

WEDNESDAY

December 10

A Gentle Answer

Read Joshua 22:21-29 in the light of Proverbs 15:1. What can we learn from the answer of the eastern tribes?

The answer of the accused, as straightforward and powerful as the accusation, constitutes both thematically and structurally the heart of the chapter. So far, the tribes have not replied to the accusations but instead have quietly listened to the allegations against them. Given the seriousness of the charges, their patience is exemplary as they display the true meaning of the proverb: "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Prov. 15:1, NKJV).

The opening sentence of the defense is a string of divine names attributed to Israel's God: *El, Elohim, Yahweh* (Josh. 22:22). It is repeated twice with a growing force, as it becomes a solemn oath in order to dispel the doubts and false accusations that almost lead to a civil war in Israel. They are

strongly convinced that God fully knows and understands the situation, and they hope that the present delegation will arrive at the same conclusion. The two-and-a-half tribes also recognize their accountability before the Lord by calling Him to take vengeance (compare with Deut. 18:19, 1 Sam. 20:16) if they are indeed guilty.

A surprising revelation follows, which on the one hand proves the basis of the indictment void (an altar cannot serve only as a place of sacrifice) and, on the other hand, discloses their true motivation. Fear of separation from Israel, rather than apostasy, was the true ground for their action. Thus, the building of the altar is not evidence of apostasy, as had been supposed. Actually, the contrary is true: they have acted out of fear of the Lord, just as the western Jordan tribes did. The true basis of Israel's unity is not geography or the physical extent of the inheritance but their spiritual allegiance to the requirements of the Lord.

The genuine concern of the tribes on the west side of the river is also revealed in their authentic joy as the innocence of the tribes on the east is ascertained. Instead of feeling defeated by the arguments of their brothers, they show authentic happiness that their suspicions turned out to be wrong. Civil war in Israel was avoided and the unity of the nation preserved.

How do you handle false accusations? Share some of the principles that guide your attitude. For inspiration, see Psalm 37:3-6, 34, 37.

EAR -

JAMES 1:19-20

QUICK TO HEAR - TWO EARS

1. LISTEN WELL 2. SAY BACK WHAT YOU HEARD. THIS TAKES MORE TIME

AND THEREFORE LEADS YOU TO:

SLOW TO SPEAK - ONE MOUTH -

SLOW TO WRATH - IT DOESN'T WORK GOD'S WILL

RECENT EMAIL REBUKING ME FOR A NUMBER OF PERCEIVED MISTAKES

LIKE:

1. IF THEY WERE HONESTLY PERCEIVED THEN APOLOGIZE FOR COMING

ACROSS THAT WAY. THANK THEM FOR POINTING OUT WHAT YOU SENSE

COULD BE THE WAY YOU COME ACROSS. WORK ON DOING BETTER.

2. IF YOU ARE NOT GUILTY YOU HAVE NOTHING TO JUSTIFY. BE AT PEACE

KNOWING THAT YOUR HEART IS RIGHT GOD.

3. IF YOU ARE GUILTY AS CHARGED REPENT FAST! THANK THE PERSON AND

CONSIDER YOURSELF BLESSED TO HAVE YOUR SINS POINTED OUT.

PROVERBS 6:23:

FOR THE COMMANDMENT IS A LAMP; AND THE LAW IS LIGHT;
AND REPROOFS OF INSTRUCTION ARE THE WAY OF LIFE:

THE 2.5 TRIBES WERE NOT GUILTY OF WHAT THEY WERE PERCEIVED TO BE
DOING. THEY WERE AT PEACE WITH GOD AND WITH THEIR BRETHREN. THEY
LISTENED PATIENTLY, EXPLAINED KINDLY AND WERE RECEIVED WITH JOY
BY THEIR MISUNDERSTANDING BRETHREN.