

Exodus 23:20-33 (KJV)

²⁰ Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. ²¹ Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name *is* in him. ²² But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries. ²³ For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off. ²⁴ Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images. ²⁵ And ye shall serve the LORD your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee. ²⁶ There shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren, in thy land: the number of thy days I will fulfil. ²⁷ I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee. ²⁸ And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee. ²⁹ I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee. ³⁰ By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land. ³¹ And I will set thy bounds from the Red sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river: for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee. ³² Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. ³³ They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee.

Mine Angel Shall Go Before Thee

OUTLINE

- (1) Purifying Presence (v20-21, 24, 32-33)**
- (2) Prospering Presence (v22-23)**
- (3) Protective Presence (v24-31)**

INTRODUCTION

The making of a nation in God's economy is an elaborate affair. For Israel, the nation God Himself creates and designs sets the example for all the nations of the world. God would make them a multitude from a family of 70 when they entered Egypt. This was foretold to Abram when **God made a covenant with him** in Genesis 15 concerning the nation that God will establish through his loins.

Genesis 15:13-16 (KJV) ¹³ *And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;* ¹⁴ *And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.* ¹⁵ *And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.* ¹⁶ *But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.*

The Lord sees to the details of establishing the nation. When God chooses you for salvation, He sees to the details of establishing you as His witness. You are guided, guarded and gifted for God's glory in God's economy.

Israel was freed from the bondage for Egyptian rule so that they may be fearfully and wonderfully ruled under God. Israel was a theocracy in her origin. God rules Israel.

They were three months out of Egypt when they reached Mount Sinai.

Exodus 19:1-8 (KJV) ¹ *In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai.* ² *For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount.* ³ *And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;* ⁴ *Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.* ⁵ *Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:* ⁶ *And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.* *These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.* ⁷ *And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him.* ⁸ *And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.*

You recall in our introduction to chapter 19, we said, “God unfolds for us His purpose in establishing the nation of Israel when He said that they shall be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. A priest is a representative of God before men. And a kingdom of priests makes the nation a witness to all the nations of the world of the living and true God of Israel. This was the purpose for the establishment of Israel. And the ground work is being prepared with the appointment of Israel’s judges for the giving of the constitution for this holy nation, the laws that govern this holy nation.”

Obedience to God’s laws establishes Israel as a holy nation before God. We have taken time to consider the giving of the law in Exodus 20-23. These are the laws that God require of His people that they may prosper in the sight of God and men.

Proverbs 3:1-4 (KJV) ¹ *My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments:* ² *For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.* ³ *Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart:* ⁴ *So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.*

These righteous laws bring order and peace and harmony to the nation. When practised, these laws exalt the nation as a wise and understanding people before the nations of the world.

(1) Purifying Presence (v20-21, 24, 32-33)

(2) Prospering Presence (v22-23)

(3) Protective Presence (v24-31)

(1) Purifying Presence (v20-21, 24, 32-33)

²⁰ *Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared.*

The Lord sends an Angel to be with His people, guarding and guiding them in the way. The Lord sought their cooperation to hearken to the Angel’s instruction of wisdom to navigate them in the way to the Promised Land to establish them as a nation.

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The angel Gabriel was sent to instruct Daniel concerning Israel's future on the 69th year of their captivity.

Daniel 8:15-19 (KJV) ¹⁵ And it came to pass, when I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man. ¹⁶ And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision. ¹⁷ So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision. ¹⁸ Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright. ¹⁹ And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be.

The angel Gabriel was sent to give the priest Zecharias concerning the birth of John the Baptizer out of his marriage with Elizabeth. He shall be the forerunner of Christ.

Luke 1:19-21 (KJV) ¹⁹ And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings. ²⁰ And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. ²¹ And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple.

Luke 1:5-18 (KJV) ⁵ There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. ⁶ And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. ⁷ And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years. ⁸ And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, ⁹ According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. ¹⁰ And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. ¹¹ And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. ¹³ But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. ¹⁴ And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. ¹⁵ For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. ¹⁶ And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. ¹⁸ And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.

²¹ Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him.

Zecharias was struck dumb because of his unbelief concerning the prophecy of the angel's words till the birth of John.

Israel was instructed to obey the voice of God's angel sent to guide them in their journey. They are to beware of him and obey his voice.

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The word “beware” is a command. It is the Hebrew word “šāmar” שָׁמַר which means *to watch, to keep, to preserve, to guard, to be careful, to watch over, to watch carefully over, to be on one’s guard*. The verb means to watch, to guard, to care for. The angel was to care for their well-being. Israel is also to be on guard “*after He has said that an angel shall be their guardian, He warns them, on the other hand, that they should guard themselves. Herein the Angel is exalted above the rank of a human being, since He is appointed to be their judge, if the Israelites should offend in any respect...*” (Calvin)

The word “obey” is also a command. It is the Hebrew word “šāma” שָׁמַע which means *to hear, to obey, to listen, to be heard of, to be regarded, to cause to hear, to proclaim, to sound aloud*.

Both words sound alike in the original perhaps for emphasis. And the urgent message is that Israel will not provoke, be bitter against, towards the instruction of the angel given for their good. The negative not “*al*” gives a word of emotive appeal.

And the other negative “not” - *for he will not pardon your transgressions* – is the word “lo” which means “an objective negation according to fact”. Of a truth, your transgression or rebellion will certainly be dealt with.

Calvin said well, “God here reminds the Israelites that their wellbeing is so connected with the keeping of the Law, that, by neglecting it, they would sorely suffer. For He says that He will be their leader by the hand of an angel, which was a token of His fatherly love for them; but, on the other hand, He threatens that they would not be unpunished if they should despise such great mercy and follow their own lusts, because they will not escape the sight of the angel whom He had appointed to be their guardian.”

The Angel provides a sanctifying influence on His people to judge the people for their waywardness should they depart from the Lord and go after the gods of the land.

³² *Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods.* ³³ *They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee.*

The warning is given against spiritual idolatry which God abhors. The Lord forbids any association that leads one to worship these false gods.

(2) Prospering Presence (v22-24)

²² *But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries.* ²³ *For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off.* ²⁴ *Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images.*

The Lord shall fight for His people as they obey His voice, according to His law, that they may bring honour and glory to His Name. By their obedience, the Lord shall fulfil His purpose to bring them into the land and drive out their enemies and establish them as a nation.

Indeed, when Joshua led them into Canaan, the Jordan River was parted as dry land for them to cross safely. The Angel also provided Joshua with the strategy to take the city of Jericho.

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When they obeyed the Lord, there was victory. When they disobeyed the Lord, there was defeat. Achan coveted the spoils of Jericho, hid them beneath his tents, the accursed thing caused Israel to be defeated. Until the accursed thing was destroyed, Israel experienced God's wrath.

Joshua 7:19-26 (KJV) ¹⁹ And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me. ²⁰ And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: ²¹ When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it. ²² So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it. ²³ And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD. ²⁴ And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. ²⁵ And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones. ²⁶ And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day.

Prosperity hinges upon their obedience. A lesson that Israel learned through defeat and the need to get right with God. They cleaned house. God restored them to favour.

Indeed, sin is an abomination to God. When God's people would be disobedient and meddle with sin, they experience God's chastisement.

Hebrews 12:3-11 (KJV) ³ For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. ⁴ Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. ⁵ And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: ⁶ For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. ⁷ If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? ⁸ But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. ⁹ Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? ¹⁰ For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. ¹¹ Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

Chastisement was meant to restore them back to God's favour.

(3) Protective Presence (v25-31)

²⁵ And ye shall serve the LORD your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee.

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The Lord shall bless them with bread sufficient for their needs and the supply of water. Also, He shall take away their sicknesses. The plagues of diseases shall not come nigh them.

Psalm 91:1-4 (KJV) ¹ *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.* ² *I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.* ³ *Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.* ⁴ *He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.*

²⁶ *There shall nothing cast their young, nor be barren, in thy land: the number of thy days I will fulfil.*

The Lord also shall cause their womb to be fruitful.

Psalm 127:1-3 (KJV) ¹ *Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.* ² *It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.* ³ *Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.*

²⁷ *I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee.* ²⁸ *And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee.* ²⁹ *I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee.* ³⁰ *By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land.* ³¹ *And I will set thy bounds from the Red sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river: for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee.*

God will cause His dread to be upon the hearts of Israel's enemies so that they have no strength before them.

Rahab, the harlot, inhabitant of Jericho, gave a glimpse of the dread that God put in the heart of Israel's enemies.

Joshua 2:9-13 (KJV) ⁹ *And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you.* ¹⁰ *For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed.* ¹¹ *And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.* ¹² *Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token:* ¹³ *And that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.*

The Gibeonites, a people of the land, understood the terror of Israel's God, sought a peace treaty albeit by trickery.

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Joshua 9:1-14 (KJV) ¹ And it came to pass, when all the kings which were on this side Jordan, in the hills, and in the valleys, and in all the coasts of the great sea over against Lebanon, the Hittite, and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, heard thereof; ² That they gathered themselves together, to fight with Joshua and with Israel, with one accord. ³ And when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and to Ai, ⁴ They did work wilily, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles, old, and rent, and bound up; ⁵ And old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy. ⁶ And they went to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country: now therefore make ye a league with us. ⁷ And the men of Israel said unto the Hivites, Peradventure ye dwell among us; and how shall we make a league with you? ⁸ And they said unto Joshua, We are thy servants. And Joshua said unto them, Who are ye? and from whence come ye? ⁹ And they said unto him, From a very far country thy servants are come because of the name of the LORD thy God: for we have heard the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt, ¹⁰ And all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites, that were beyond Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon, and to Og king of Bashan, which was at Ashtaroth. ¹¹ Wherefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spake to us, saying, Take victuals with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say unto them, We are your servants: therefore now make ye a league with us. ¹² This our bread we took hot for our provision out of our houses on the day we came forth to go unto you; but now, behold, it is dry, and it is mouldy: ¹³ And these bottles of wine, which we filled, were new; and, behold, they be rent: and these our garments and our shoes are become old by reason of the very long journey. ¹⁴ And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD.

God was there to help them, they had to keep close to God, hearken to His counsel to experience their protective care.

CONCLUSION

He will be there to drive the enemies out and as they rely upon Him, He will bless their way to inherit the land. Amen.