LORD? ¹⁷ Is the iniquity of Peor not enough for us, from which we are not cleansed until this day, although there was a plague in the congregation of the LORD, ¹⁸ but that you must turn away this day from following the LORD? And it shall be, if you rebel today against the LORD, that tomorrow He will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel. ¹⁹ Nevertheless, if the land of your possession is unclean, then cross over to the land of the possession of the LORD, where the LORD's tabernacle stands, and take possession among us; but do not rebel against the LORD, nor rebel against us, by building yourselves an altar besides the altar of the LORD our God. ²⁰ Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? And that man did not perish alone in his iniquity.' "

Answer regarding the great Altar

²¹ Then the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh answered and said to the heads of the divisions of Israel: ²² The LORD God of gods, the LORD God of gods, He knows, and let Israel itself know--if it is in rebellion, or if in treachery against the LORD, do not save us this day. ²³ If we have built ourselves an altar to turn from following the LORD, or if to offer on it burnt offerings or grain offerings, or if to offer peace offerings on it, let the LORD Himself require an account.

²⁴ But in fact we have done it for fear, for a reason, saying, 'In time to come your descendants may speak to our descendants, saying, "What have you to do with the LORD God of Israel? ²⁵ For the LORD has made the Jordan a border between you and us, you children of Reuben and children of Gad. You have no part in the LORD.'" So your descendants would make our descendants cease fearing the LORD.' ²⁶ "Therefore we said, 'Let us now prepare to build ourselves an altar, not for burnt offering nor for sacrifice, ²⁷ but that it may be a witness between you and us and our generations after us, that we may perform the service of the LORD before Him with our burnt offerings, with our sacrifices, and with our peace offerings; that your descendants may not say to our descendants in time to come, "You have no part in the LORD.'" ' ²⁸ "Therefore we said that it will be, when they say this to us or to our generations in time to come, that we may say, 'Here is the replica of the altar of the LORD which our fathers made, though not for burnt offerings nor for sacrifices; but it is a witness between you and us.' ²⁹ "Far be it from us that we should rebel against the LORD, and turn from following the LORD this day, to build an altar for burnt offerings, for grain offerings, or for sacrifices, besides the altar of the LORD our God which is before His tabernacle."

³⁰ Now when Phinehas the priest and the rulers of the congregation, the heads of the divisions of Israel who were with him, heard the words that the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and the children of Manasseh spoke, it pleased them.

³¹ Then Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said to the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and the children of Manasseh, "This day we perceive that the LORD is among us, because you have not committed this treachery against the LORD. Now you have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the LORD."

³² And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and the rulers, returned from the children of Reuben and the children of Gad, from the land of Gilead to the land of Canaan, to the children of Israel, and brought back word to them. ³³ So the thing pleased the children of Israel, and the children of Israel

blessed God; they spoke no more of going against them in battle, to destroy the land where the children of Reuben and Gad dwelt.

34 The children of Reuben and the children of Gad called the altar, Witness, "For it is a witness between us that the LORD is God." NKJV

Facts Revealed:

Armies of Eastern Tribes Dismissed to Return Home [Joshua 22:1-5]

- ✧ Joshua called the armies of the Eastern tribes and said, well done:
 - ◇ The Enemy is defeated, The Land is at rest, Your responsibility is fulfilled.
 - ◇ Joshua released the armies of the Eastern tribes to return home.
 - ◇ Joshua commanded the Eastern tribes to be careful to keep the commandments of Yehowah Eloheykm (The Lord Your God) which Moses had given to the Children of Israel, with all your heart and with all your soul.

Blessing & Spoils of War – The Eastern Tribes and their land

- ✧ Joshua sent them away with a blessing and their share of the spoils of war. [Joshua 22:6-8]
 - ◇ Moses had given the half tribe of Manasseh the land of Bashon east of the Jordan River.
 - ◇ The other half of the Tribe of Manasseh had received their inheritance among the western tribes west of the Jordan River by Joshua and the leaders of Israel.
 - ◇ The land of the Eastern tribes was called the land of Gilead. [Joshua 22:9]
 - ◇ The land west of the Jordan River is called the Land of Canaan. [Joshua 22:9]
 - ◇ The departure was done from Shiloh in the land of Canaan. [Joshua 22:9]

Altar of Witness [Joshua 22:10-11]

- ✧ The Altar of Witness was built by the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh.
 - ◇ It was built on the west side of the Jordan River in the land of Canaan.

Response of the Western Tribes [Joshua 22:12-14]

- ✧ Western tribes heard of the Altar and prepared for war.
 - ◇ Delegation of the leaders was sent into the land of Gilead to question the motive for the Altar.

Challenge regarding the great Altar [Joshua 22:15-20]

- ✧ The leaders of the western tribes came to Gilead and said to the eastern tribes:
 - ◇ "Thus says the whole congregation of the LORD: 'What treachery is this that you have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following the LORD, in that you have built for yourselves an altar, that you might rebel this day against the LORD?' [Joshua 22:15-16]
 - ◇ Is the iniquity of Peor not enough for us, from which we are not cleansed until this day, although there was a plague in the congregation of the LORD, but that you must turn away this day from following the LORD? And it shall be, if you rebel today against the LORD, that tomorrow He will be angry with the whole congregation of Israel. [Joshua 22:17-18]
 - ⊘ The iniquity of Peor was when the Midianite women entice the Children of Israel to engage in sexual immorality and idolatry, and 2400 Israelites were killed by the resulting plague. [Numbers 25:1-15]
 - ◇ Nevertheless, if the land of your possession is unclean, then cross over to the land of the possession of the LORD, where the LORD's tabernacle stands, and take possession among us; but do not rebel against the LORD, nor rebel against us, by building yourselves an altar besides the altar of the LORD our God. . [Joshua 22:19]
 - ⊘ The eastern tribes would be welcome among the western tribes.

- ✧ Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? And that man did not perish alone in his iniquity.' " [Joshua 22:20]
- ✧ The trespass of Achan was when the Israelite took spoils God had forbidden and caused the Israelite army to be defeated at Ai. [Joshua 17:1-26]

Answer regarding the great Altar

- ✧ The eastern tribes answered: [Joshua 22:21-29]
 - ✧ The LORD God of gods, the LORD God of gods, He knows.
 - ✧ let Israel itself know--if it is in rebellion, or if in treachery against the LORD, do not save us this day.
 - ✧ If we have built ourselves an altar to turn from following the LORD, or if to offer on it burnt offerings or grain offerings, or if to offer peace offerings on it, let the LORD Himself require an account.
 - ✧ But in fact we have done it for fear, for a reason, saying, 'In time to come your descendants may speak to our descendants, saying, "What have you to do with the LORD God of Israel? For the LORD has made the Jordan a border between you and us, you children of Reuben and children of Gad. You have no part in the LORD." So your descendants would make our descendants cease fearing the LORD.'
 - ✧ "Therefore we said, 'Let us now prepare to build ourselves an altar, not for burnt offering nor for sacrifice, but that it may be a **witness** between you and us and our generations after us, that we may perform the service of the LORD before Him with our burnt offerings, with our sacrifices, and with our peace offerings; that your descendants may not say to our descendants in time to come, "You have no part in the LORD." '
 - ✧ "Therefore we said that it will be, when they say this to us or to our generations in time to come, that we may say, 'Here is the replica of the altar of the LORD which our fathers made, though not for burnt offerings nor for sacrifices; but **it is a witness between you and us.**'
 - ✧ "Far be it from us that we should rebel against the LORD, and turn from following the LORD this day, to build an altar for burnt offerings, for grain offerings, or for sacrifices, besides the altar of the LORD our God which is before His tabernacle."

Western tribes accept the explanation of the Eastern tribes

- ✧ Now when Phinehas the priest and the rulers of the congregation, the heads of the divisions of Israel who were with him, heard the words that the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and the children of Manasseh spoke, it pleased them. [Joshua 22:30]
 - ✧ Then Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said to the children of Reuben, the children of Gad, and the children of Manasseh, "This day we perceive that the LORD is among us, because you have not committed this treachery against the LORD. Now you have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the LORD." [Joshua 22:31]
- ✧ And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and the rulers, returned from the children of Reuben and the children of Gad, from the land of Gilead to the land of Canaan, to the children of Israel, and brought back word to them. So the thing pleased the children of Israel, and the children of Israel blessed God; they spoke no more of going against them in battle, to destroy the land where the children of Reuben and Gad dwelt. [Joshua 22:32-33]

The Altar is named, "Witness"

- ✧ The children of Reuben and the children of Gad called the altar, Witness, "**For it is a witness between us that Yehowah Ha-Elohiym (the LORD is God).**" [Joshua 22:34]