

Conflict Resolution

Reuben and Gad II

Joshua 22:10–34

It just seems like, no matter what the best of intentions, a lack of a proper explanation will have devastating results. It might be thought that Reuben, Gad and Manasseh's previous conflict would have left enough of an impression that they would not have attempted any actions that might even remotely cause Conflict between them and the tribes west of the Jordan, but no.

“Then Joshua called the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, and said unto them, Ye have kept all that Moses the servant of Jehovah commanded you, and have hearkened unto my voice in all that I commanded you: ye have not left your brethren these many days unto this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of Jehovah your God. And now Jehovah your God hath given rest unto your brethren, as he spake unto them: therefore now turn ye, and get you unto your tents, unto the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of Jehovah gave you beyond the Jordan. Only take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of Jehovah commanded you, to love Jehovah your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul. So Joshua blessed them, and sent them away; and they went unto their tents. Now to the one half-tribe of Manasseh Moses had given inheritance in Bashan; but unto the other half gave Joshua among their brethren beyond the Jordan westward; moreover when Joshua sent them away unto their tents, he blessed them, and spake unto them, saying, Return with much wealth unto your tents, and with very much cattle, with silver, and with gold, and with brass, and with iron, and with very much raiment: divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren.”

Up to this point in time all is well. Everyone goes to their perspective lands, and life is good, or is it? It has an obvious result, i.e., rivers divide. States and nations are often divided by bodies of water. That was the case with Reuben, Gad and Manasseh. The Jordan River separated them from the rest of Israel. In an effort to maintain the national connection...“the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh returned, and departed from the children of Israel out of Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan, to go unto the land of Gilead, to the land of their possession, whereof they were possessed, according to the commandment of Jehovah by Moses. And when they came unto the region about the Jordan, that is in the land of Canaan, the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh built there an altar by the Jordan, a great altar to look upon.” To which, the children of Israel on the west side of the Jordan responded to a potential danger.

“And the children of Israel heard say, Behold, the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh have built an altar in the forefront of the land of Canaan, in the region about the Jordan, on the side that pertaineth to the children of Israel. And when the children of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered themselves together at Shiloh, to go up against them to war. And the children of Israel sent unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, into the land of Gilead, Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and with him ten princes, one prince of a fathers' house for each of the tribes of Israel; and they were every one of them head of their fathers' houses among the thousands of Israel.”

The Conflict: “And they came unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, unto the land of Gilead, and they spake with them, saying, Thus saith the whole congregation of Jehovah, What trespass is this that ye have committed against the God of Israel, to turn away this day from following Jehovah, in that ye have builded you an altar, to rebel this day against Jehovah? Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us, from which we have not cleansed ourselves unto this day, although there came a plague upon

the congregation of Jehovah, that ye must turn away this day from following Jehovah? and it will be, seeing ye rebel to-day against Jehovah, that to-morrow he will be wroth with the whole congregation of Israel. Howbeit, if the land of your possession be unclean, then pass ye over unto the land of the possession of Jehovah, wherein Jehovah's tabernacle dwelleth, and take possession among us: but rebel not against Jehovah, nor rebel against us, in building you an altar besides the altar of Jehovah our God. Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the devoted thing, and wrath fell upon all the congregation of Israel? and that man perished not alone in his iniquity."

The Resolution: "Then the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh answered, and spake unto the heads of the thousands of Israel, The Mighty One, God, Jehovah, the Mighty One, God, Jehovah, he knoweth; and Israel he shall know: if it be in rebellion, or if in trespass against Jehovah (save thou us not this day,) that we have built us an altar to turn away from following Jehovah; or if to offer thereon burnt-offering or meal-offering, or if to offer sacrifices of peace-offerings thereon, let Jehovah himself require it; and if we have not rather out of carefulness done this, and of purpose, saying, In time to come your children might speak unto our children, saying, What have ye to do with Jehovah, the God of Israel? for Jehovah hath made the Jordan a border between us and you, ye children of Reuben and children of Gad; ye have no portion in Jehovah: so might your children make our children cease from fearing Jehovah. Therefore we said, Let us now prepare to build us an altar, not for burnt-offering, nor for sacrifice: but it shall be a witness between us and you, and between our generations after us, that we may do the service of Jehovah before him with our burnt-offerings, and with our sacrifices, and with our peace-offerings; that your children may not say to our children in time to come, Ye have no portion in Jehovah. Therefore said we, It shall be, when they so say to us or to our generations in time to come, that we shall say, Behold the pattern of the altar of Jehovah, which our fathers made, not for burnt-offering, nor for sacrifice; but it is a witness between us and you. Far be it from us that we should

rebel against Jehovah, and turn away this day from following Jehovah, to build an altar for burnt-offering, for meal-offering, or for sacrifice, besides the altar of Jehovah our God that is before his tabernacle.”

Resolution Accepted: And when Phinehas the priest, and the princes of the congregation, even the heads of the thousands of Israel that were with him, heard the words that the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the children of Manasseh spake, it pleased them well. And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the children of Manasseh, This day we know that Jehovah is in the midst of us, because ye have not committed this trespass against Jehovah: now have ye delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of Jehovah. And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and the princes, returned from the children of Reuben, and from the children of Gad, out of the land of Gilead, unto the land of Canaan, to the children of Israel, and brought them word again. And the thing pleased the children of Israel; and the children of Israel blessed God, and spake no more of going up against them to war, to destroy the land wherein the children of Reuben and the children of Gad dwelt. And the children of Reuben and the children of Gad called the altar Ed: For, said they, it is a witness between us that Jehovah is God” (Joshua 22:1–34).

A little communication can often avoid a potential conflict. What do you glean from the event that will aid you in your life of dealing with others?

Although the dust settled, and all attempts were made to maintain a national unity, the Jordan river posed a greater threat than either side apparently imagined. The three tribes on the east of the Jordan faded from the national scene when “the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tilgathpilneser king of Assyria, and he carried them away, even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and brought them unto Halah, and Habor, and Hara, and to the river Gozan, unto this day.” (1 Chron. 5:26).