

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION TO JUDGES 2

This chapter gives an account of an angel of the Lord appearing and rebuking the children of Israel for their present misconduct, (^{<ORII>}Judges 2:1-5); of their good behaviour under Joshua, and the elders that outlived him, (^{<ORII>}Judges 2:6-10); and of their idolatries they fell into afterwards, which greatly provoked the Lord to anger, (^{<ORII>}Judges 2:11-15); and of the goodness of God to them nevertheless, in raising up judges to deliver them out of the hands of their enemies, of which there are many instances in the following chapter, (^{<ORII>}Judges 2:16-18); and yet that how, upon the demise of such persons, they relapsed into idolatry which caused the anger of God to be hot against them, and to determine not to drive out the Canaanites utterly from them, but to leave them among them to try them, (^{<ORII>}Judges 2:19-23).

Ver. 1. *And an angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim*, etc.] The Targum calls him a prophet ^{f23}; and the Jewish commentators in general interpret it of Phinehas ^{f24}; and that a man is meant is given into by others, because he is said to come from a certain place in Canaan, and not from heaven, and spoke in a public congregation, and is not said to disappear; but neither a man nor a created angel is meant, or otherwise he would have spoken in the name of the Lord, and have said, “thus saith the Lord”, and not in his own name; ascribing to himself the bringing of the children of Israel out of Egypt, and swearing to them, and making a covenant with them, and threatening what he would do to them because of their sin; wherefore the uncreated Angel, the Angel of the covenant, is meant, who brought Israel out of Egypt, was with them in the wilderness, and introduced them into the land of Canaan, and appeared to Joshua as the Captain of the Lord’s host at or near Gilgal, (^{<ORII>}Joshua 5:13,14); and because he had not appeared since, therefore he is said to come from thence to a place afterwards called Bochim, from what happened at this time:

and said, I made you to go out of Egypt; that is, obliged Pharaoh king of Egypt to let them go, by inflicting plagues upon him and his people, which made them urgent upon them to depart:

and I have brought you unto the land which I sware unto your fathers; into the land of Canaan, now for the most part conquered, and divided among them, and in which they were settled:

and I said, I will never break my covenant with you; if the covenant between them was broken, it should not begin with him, it would be their own fault; all which is mentioned, as so many instances of divine goodness to them, and as so many aggravations of their sins against God.

Ver. 2. *And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land,* etc.] This the Lord charged them not to do, when he covenanted with them, and assured them of bringing them into the land; and yet they had done it, as some instances in the preceding chapter show, which were the occasion of the angel's coming to them to rebuke them, (see ~~Exod~~ Deuteronomy 7:2);

you shall throw down their altars; this they ought to have done as soon as they were come into the land, and possessed of the places where they were erected, to show their detestation of idolatry, and to prevent the use of them to idolatrous purposes, (see ~~Exod~~ Deuteronomy 7:5 12:3);

but ye have not obeyed my voice; the command of God, but on the contrary had made leagues and covenants with several inhabitants of the land, allowing them to dwell among them on paying a certain tax or tribute to them; and had suffered their altars to continue, and them to sacrifice upon them to their idols, according to their former customs:

why have ye done this? transgressed the commandment of God in the instances mentioned. It showed the wickedness of their hearts, their ingratitude to God, who had done such great things for them, and their proneness to idolatry, and liking of it.

Ver. 3. *Wherefore I also said,* etc.] Supposing, or on condition of their being guilty of the above things, which was foreseen they would:

I will not drive them out from before you; the seven nations of the Canaanites entirely, and which accounts for the various instances related in the preceding chapter; where it is observed, that they could not, or did not, drive the old inhabitants out of such and such places, because they sinned

against the Lord, and he forsook them, and would not assist them in their enterprises, or them to their sloth and indolence:

but they shall be [as thorns] in your sides: very troublesome and afflicting, (see ⁴⁰³⁵Numbers 33:55); or for straits, as the Septuagint, or be such as would bring them into tribulation, and distress them, as the Targum; so they often did:

and their gods shall be a snare unto you; which they suffered to continue, and did not destroy them, as they ought to have done; they would be, as they proved, ensnaring to them, and whereby they were drawn to forsake the worship of the true God, and bow down to them, as we read in some following verses.

Ver. 4. *And it came to pass, when the angel of the Lord spake these words unto all the children of Israel*, etc.] This being either one of the three solemn feasts, when all the males appeared at the tabernacle of the Lord; or else here was now a solemn convention of all the tribes to inquire of the Lord the reason why they were not able to drive out the Canaanites in some places, and why they prevailed over them in many:

that the people lift up their voice, and wept; being affected with what the angel said, and convicted in their consciences of their sins, and so fearing the bad consequences thereof, they wept because of the sins they had been guilty of, and because of the evils that were like to befall them on account of them.

Ver. 5. *And they called the name of that place Bochim*, etc.] Which signifies “weepers”, from the general lamentation of the people, which before had another name; very probably it was Shiloh itself since all Israel was gathered together, the tabernacle being now at Shiloh, and also because sacrifices were offered up, as follows:

and they sacrificed there unto the Lord; to atone for the sins they had committed; and if they did this in the faith of the great sacrifice of the Messiah, they did well; however, so far there was an acknowledgment of their guilt, and a compliance with the appointments of God directed to in such cases.

Ver. 6. *And when Joshua had let the people go*, etc.] This is not to be connected with what goes before, as if that was done in Joshua’s lifetime; for during that, as is after testified, the people of Israel served the Lord;

whereas the angel, in the speech to them before related, charges them with disobeying the voice of the Lord, making leagues with the inhabitants of the land, and not demolishing their altars, all which was after the death of Joshua; but this refers to a meeting of them with him before his death, and his dismissal of them, which was either when he had divided the land by lot unto them, or when he had given them his last charge before his death, (see ^{<124>}Joshua 24:28); and this, and what follows, are repeated and introduced here, to connect the history of Israel, and to show them how they fell into idolatry, and so under the divine displeasure, which brought them into distress, from which they were delivered at various times by judges of his own raising up, which is the subject matter of this book:

the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land; as it was divided to the several tribes and their families; which seems to confirm the first sense given, that this refers to the dismissal of the people upon the division of the land among them.

Ver. 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.*] In Egypt, at the Red sea, in the wilderness, at the river Jordan, and in the land of Canaan; (see Gill on ^{<124>}Joshua 24:31”). The Jews ^{f25} say, the elders died on the fifth of Shebet, which answers to part of January and part of February, on which account a fast was kept on that day.

Ver. 8. *And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, [being] an hundred and ten years old.* (See Gill on ^{<124>}Joshua 24:29”).

Ver. 9. *And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathheres,* etc.] In (^{<124>}Joshua 24:30); it is called Timnathserah, the letters of “serah” being here inverted, make “heres”, which sometimes is used for the sun, (^{<124>}Job 9:7); and therefore some observe, that the whole name signifies the figure of the sun, which the Jews say was put on his monument, in commemoration of the miracle of the sun standing still at his request, and had this inscription on it,

“this is he that caused the sun to stand still;”

but this is not very probable, since it might have had a tendency to idolatry, the sun being what was the first object of idolatrous worship among the Heathens, and had the greatest show of reason for it:

in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash; (see Gill on “⁽⁴²⁴⁾Joshua 24:30”).

Ver. 10. *And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers,* etc.] Were dead and buried, that is, the greatest part of those that were contemporaries with the elders that outlived Joshua; for they might not be all dead, at least not all that came out of Egypt, and still less all that came into the land of Canaan; for, according to the computation of Ben Gersom, the time of Joshua and the elders were but twenty seven years; and there were no more than sixty seven years from their coming out of Egypt to this time; and no doubt there were men living of eighty years of age and more, but these might be but few:

and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord; so as to love, fear, serve, and worship him; did not own him to be the one only living and true God, otherwise they must know him nationally, being educated in the true religion:

nor yet the works which he had done for Israel; some of them, as before observed, might have seen the works and wonders of the Lord for Israel, at their first coming out of Egypt; though not being wise, as the above writer observes, it had no effect upon them, to keep them from doing evil in the sight of God; and they all of them had been informed of them, and many had seen, and must have had personal knowledge of what was done for them at their coming into the land of Canaan; but not a practical knowledge, or such as had any influence upon them, to preserve them from idolatry.

Ver. 11. *And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord,* etc.] Openly and publicly, boldly and impudently, in the very face of God, and amidst all the good things they received from him, which were aggravating circumstances of their sins; what the evil was they did is next observed:

and served Baalim; the idol Baal, as the Arabic version, of which there were many, and therefore a plural word is used; to which the apostle refers (⁽⁴²⁵⁾1 Corinthians 8:5); for the word signifies “lords”, and there were Baalpeor, Baalzebub, Baalberith, etc. and who seem to have their name from Bal, Bel, or Belus, a king of Babylon after Nimrod, and who was the first monarch that was deified, the Jupiter of the Heathens. Theophilus of Antioch ^{f26} says, that, according to the history of Thallus, Belus the king of the Assyrians, whom they worshipped, was older than the Trojan war three

hundred twenty two years; and that some call Cronus or Saturn Bel and Bal; by the Assyrians called Bel, and in the Punic or Phoenician language Bal^{f27}.

Ver. 12. *And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers*, etc.] The covenant God of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and of their more immediate ancestors; his worship they forsook, neglected his tabernacle, and the service of it:

which brought them out of the land of Egypt; out of wretched misery and bondage there, with an high hand, and outstretched arm; and led them through the wilderness, and provided for them there, and brought them into the land of Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey; but all these mercies were forgotten by them:

and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that [were] round about them: the gods of the Canaanites and Phoenicians, of the Egyptians, and of the Moabites, Amorites, and Edomites, that were round about them, on the borders of them; instead of one God they worshipped many, even all in or about the land of Canaan; so much given were they to idolatry:

and bowed themselves unto them; giving them all religious worship and honour they were capable of:

and provoked the Lord to anger; nothing is more provoking to him than idolatry; he being a jealous God, and will not bear any rival in worship, nor his glory to be given to another, to a strange god.

Ver. 13. *And they forsook the Lord*, etc.] The worship of the Lord, as the Targum; this is repeated to observe the heinous sin they were guilty of, and how displeasing it was to God:

and served Baal and Ashtaroth; two images, as the Arabic version adds; Baal, from whence Baalim, may signify the he deities of the Gentiles, as Jupiter, Hercules, etc. and Ashtaroth their female deities, as Juno, Venus, Diana, etc. the word is plural, and used for flocks of sheep, so called because they make the owners of them rich; and Kimchi and Ben Melech say these were images in the form of female sheep. Perhaps, as Baal may signify the sun, so Ashtaroth the moon, and the stars like flocks of sheep about her. Ashtaroth was the goddess of the Zidonians, (¹¹¹¹⁶1 Kings 11:5,33); the same with Astarte, the wife of Cronus or Ham, said to be the Phoenician or Syrian Venus. So Lucian says^{f28} there was a temple in

Phoenicia, belonging to the Sidonians, which they say is the temple of Astarte; and, says he, I think that Astarte is the moon; and Astarte is both by the Phoenicians ^{f29} and Grecians ^{f30} said to be Venus, and was worshipped by the Syrians also, as Minutius Felix ^{f31} and Tertullian ^{f32} affirm; the same with Eostre, or Aestar, the Saxon goddess; hence to this day we call the passover Easter ^{f33}, being in Easter-month; and with Andraste, a goddess of the ancient Britains ^{f34}. There were four of them, and therefore the Septuagint here uses the plural number Astartes; so called either from Asher, being reckoned “blessed” ones, or from Asheroth, the groves they were worshipped in; or from אַשׁ, “Ash”, and רַוַּת, “Tor”, the constellation Taurus or the bull; so Astarte by Sanchoniatho is said to put upon her head the head of a bull, as the token of her sovereignty; (see Gill on “~~0146~~Genesis 14:5”).

Ver. 14. *And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel*, etc.] For the idolatries they were guilty of; it burned within him, it broke forth, and was poured out like fire on them, and consumed them; (see Na 1:6);

and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them; that rifled their houses, and plundered them of their goods and substance:

and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about; the is, delivered them into their hands, who carried them captive, where they were as men sold for slaves; (see ~~0412~~Psalm 44:12); and this was in just retaliation, that as they had said themselves to work wickedness, the Lord sold them into the hands of their enemies for their wickedness; and, as they had followed the gods of the people round about them, so he delivered them up, into the hands of their enemies round about them, as the Mesopotamians, Moabites, Midianites, Philistines, and Ammonites:

so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies; but turned their backs on them, and fled whenever engaged in war with them.

Ver. 15. *Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil*, etc.] They prospered not in any business they undertook, or put their hands unto; or in any expedition they went upon, or when they went out to war, as Kimchi, Ben Melech, and Abarbinel explain the phrase: the battle went against them, because God was against them; his hand was against them, and there was no resisting and turning that back; and this sense seems to agree with what goes before and follows after; though in some Jewish writings ^{f35} it is explained of those that went out of the land to

escape the calamities of it, and particularly of Elimelech and his two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, (^{<0800>}Ruth 1:1,2);

as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn unto them; having ratified and confirmed his threatening with an oath, that if they served other gods, he would surely bring upon them all the curses of the law; (see ^{<0512>}Deuteronomy 29:12-20);

and they were greatly distressed; by the Canaanites they suffered to dwell among them, who were pricks in their eyes, and thorns in their sides, as had been threatened them; and by the nations round about them, who came in upon them, and plundered them, and carried them captive.

Ver. 16. *Nevertheless, the Lord raised up judges*, etc.] Who are particularly mentioned by name, and their exploits recorded, in some following chapters, and from whom the book in general has its name: these were men that God raised up in an extraordinary manner, and spirited and qualified for the work he had to do by them; which was to deliver the people of Israel out of the hands of their oppressors, and restore them to their privileges and liberties, and protect them in them, and administer justice to them; which was a wonderful instance of the goodness of God to them, notwithstanding their many provoking sins and transgressions:

which delivered them out of the hands of those that spoiled them; who took away their goods and cattle from them, and carried their persons captive: these were the instruments of recovering both again, just as Abraham brought again Lot and all his goods.

Ver. 17. *And yet they would not hearken unto their judges*, etc.] Afterwards, or not always; but when they admonished them of their sins, and advised them to walk in the good ways of God, and serve him only; they turned a deaf ear to them, and went on in their own ways, which is a sad aggravation of their iniquities:

but they went a whoring after their gods, and bowed themselves unto them; committing spiritual adultery, for such idolatry is, and is often so represented in Scripture; for by it they broke the covenant God made with them, which had the nature of a matrimonial contract, and in which God was an husband to them; and therefore serving other gods was rejecting him as such, and committing whoredom with others; than which nothing was more provoking to God, jealous of his honour and glory:

they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in; as soon as ever Joshua and the elders were dead, they departed from the God of their fathers, and the way in which they worshipped him; and so likewise quickly after they had been delivered by the judges, or however as soon as they were dead:

obeying the commandments of the Lord; serving him at his tabernacle, according to the laws, commands, and ordinances he gave to Moses, which is to be understood of their fathers:

[but] they did not so; did not walk in the same way, nor serve the Lord, and obey his commands, as their fathers did; but all the reverse.

Ver. 18. *And when the Lord raised them up judges, then the Lord was with the judge*, etc.] Every one of them that he raised up; as he stirred up their spirits for such service, to judge his people, and qualified them for it, he assisted and strengthened them, and abode by them, and succeeded them in whatsoever they engaged for the welfare of the people; the Targum is,

“the Word of the Lord was for the help of the judge:”

and delivered them out of the hands of their enemies all the days of the judge; so long as a judge lived, or continued to be their judge, they were protected by him, and preserved from falling into the hands of their enemies:

for it repented the Lord because of their groanings, by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them; the Lord being merciful had compassion upon them, when they groaned under their oppressions, and cried unto him, then he received their prayer, as the Targum, and sent them a deliverer; and so did what men do when they repent of a thing, change their conduct; thus the Lord changed the outward dispensation of his providence towards them, according to his unchangeable will; for otherwise repentance, properly speaking, does not belong unto God: the Targum is,

“he turned from the word he spake;”

the threatening he had denounced.

Ver. 19. *And it came to pass, when the judge was dead*, etc.] Any one of them, the first and so all succeeding ones:

[that] they returned; to their evil ways and idolatrous practices, from which they reformed, and for which they showed outward repentance during the life of the judge; but he dying, they returned again to them:

and corrupted [themselves] more than their fathers; in Egypt and in the wilderness; or rather than their fathers that lived in the generation after the death of Joshua; and so in every generation that lived before a judge was raised up to deliver them out of the evils brought upon them; the children of those in every age successively grew worse than their fathers:

in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; not content with the idols their fathers served, they sought after and found out others, and were more constant and frequent in their worship and service of them, and increased their sacrifices and acts of devotion to them:

they ceased not from their own doings; or, “did not let them fall”^{f36}; but retained them, and continued in the practice of them, being what they were naturally inclined unto and delighted in:

nor from their stubborn way; which they were bent upon, and determined to continue in: or “their hard way”^{f37}; which their hard hearts had chosen, and they obstinately persisted in, being obdurate and stiffnecked; and which, in the issue, they would find hard, troublesome, and distressing to them, though at present soft and agreeable, and in which they went on smoothly; but in time would find it rough and rugged, offensive, stumbling, and ruinous; or it may signify a hard beaten path, a broad road which multitudes trod in, as is the way of sin.

Ver. 20. *And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel*, etc.] As at first, so whenever they fell into idolatry; (see ^{<0014>}Judges 2:14);

and he said, because this people have transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers; made at Sinai, in which they were enjoined to have no other gods before him:

and have not hearkened to my voice; in his commands, and particularly what related to his worship and against idolatry.

Ver. 21. *I also henceforth will not drive out and from before them*, etc.] At least not as yet, not very soon nor hastily, as in (^{<0023>}Judges 2:23);

of the nations which Joshua left when he died; that is, unsubdued; which was owing either to the infirmities of old age coming upon him, which

made him incapable of engaging further in war with the Canaanites; or to the sloth and indolence of the people, being weary of war, and not caring to prosecute it; or to want of men to cultivate any more land, and people other cities, than what they were possessed of; and chiefly this was owing to the providence of God, who had an end to answer hereby, as follows.

Ver. 22. *That through them I may prove Israel*, etc.] Afflict them by them, and so prove or try them, their faith and patience, which are tried by afflictions; and such were the Canaanites to them, as afflictions and temptations are to the spiritual Israel of God; or rather, whether they would keep in the ways of God, or walk in those the Canaanites did, as follows:

whether they will keep the way of the Lord, as their fathers did keep [it], or not; whether they would worship the true God their fathers did, or the gods of the Canaanites; not that the Lord was ignorant of what they would do, and so made the experiment; but that the sincerity and faithfulness, or insincerity and unfaithfulness of their hearts, might appear to themselves and others.

Ver. 23. *Therefore the Lord left these nations, without driving them out hastily*, etc.] Left them unsubdued, or suffered them to continue among the Israelites, and did not drive them out as he could have done; which was permitted, either that it might be seen and known whether Israel would give into the idolatry of these nations or not, (^(~~1022~~)Judges 2:22); of which there could have been no trial, if they and their idols had been utterly destroyed; or because the children of Israel had transgressed the covenant of the Lord, therefore he would drive no more of them out, but leave them to afflict and distress them, and thereby prove and try them, (^(~~1021~~)Judges 2:20,21); both senses may very well stand, but the former seems rather to agree with what follows:

neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua; having an end to be answered by them, before suggested, namely, to prove and try Israel; and, for a like reason, the indwelling sin and corruptions of God's people are suffered to remain in them, for the trial of their graces, and that the power of God in the support and deliverance of them might appear the more manifest.