

COUNCIL OF GODS OR MEN?

Introduction: In The Unseen Realm, author Michael Heiser promoted the fallen angel story and the idea that Psalm 82 describes a divine council scene in heaven. He asserted that God condemned the behavior of the council of gods for unjust legal decisions favoring the wicked and oppressing the poor. However, judging human legal issues was given to human judges, not celestial beings. In Exodus 18 a court system, similar to the U.S. judicial structure, was set up under Moses. Members were entrusted to be representatives of Yahweh. We will seek to show Psalm 82 describes a congregation of human judges in King David's day, referred to as "gods", who were unworthy of their high position and deserving of judgment. Familiarity with Exodus 18:13-27 is essential to understand Psalm 82.

1. In Psalm 82, the word "Elohim" [#430], refers to both God and human judges.

("Elohim" is an irregular plural noun. It is both plural and singular, like moose, sheep, deer, etc.)

Psalm 82: A psalm of Asaph.

1 "God [#430] stands in the assembly of El [#430]; in the midst of the gods [#430] he renders judgment."

2 He says, "How long will you make unjust legal decisions and show favoritism to the wicked?" (Selah)

3 Defend the cause of the poor and the fatherless! Vindicate the oppressed and suffering!

4 Rescue the poor and needy! Deliver them from the power of the wicked!

5 They neither know nor understand. They stumble around in the dark, while all the foundations of the earth crumble.

6 I thought, "You are gods [#430]; all of you are sons of the Most High."

7 "Yet you will die like mortals; you will fall like all the other rulers."

8 "Rise up, O God [#430], and execute judgment on the earth! For you own all the nations."

2. Psalm 82 is a Psalm of Asaph. Asaph was a prophet, levite and poet.

"King Hezekiah and the officials told the Levites to praise the LORD, using the psalms of David and Asaph the prophet." 2 Chr 29:30

3. Our present understanding of Psalm 82:

The prophet Asaph, representing Yahweh, stood in the congregation of the judges in Israel, charging them with corruption. They favored the wicked, likely the rich and powerful with whom they were associated. The poor and oppressed were the victims of their corruption. These unethical judges had no moral compass and undermined the very foundations of their society with lawless decisions. They were supposed to be God's righteous agents and inheritors of everlasting life (Dan. 12:2). Instead, these judges would be destroyed like all other corrupt pagan leaders. Asaph called on Yahweh to judge the land—a reference to the land of Israel. Asaph ends with the affirmation that Yahweh owns all the nations.

4. Moses divided up judicial responsibilities with other reputable men. The judges had to be God fearing, trustworthy and hate bribery. They would speak for God. (See underlined phrases.)

A. Moses said, "... the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a dispute, it comes to me and I decide between a man and his neighbor, and I make known the decrees of God and his laws...Moses chose capable men from all Israel, and he made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. They judged the people under normal circumstances; the difficult cases they would bring to Moses, but every small case they would judge themselves. Ex18:15-18, 25-26.

B. The Lord said to Moses, "Gather to me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know are elders of the people and officials over them, and bring them to the tent of meeting; let them take their position there with you. Then I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take part of the spirit that is on you, and will put it on them, and they will bear some of the burden of the people with you, so that you do not bear it all by yourself." Num 11:16-17

C. Moses said, "[I] admonished your judges at that time that they should...judge fairly, whether between one citizen and another or a citizen and a resident foreigner. They must not discriminate in judgment, but hear the lowly and the great alike. Nor should they be intimidated by human beings, for judgment belongs to God. If the matter being adjudicated is too difficult for them, they should bring it before me for a hearing." Dt. 1:15-17

5. Elohim (gods #430) is translated as judges in Exodus 21 & 22 in some translations. We agree. The lower level judges were set up to address the very issues named here: disputes over servants, theft, illegal possessions, etc.

A. Matters pertaining to servants: "But if the servant should declare, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free, then his master must bring him to the judges [gods #430], and he will bring him to the door or the doorposts, and his master will pierce his ear with an awl, and he shall serve him forever.'" Ex 21:5-6

B. Matters pertaining to theft: "If the thief is not caught, then the owner of the house will be brought before the judges [gods #430] to see whether he has laid his hand on his neighbor's goods." Ex 22:8

C. Matters pertaining to illegal possessions: "In all cases of illegal possessions, whether for an ox, a donkey, a sheep, a garment, or any kind of lost item, about which someone says 'This belongs to me,' the matter of the two of them will come before the judges [gods #430], and the one whom the judges declare guilty must repay double to his neighbor." Ex 22:9

6. No sinful celestial angels. All serve and exalt God.

- A. "Praise him, all his angels! Praise him, all his heavenly assembly!" Ps 148:2
- B. "Are they [angels] not all ministering spirits, sent out to serve those who will inherit salvation?" Heb 1:14
- C. "The Lord has established his throne in heaven; his kingdom extends over everything. Praise the Lord, you angels of his, you powerful warriors who carry out his decrees and obey his orders! Praise the Lord, all you warriors of his, you servants of his who carry out his desires!" Ps 103:19-21

7. Jesus identified "the gods" of Psalm 82. They were of "those to whom the word of God came" i.e. Israel.

- A. Jesus answered, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, you are gods'. If those to whom the word of God came were called 'gods' (and the scripture cannot be broken) do you say about the one whom the Father set apart and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming, because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?" Jn 10:34-36
- B. "God, having in the past spoken to the fathers [Israel] through the prophets at many times and in various ways, has at the end of these days spoken to us by his Son..." Heb 1:1-2

8. In Psalms 82, the gods were called "sons [#1121] of God". This designation was used for Israel, believers, celestial angels, and Adam in various contexts. In Psalm 82, "sons of God" pertained to the judges of Israel.

Israel: "You are sons [#1121] of the Lord your God." Deut. 14:1

Israel: "You must say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the Lord, Israel is my son [#1121], my firstborn, and I said to you, Let my son go that he may serve me..." Ex 4:22-23

Believers: "...and it will come to pass that, in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people', they will be called 'sons [#1121] of the living God.'" Hos 1:10

Angels: "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? ... when the morning stars sang in chorus, and all the sons [#1121] of God shouted for joy?" Job 38:4-7

Adam: "...the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God." Lk 3:38 (note: Gen 5:3 "When Adam had lived 130 years he fathered a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and he named him Seth.")

9. Asaph called on God to execute judgment on "the land [#776]"—a reference to the "gods"/judges in Israel.

- A. "Rise up, O God, and execute judgment on the earth [land #776]!" Ps. 82:8
- B. "...tell the people of the land [#776], thus says the Lord..." Ezek 12:19,
- C. "...when the people of the land [#776] shall come before Yahweh..." Ezek 46:9
- D. "All the people of the land [#776] went to the house of Baal, and broke it down..." 2 Kgs 11:18
- E. "...sixty men of the people of the land [#776] ..." 2 Kgs 25:19
- F. "...he took an officer...who mustered the people of the land [#776] ..." Jer 52:25

10. Asaph ended the Psalm with the emphatic exclamation that Yahweh owns all the nations.

"For you own all the nations." Ps 82:8

NOTE: Other Preterist Papers that pertain to the fallen angel mythology:

- #59. Serpent in the Garden was not Satan
- #60. Problems with the Idea of Satan in the Old Testament
- #61. Problems with the word Satan in the New Testament
- #62. Satan in Job
- #63. Did the Devil Tempt Jesus? (Mt 4)
- #64. A Study of Satan by Francis Beffert (142 page document)
- #65. Are there Wicked Angels in Jude? (Jude)
- #66. "The Ruler of this World" is Not Satan. (Jn. 14:30)
- #67. Are there Evil Powers in Heaven? (Ephesian 6:12)
- #68. War in Heaven—Revelation 12
- #69. Lucifer was not a Fallen Angel (Isaiah 14)
- #70. Beautiful Fallen Angel? (Ezekiel 28)

See also: The Real Devil by Duncan Heaster <https://www.realdevil.info/5-4.htm>