Question: What does it mean to “anger” a person or an angel? (Exodus 23:21)

Answer:Let’s go back to the passage...

> *Exodus 23:20-22*
> *“Behold, I send an angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared.*
> *21 Be careful before him and obey his voice; do not provoke him, for he will not pardon your transgressions; for My name is in him.*
> *22 But if you indeed obey his voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.”*

To “anger” someone, as mentioned in the Bible, means to provoke them to anger. In this context, God is saying not to anger the angel He sends, because if you do, the angel will not forgive your sins.

What would provoke the angel to anger?
It’s not anything trivial, but rather actions like “forsaking God and

worshiping other gods” or “failing to keep His Word.” You’ll see that the children of Israel repeatedly angered the angel during their time in the wilderness, and even when they entered the Promised Land.

One clear example of this was when they delayed driving out the nations they encountered in the Promised Land and entered into covenants with their gods—an abomination before God and His angel, who had led them into that land.

> *Judges 2:1-5*
> *“Then the Angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bokim, and said: ‘I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land which I swore to your fathers; and I said, I will never break My covenant with you.*
> *2 And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars. But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this?*
> *3 Therefore I also said, I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare to you.’*
> *4 So it was, when the Angel of the Lord spoke these words to all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voices and wept.*

> *5 Then they called the name of that place Bokim; and they sacrificed there to the Lord.”*

Even today, people provoke God’s angels by living contrary to God’s Word. The Scriptures say that every believer has their own angel who stands before God, delivering good news and ministering on their behalf (see Matthew 18:10 and Hebrews 1:13-14).

So when someone acts in opposition to God’s Word, the angel assigned to them is grieved and upset as well.

But it’s not just angels who are angered; we also provoke God Himself by our sinful actions. The children of Israel provoked God during their time in the wilderness, and we, even today, provoke Him with our sins.

> *Deuteronomy 9:7-9*
> *“Remember! Do not forget how you provoked the Lord your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day that you departed from the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the Lord.*

> *8 Also in Horeb you provoked the Lord to wrath, so that the Lord was angry enough with you to have destroyed you.*
> *9 When I went up into the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant which the Lord made with you, then I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water.”*

Also see Deuteronomy 31:29

May the Lord help us not to cross the boundaries of His Word and provoke His anger.

Amen.

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