

Judges 2:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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.

The appearance of "an angel of the LORD" (mal'ak Yahweh, מַלְאֲכַי יְהוָה) marks a pivotal moment of divine confrontation. The definite article suggests this is the Angel of the LORD—a theophany or pre-incarnate appearance of Christ who speaks as God Himself (compare Genesis 16:7-13, Exodus 3:2-6). His movement from Gilgal (Israel's first encampment in Canaan where they renewed covenant through circumcision, Joshua 5:2-9) to Bochim (meaning "weepers") symbolizes God's evaluation of Israel's spiritual state since entering the land.

God's speech employs covenant lawsuit (rib) language, beginning with recitation of His faithful acts: "I made you to go up out of Egypt" recalls the Exodus deliverance, and "brought you unto the land" references conquest under Joshua. The phrase "which I swore unto your fathers" connects to the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 12:7, 15:18-21, 17:8). The emphatic declaration "I will never break my covenant with you" (lo-afir briti itchem le'olam, לֹא-אֶפְרֹ בְרִיתִי אִתְּכֶם לְעֹלָם) uses the strongest possible Hebrew negation, affirming God's immutable faithfulness despite Israel's unfaithfulness.

This covenantal framework establishes the theological foundation for the entire book. God remains faithful (2 Timothy 2:13) even when His people prove faithless. The Mosaic covenant was conditional (blessings for obedience, curses for disobedience, Deuteronomy 28), yet God's ultimate purposes remain secure through His unconditional promises to Abraham. This tension between conditional and unconditional aspects of God's covenant relationship with Israel runs throughout Judges.

Historical Context

Gilgal held tremendous significance in Israel's history. Located near Jericho, it was Israel's first encampment after crossing the Jordan (Joshua 4:19-20). At Gilgal, Joshua circumcised the generation born in the wilderness (Joshua 5:2-9), they celebrated Passover (Joshua 5:10), the manna ceased (Joshua 5:12), and the Angel of the LORD appeared to Joshua (Joshua 5:13-15). Gilgal served as the base camp during initial conquest (Joshua 9:6, 10:6-7, 14:6). The angel's journey from Gilgal to Bochim symbolizes movement from past faithfulness to present failure.

Bochim's location is debated, possibly near Bethel (mentioned in Judges 2:1 in some manuscripts) in the central hill country. The name "weepers" describes Israel's response to divine rebuke rather than a pre-existing place name—it became known as Bochim because Israel wept there. This naming pattern occurs throughout Scripture when significant events transform locations (compare Babel, Genesis 11:9; Bethel, Genesis 28:19; Peniel, Genesis 32:30).

The covenant language recalls the Deuteronomic covenant with its blessings and curses (Deuteronomy 27-28). God's covenant lawsuit (*rib*) follows the pattern of ancient Near Eastern suzerain-vassal treaties, where the sovereign lord recounts his benefits to the vassal before accusing them of covenant violation. Similar prophetic lawsuits appear throughout the prophets (Micah 6:1-8, Isaiah 1:2-20).

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does remembering God's past faithfulness in salvation motivate present obedience and guard against spiritual complacency?
2. What spiritual 'Gilgals' (places of consecration and renewal) has God established in your life, and how can returning to these prevent drift toward 'Bochim' (weeping over failure)?
3. How does God's promise never to break covenant balance with the consequences His people experience for covenant unfaithfulness?

Interlinear Text

הַבֹּכִי יָם אֶל הַגִּלְגָּל לְ מִן יְהוָה הַ מַלְאָךְ אֲעֹלָה
I made you to go up And an angel of the LORD H4480 from Gilgal H413 to Bochim
H5927 H4397 H3068 H1537 H1066

וְאָבִי יָא מִמִּצְרַיִם אֶתְּךָ הַ אֲעֹלָה וְאָמַרְתִּי
and I said I made you to go up H853 out of Egypt and have brought
H559 H5927 H4714 H935

לְאָבִי תִיכָּה נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי אֲשֶׁר הָאֶרֶץ אֶל אֶתְּכֶם
you unto the land H834 which I swear unto your fathers
H853 H413 H776 H7650 H1

לְעוֹלָם: אֶתְּךָ בְּרִיתִי אֶפְרָח לֹא וְאָמַרְתִּי
I will never H854 break my covenant H3808
H559 H6565 H1285 H5769

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 20:2 (References Lord): I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Leviticus 26:42 (Covenant): Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.

Exodus 23:20 (Parallel theme): Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared.

Genesis 12:7 (References Lord): And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.

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