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The Angel of ADONAI Confronts Isra'el 2: 1-5

The Angel of ADONAI confronts Isra'el DIG: How has Isra'el disobeyed ADONAI? How does God get their attention? How do they respond regarding this? Who is the Angel of ADONAI? Why can the people sacrifice away from the Tabernacle? How do you see God's treatment of Isra'el? Too harsh? Too soft? Just right?

REFLECT: What factors might cause you to break your commitments, and how can you guard against this? How and when has ADONAI confronted you about your sin? What was the result? Repentance or rebellion? What does it mean to repent? When was the last time you wept over your sin? Who can you help this week?

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The period of warlike activity was over, and the Israelites, now firmly established, settled down to a normal life; but the fears of Moses and Joshua with regard to the evil effects which would confirm Isra'el's surrender to the Canaanites would soon prove to be well founded. These verses are the climax of the first major section of the introduction to the book.

A. The Israelites asked ADONAI, "Who will be the first to go up . . . (1:1)?

B. The tribe of Judah will go up . . . (1:2).

B. The house of Joseph went up . . . (1:22a-26).

A. The Angel of ADONAI came up . . . (2:1-5)

But **2:1-5** also acts as a transition to what follows. It is the first of a series of three confrontations between **ADONAI** and **Isra'el** found in **Judges**. The second is found in **6:7-10** (**to see link click Az - A Prophet Sent by ADONAI Confronts**

Isra’el), and the third is found in **10:10-16** (see **Bo – ADONAI Himself Confronts Isra’el**).³⁶

ADONAI’s Rebuke (2:1-3): The Rebuker Himself is named in the first verse. **Now The Angel of ADONAI came up from Gilgal to Bochim** bringing an ominous message (**2:1a**). Any time **The Angel of ADONAI** is mentioned in the TaNaKh, this is not merely an ordinary angel, but the preincarnate, **the Second Person of the Trinity, Yeshua Messiah**.³⁷ His appearance is set against the backdrop of the book of **Joshua**. **Gilgal**, located just west of the Jordan River somewhere on the outskirts of the city of Jericho, was the location of **the Israelites’** first encampment after **they** crossed the swollen Jordan River during the springtime of **Joshua’s** leadership. There, **they** left behind the infamy of the wilderness wanderings by performing a mass **circumcision** and celebrating **their** first **Passover** as a nation in **their** Land (see the commentary on **Joshua Aw – The Dedication of the Israelites**).³⁸ This was not merely a geographical migration, but a spiritual one. In **Joshua 5:13-15**, **Gilgal** was where **Joshua** was unexpectedly visited by **the Commander of ADONAI’s army**, who **stood with a sword in his hand** and brought an encouraging message of divine support on the eve of leading the nation on **a holy war** against **the Canaanites** (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Ag – The Problem of Holy War in the TaNaKh**).

The name **Bochim** (meaning **weeping**) is outdated in terms of the author’s own chronology, for the **weeping** in question does not begin until **2:4b**, and the naming of the place as **Bochim** does not happen until **2:5a**. However, the introduction of the name here in **verse one** contributes significantly to the design of the unit. It anticipates its explanation in **2:5a**, and these two verses function as two bookends around **God’s** rebuke. The real identity of the place is not given, but it’s probably **Bethel**. The taking of **Bethel** (see **Aj – The Failures of the Northern Tribes: The Victory over Bethel**) would have made it available for such a meeting. **It** was a place with a tradition of meeting with **ADONAI** going right back to patriarchal times (**Genesis 28:10-22** and **35:1-15**), and there are repeated references in the book of **Judges** to **the Israelites** meeting **YHVH** there (**20:18, 26, 31, and 21:2**). There is even **weeping** in **20:26** that echoes **the weeping** here in **2:4**. It is as though the book turns full circle by the end; **Isra’el** will finally find **herself** back at **Bethel**, the place of **weeping**, once again.³⁹

In this passage, however, **The Angel of ADONAI came up from Gilgal** with a message of defeat and judgement. **He** said: **I brought you up out of Egypt and**

led you into the Land I promised to your fathers and said: **I will never break My Covenant with you (2:1b CJB)**. This is possibly a reference to **the land** promise in **the Abrahamic Covenant** (see the commentary on **Exodus Di - I Am the LORD, Who Brought You Out of the Land of Slavery**), but it could also be in reference to **the Mosaic Covenant** (see **Deuteronomy Fm - Renewal of the Covenant**), which stated that the enjoyment of **the land** was conditional on obedience. But clearly, **The Angel of ADONAI** is speaking as if **He** were **God**, because **He** is **God**. **And you, for your part, are not to make any covenant with the people living in this land, but must tear down their altars**. Here is the accusation: **Yet, you have disobeyed Me. Why have you done this (2:2 CJB)?** This is a rhetorical question, with a hint of indignation. The sense is, “How could **you have done this** after everything **I** have done for **you**?”

Then comes the judgement: **So now I declare that I will no longer drive them out; first, they will become a snare for you, and second, their gods will be a constant temptation to you (2:3 Hebrew)**. **Isra’el** failed to rid **themselves** of the two things that would then become a problem for **them**. **They** failed to eliminate **the Canaanites**, so now **the Canaanites** would be a **snare for them**. Furthermore, since **they** failed to **tear down their altars**, **the altars themselves** would **become a temptation** to lure **them** into idolatry. As a result of this judgment, **ADONAI** will first cease working on **Isra’el’s** behalf to drive out **the Canaanites**, and, second, **He** would allow **the Canaanites** and **their gods** to prevail over **Isra’el**. This judgement was the fulfillment of the threat found in **Exodus 23:20-33** and **34:1-11**. There, **Ha’Shem** warned **Isra’el** that if **they** did not obey **YHVH**, **He** would not drive out **the Canaanites**. Instead, **Isra’el** would face an increasingly hostile **Canaanite** population.⁴⁰



Isra’el’s Response (2:4-5): The national and religious conscience was dormant, but not dead. After The Angel of ADONAI had finished speaking to all the Israelites, the people wept loudly (2:4 Hebrew). Therefore, rather than being in a festive mood similar to Joshua’s Passover at Gilgal, the encampment at **Bokhim (which means “weeping”)** only highlighted the unraveling of Isra’el’s destiny in the new Land. By repeating events associated with Joshua, the book of Judges emphasizes the terrible difference that was unfolding. This time, the preincarnate Messiah’s message to the people was only ominous, for He bore no sword symbolizing victory, but also the painful words of divine rebuke (2:5a NLT).⁴¹

And they offered sacrifices to ADONAI (2:5b NLT). The fact that they sacrificed to ADONAI at **Bochim** does not mean that the Tabernacle was located there at that time. Normally, it would have been the place for sacrifices. However, since **The Angel of ADONAI** was a theophany (the preincarnate **Yeshua Messiah**) the Shechinah Glory, the visible manifestation of **God’s** presence, it was permissible to **sacrifice** there. This action will be repeated in **Judges 6:20, 6:26, 6:28, 13:16-20**, and also in **Second Samuel 24:25**. Any place where a theophany appeared, it was possible to **sacrifice** at that place. This further shows that **The Angel of ADONAI** is indeed **God Himself**.⁴²

Up to this point, **YHVH** has only said what **He** was going to do in the future. **His** specific actions don’t come until **2:20-22**, after the period of **the judges** as a whole has been previewed in **2:6-19**. For now, all we have is **Isra’el’s** response to the judgement **they** have just heard: **After The Angel of ADONAI had finished**

speaking to all the Israelites, the people wept loudly . . . and they offered sacrifices to ADONAI (2:4-5b). At the time, these signs of repentance provided some grounds for hope. Perhaps **Isra’el** will turn around, go in the right direction, prove faithful to **YHVH**, and come into full possession of **the land** that **He** promised to give **them** after all! But what follows in **2:6** to **2:19** will show that this hope didn’t last long. Indeed, if **their** remorse had been genuine, **Isra’el’s** history would have been much different, the events described in the rest of the book would have never taken place, and **Judges** wouldn’t have been written. But **Isra’el’s** repentance evaporated, and **they** sank into an apostasy from which even **ADONAI Himself** seemed powerless to retrieve **them**. And this, sadly, leads to, and justifies, the judgement that is finally announced in **2:20-22**.⁴³

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** for being so wise in **Your** discipline. It is awesome to have such a wonderful **Father** who has steadfast love! Even in the midst of trials **Your** love is there as a comfort and support to me (**Psalms 63:5**). But it’s very important to realize that your love, which is sooo great, does not rule out the option of discipline. For you say that love may use discipline as a means of restoring the broken relationship and producing the fruit of righteousness (**Hebrews 11:6,11**). What a joy and a peace to put our faith/trust in **You** and realize that when trials come, they are **not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us. (Romans 8:18)**. To **the One** who sits at **Your** right hand. Amen*