

Judges 2:1-23

The Angel of the Lord

Judges 2:1-2 - "And an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this?"

Who was the Angel of the Lord? The Targum and Maimonides call him a prophet; and the Jewish commentators in general interpret it to be Phinehas, translating Angel (*mal'ak*) to be messenger.

Rashi - We learned in Seder Olam that this was Phinehas.

R. Tanchum, from Judges 2:6, infers that it was Joshua himself

The LXX and Peshitto even insert the prophetic formula 'thus saith the Lord,' into the text.

The reasoning is that nowhere else in the scriptures is an angel describes as going from one place to another. Also, angels usually just appear to an individual, and are not seen speaking to the whole people.

But this without doubt the Angel of the Presence referred to by Isaiah:

- **Isaiah 63:9** - " In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old."

He was called the Captain of the Lord's Hosts and also the Angel of the Lord. He was a pre-incarnation appearance of their future Messiah, who because of His oneness with, yet distinction from, the Father could speak directly in His Name.

He is also called by Micah the Messenger of the Covenant, equating Him with the Lord:

- **Malachi 3:1-3** - "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness."

This angel/messenger appeared to Joshua just after they crossed the Jordan, and

Joshua had bowed and worshipped Him. As Israel prepared for the conquest of Canaan, the Angel assured him of the taking of Jericho.

- **Joshua 5:13** - "Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us or for our adversaries?" He said, "No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the LORD." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, "What has my lord to say to his servant?" The captain of the LORD'S host said to Joshua, "Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so."

Now, at another crucial juncture, after the entrance of the tribes of Israel into their inheritances, the Angel appeared again to warn them about making alliances or taking tribute from the Canaanites.

McClaren's Expositions emphasizes the spiritual lesson here:

God's servants "sin when they allow themselves to be so mixed up with the world that they are in peril of learning its ways and getting a snare to their souls. We all have unconquered 'Canaanites' in our hearts, and amity with them is supreme folly and crying wickedness. He charges them with disobedience, and asks the same question as had been asked of Eve, 'What is this ye have done?'"

The result of their sin is that God will withdraw His hand from helping them, as God had told them originally:

Judges 2:3 - "Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you."

Place of Weeping

Judges 2:4-5 - "And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept. And they called the name of that place Bochim: and they sacrificed there unto the LORD."

Bochim = weeping, from the root *baka* - to weep, bewail, mourn, lament. "to flow by drops" indicating tears.

The tears of true repentance can transform us.

- **Psalm 84:6** - "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them (or, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage) Who passing through the valley of Baca (tears, weeping) make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God."

But this was not what happened with Israel here.

A Chronological Rewind - Review of What Had Happened Previously

Judges 2:6 - "And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land."

This takes us back to **Joshua 24:28** - "So Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance."

Judges 2:7 - "And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel."

Although this generation served the Lord, they failed to ensure their children did. Each person must run to the cross on their own, for their own sins. Parents can't do that for them, but we are responsible to provide the knowledge of the Way and testimony of our own redemption, and raise children in humility and dependence on God. In this case, it apparently didn't work out.

Because of this, Rashi notes "their days were lengthened but their years were not, because they were lax with his eulogy. And so it says (v.9) "Mount $\psi\gamma\lambda$," the mountain quaked ($\psi\gamma\lambda$) over them to kill them (Sab. 105b)."

"Their eulogy" perhaps meaning they did not heed and take to heart Joshua's final speech to them, or they did not honor Joshua properly by taking responsibility for their children.

Judges 2:8-9 - "And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathheres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash."

An Evil Generation that Knew Not the Lord

Judges 2:10-13 - "And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim: And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger. And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth."

This may be the saddest passage in the scriptures, except perhaps for the next one.

Retribution and Chastisement

Judges 2:14-15 - "And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of

their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed."

"Whithersoever they went out" - Rashi relates this to Elimelech and his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion who left to escape drought and other calamities (**Ruth 1:1**) - Concerning Elimelech, Machlon, and Kilyon it was said. In Seder Olam 12.

"he delivered them into the hands of spoilers " - Compare with 1 Corinthians 5 where the church is to do the same for a member who was having sex with his father's wife:

- **1 Corinthians 5:4** - "When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, along with the power of the Lord Jesus, hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the Day of the Lord."

Chastisement is for correction, not destruction. Repentance will always turn away God's anger. The destruction of the "flesh" here is *sarx* - always used by Paul when referring to the sinfulness in man, the evil inclination according to the rabbis. The *sarx* is destroyed when you repent. The destruction continues until you can see past yourself to your true identity in Him.

Raising Up Judges

Judges 2:16 - "Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them."

"Individuals, prompted by the inward, irresistible impulse of God's Spirit when they witnessed the depressed state of their country, were roused to achieve its deliverance. It was usually accompanied by a special call, and the people seeing them endowed with extraordinary courage or strength, accepted them as delegates of Heaven. Frequently they were appointed only for a particular district, and their authority extended no farther than over the people whose interests they were commissioned to protect. They had no power to make laws; for these were given by God; nor to explain them, for that was the province of the priests and Levites — but they were officially upholders of the law, defenders of religion, avengers of all crimes, particularly of idolatry and its attendant vices."

- Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary

But the cycle would continue...

Judges 2:17 - "And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so."

The cycle is looked at several times here and repeated in different ways to make it

clear, as a warning for us.

Judges 2:18-19 - "And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them. And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way."

"bowing down" is a term usually related to adultery, used for submitting sexually. In this case it is spiritual union with a false god or idol.

"they ceased not from their own doings" - "doings" = *ma`alal* - works, practices, inventions, endeavors.

Works can be good or evil, usually evil if done by men, good if done by God.

There is only one cure - going to the cross, your death, abandoning self and the evil inclination by repentance:

- **Jeremiah 4:4** - "Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings (*ma`alal*).

Result: The Canaanites Remain in the Land

Judges 2:20 - "And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice; I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died:"

Promised Land Becomes a Proving Ground

Judges 2:22 - "That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not. Therefore the LORD left those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua."

"prove" = *nacah* - prove, assay, test

God tests people by adversity in order to prove their faith Genesis 22:1, Exodus 16:4, Deuteronomy 8:2 and 16, 13:4. Men test God illegitimately:

- **Isaiah 7:12** - "I will not ask, neither will I tempt (*nacah*) Jehovah."

The Greek equivalent is *dokimos* - both are assaying terms used to reveal the genuineness of a metal like gold. In the New Testament it largely means "approved," i.e.

tested and shown to be genuine.

- **2 Timothy 2:15** - "Study to shew thyself approved [dokimon] unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"

A similar NT word is *peirasmós* - test, assay

- **1 Peter 4:12-13** - "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial (*peirasmós*) which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

(read down through the end of the chapter)

This chapter in Judges started with the Angel of the Lord imploring the people to remain unmixed with the world, and " the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land." (**Judges 2:6**) It went downhill from there.

We have a more sure word than even they had, so we have no excuse:

- **2 Peter 1:19** - "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts."

Lord help us to heed this warning and walk in repentance from moment to moment!