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I Am Sending an Angel Ahead of You to Bring You to the Place I Have Prepared **23: 20-33**

I am sending an angel ahead of you to bring you to the place I have prepared DIG: Why does the Holy Spirit emphasize these four themes? What is God preparing the children of Isra'el for?

REFLECT: In what ways do people sacrifice their children to the god of this world today? What, if any, agreements have you made with the world that you regret?

At the conclusion of the Book of the Covenant, **God** makes a covenant promise that He will bring the Hebrews to **the Promised Land**. **He** will accomplish this by sending His **Angel** before **Isra'el** to lead **the people**. There, **He** would destroy **the pagan peoples**. **Isra'el** would be the instrument of that annihilation. And, afterwards, **God** would richly bless **Isra'el** as long as **they** stayed away from **the idols of Canaan**.⁴⁴⁸ In anticipation of their eventual conquest of **Canaan**, certain regulations were established concerning **their** travel and **their** confrontation with **the enemies** that lived there. **Four basic ideas emerge**.⁴⁴⁹

First, God stressed the need for obedience.⁴⁵⁰ See, I am sending an Angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared. This **Angel** must be obeyed. **Pay attention to Him and listen to what He says. Do not rebel against Him** because **He will not forgive your rebellion, since My Name is in Him (23:22-21)**. **Whatever He does, He does in My name**. Only **God** can forgive sin, and because **He** is part of **the Godhead, God's name is in Him**. This can only be **Jesus Christ**, or **the Angel of the Lord**, who appeared to **Moses at the burning bush (3:1-6)**. Whenever the phrase: **the Angel of the Lord** is seen in the TaNaKh, it is always **the Second Person of the Trinity** or **Yeshua Messiah**. It is never a common, ordinary, run of the mill angel.

There would be a reward for following this **Angel**. **If you listen carefully to what He says and do all that I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies and will oppose those who oppose you (23:22)**. **My Angel will go ahead of you and bring you into the land of**

the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites, and Jebusites, and I will wipe them out (23:23). The children of Isra'el were not to make any converts with the inhabitants of **the Land** nor with **their gods**. **Joshua** made the mistake of making a covenant with the Gibeonites. **He** did not do enough investigating. Of course, the reason **the nation of Isra'el** finally went into the Babylonian captivity was because **they** ended up practicing idolatry by serving other **gods** (see my commentary on [Jeremiah, to see link click Gu - Seventy Years of Imperial Babylonian Rule](#)). They did not heed **God's** warning.⁴⁵¹

The second important theme of this section deals with the worship of the true God. The religions of the ancient Near East were idolatrous. **Their gods** were made out of wood and stone. They worshiped on the high places, or sacred sites with **their sacred** standing **stones**, or altars of sacrifice. How then would **the Israelites** worship the true **God**? They would have to **demolish** all the **Canaanite gods** and be completely separate from **them**. **Ha'Shem** said: **Do not bow down before their gods or worship them or follow their practices. You must demolish them and break their sacred stones to pieces (23:24).**

If **the Israelites** served only **the Lord** there would be five rewards for obedience. **Worship ADONAI your God, and His blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you (23:25).** A play on words occurs in this verse between **food**, the Hebrew word *lehem*, and **sickness**, the Hebrew word *mahalah*. The two are antithetical, and as opposites they demonstrate that **God** will take care of all things for **the Israelites**. For an expanded list of **the blessings** they were promised if **they** displayed obedience to **God**, see **Deuteronomy 7:12-16. And none will miscarry or be barren in your land. I will give you a full life span (23:26).** Much of the religious ritual of **the pagans** was an effort to appease **the gods** so that **they** would ensure fertility for man and all that he owned. Acts such as temple prostitution and child sacrifice served to manipulate **the gods** so that productivity would result. **The Israelites** were not to participate in spiritual adultery. It is **God** and **God** alone who provides the fertility for humans, animals and fields. This teaching is reinforced in **Deuteronomy 7:14.**

If **Isra'el** would follow **ADONAI** to drive out **the Canaanites**, **they** were told that **their** obedience of **Torah** would lead to an ideal utopian world. As yet, this promise goes untested. There has never been a generation which might have merited it. Nevertheless, we see here the expression of the ideal Kingdom. When **Messiah** comes, the blessings of **the Torah** will be fully realized upon **the righteous**, just as the curses will be realized upon **the wicked**. Thus, the work of **Messiah** is the promise of Torah. During the Messianic Kingdom we will see the removal of the last elements of **the Canaanites** which corrupted **the people**

of God. As will all the commandments, these mitzvot are more than just antique legislation, they are the distilled essence of **God.** The warning about **not being yoked with unbelievers** (see the commentary on **Second Corinthians [Bi](#) - Do Not be Unequally Yoked with Unbelievers**) teaches us about the singularity of our covenant with **God.** It is a monogamous relationship.⁴⁵²

The third theme centers on the provisions that God would make for their victory while fighting in the land of Canaan. **God** also promised to give **the Israelites the Land** gradually. **Their enemies**, terrorized by **God**, would be confused and would retreat. **God** said: **I will send My terror ahead of you and throw into confusion every nation you encounter.** That is exactly what happened to the Egyptian army as they attempted to cross the Red Sea (**14:24-25**). **I will make all your enemies turn their backs and run.** Like running to escape the sting of a **hornet**, they would flee in fear and panic. **I will send the hornet ahead of you to drive the Hivites, Canaanites and Hittites out of your way.** **The hornet** probably symbolized Egypt's military strength (compare the symbolic use of flies and bees in **Isaiah 7:18**).⁴⁵³ This would be done gradually. **But I will not drive them out in a single year, because the land would become desolate and the wild animals too numerous for you. Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the land (23:27-30).** As the **Canaanites** would decrease, **the Jews** would increase until **they** inhabited all of **the Promised Land (Judges 1:17-36).**

I will establish your borders from the Red Sea in the south **to the Sea of the Philistines** in the west, **and from the desert** in the east **to the Euphrates River** in the north (**23:31a**). This territory was occupied during the time of Solomon (**First Kings 4:21**), though much of it was not fully under **their** control.⁴⁵⁴ This **Land** will not be totally occupied and under **their** control until the Messianic Kingdom. **God** said, however, **I will hand over to you the people who live in the land**, yet it is your responsibility to **drive them out before you (23:31b).**



The fourth theme of the epilogue focuses on the warning that no covenant should be made with the peoples of Canaan or their gods. The presence of these **enemies** in **the Land** was a constant threat spiritually. Therefore, **He** said: **Do not make a covenant with them or with their gods** like Moloch, whom the Canaanites sacrificed their first born child (23:32). **Do not let them live in your land, or they will cause you to sin against Me, because the worship of their gods will certainly be a snare to you (23:33).** Prohibitions against intermixing with **the pagan peoples** is a common theme in the Torah (**Exodus 34:12-16; Deuteronomy 7:1-5**). For what necessarily happened in such cases is that **the people of God** stumbled. This was a trap, or a **snare**, which **they** were to watch carefully and from which **they** needed to flee (**Deuteronomy 7:16; Joshua 9:3-15, 23:13; Judges 2:3**). The prohibition regarding **idol-worshippers** settling in **the Land** teaches us about the sanctity of **the Land of Isra'el**. It speaks to the very meaning of **holiness**. **Isra'el** is **the Holy Land** because it is set apart by **the Holy God**.

This final section of the Book of the Covenant came with the promise that **ADONAI** was guiding and leading **His** people to a place that **He** had prepared for **them**. No matter how difficult the way, no matter how many obstacles **the people** faced, **God** was still in control. **He** was **the One** in charge, directing **His people** to **the Land** of promise.⁴⁵⁵