

(THIRD EDITION)

3. THE ANGEL OF G-D'S PRESENCE

AN ANGEL THAT SPEAKS AS G-D SOMETIMES

The word "angel" in Hebrew means "messenger" and can be used for people like in GENESIS 32:4 and 32:7 or for angels from heaven like in many quotes in the Hebrew Bible.

Sometimes an angel called "the angel of the L-rd" appeared to people and said "thus says the L-rd" and gave a message from G-d, and sometimes it appeared and spoke like it was G-d without saying "thus says the L-rd." For examples, see GENESIS 16:10 and GENESIS 31:11-13.

The identity of this angel is controversial. Some commentators believe that G-d appeared to people in the Hebrew Bible as this angel. Other commentators say that an angel is a messenger that represents G-d, so it does not have to say "thus says the L-rd" always. When it speaks as G-d, you are supposed to understand that it is just giving a message from G-d.

I think the angel of the L-rd was an angel that brought messages from G-d sometimes, so it said "thus says the L-rd." Other times, I think G-d spoke through the angel's mouth directly to the person like the angel was a telephone or a puppet, so the angel did not have to say "thus says the L-rd."

G-D'S PRESENCE (NAME) IN ANGEL?

EXODUS 23:20

USUAL TRANSLATION

“Behold, I am sending an angel
(a messenger) before you to keep you
(to guard you) in (on) your way
and to bring you to the place
that I have prepared.”

EXODUS 23:21

USUAL TRANSLATION

“Be careful from (of) his presence
and listen to his voice.
Do not rebel against him because
he will not forgive your sins
because My name is in his midst.”

EXODUS 23:22

USUAL TRANSLATION

“But if you will listen to his voice,
and you will do all that I will speak,
then (and) **I will be an enemy** יָבִי אֶנְיָ
to (with) יָבִי your enemies
and I will oppress your oppressors.”

Or: “But if you will listen to his voice,
and you will do all that I will speak,
then **My hatred** יָבִי אֶנְיָ

is with $\pi \propto$ your enemies,
and I will oppress your oppressors.”

EXODUS 23:20-22 mentions an angel that has G-d's name in it and that the people should listen to it's voice and do all that G-d will speak. I think that G-d's name in the angel was really His presence in the angel, so G-d could speak to people through the angel's mouth if He wanted to. I think people would hear the angel's voice, but G-d would be speaking.

I think G-d spoke through an angel because people could not take hearing G-d's voice, except in visions or dreams. For example, when G-d gave the ten commandments to the people, He spoke to them “face to face” (DEUTERONOMY 5:4), but they could not take hearing Him speak, and they told Moses to talk to G-d for them because they were afraid that they were going to die. See EXODUS 20:15-18 and DEUTERONOMY 5:19-24 (which repeats the story).

EXODUS 25:21-22 and NUMBERS 7:89 describe how Moses would hear G-d's voice in the tent of meeting when they were traveling in the wilderness.

DEUTERONOMY 12:5, 11, and 21 and DEUTERONOMY 14:23-24 and some more quotes mention that G-d will put His name a certain place. This could mean He will put His presence in a certain place, but the Hebrew Bible does not really explain what G-d meant by this.

I think G-d put His spirit on prophets who spoke for Him, but He put His name (or His presence) in the angel that He spoke through. The Hebrew Bible does not say if only one angel spoke as G-d or if

more than one angel did it.

ISAIAH 63:9 also mentions the angel of G-d's presence which might be the same angel mentioned in EXODUS 23:20-22.

GENESIS 32:31

In GENESIS 32:31, after wrestling a man (an angel), Jacob called a place "G-d's Presence" (which also can mean "G-d's face") because he saw G-d face to face. If G-d's presence was in the angel, and Jacob was not having a vision or a dream, then he was seeing G-d in reality, although he did not actually see G-d.

Some commentators say that the Hebrew word for G-d in this quote can mean "G-d" or "divine being", so it can be used for an angel. They say GENESIS 32:31 says Jacob saw "a divine being face to face" instead of "G-d face to face." I don't think this is correct.

HOSEA 12:4-5 also mention Jacob wrestling this angel which might be the angel of G-d's presence with G-d's presence (name) in it. HOSEA 12:4 says "in his youth" or "by his strength", Jacob wrestled with G-d (with gods) and he prevailed to (against) an angel. ("To" is also used this way in JEREMIAH 1:19 and 15:20.) GENESIS 32:29 also says a similar thing.

Maybe it means Jacob wrestled with gods while living with Laban (an idol worshipper). Maybe he fought the belief in them. Or maybe it means he wrestled G-d because G-d's presence was in the angel.

I think Jacob knew that the man he wrestled in GENESIS 32:25-31 was the angel of G-d's presence

because he might have seen the same angel in the dream that he described in GENESIS 31:10-13, where an angel spoke like it was G-d. Or maybe if it was dark when he wrestled the angel, Jacob recognized the angel's voice from the dream.

“FACE” OR “PRESENCE”

The plural noun “panim” פָּנִים can mean “face, surface, front, or presence”, and it is used with a plural verb. For example, GENESIS 4:5-6 says that Cain's “face” fell (plural verb) which probably meant that he was sad or upset about something.

The word “panim” is used to mean “a presence” in only a few quotes.

In EXODUS 33:12, Moses asks G-d who G-d will send with Moses to lead the people, and in EXODUS 33:14, G-d says, “My face (My presence) will go...” Then in EXODUS 33:15, Moses says, “If Your face (Your presence) is not going...”, then G-d should leave them where they are.

In ISAIAH 63:9, an angel is called “the angel of His face (His presence)” meaning the angel of G-d's face or presence.

DEUTERONOMY 4:37 says, “...and He caused you to go forth with (in) (by) His face (His presence) וּבְכֹחַ פָּנָיו with (by) His great strength (great power) from Egypt.”

In 2 SAMUEL 17:11, a man says to another man, “...and your face (your presence) is going (plural verb) into the battle.”

For more examples of the word “face” used as “presence”, see PSALM 42:6, PSALM 42:12, and

PSALM 139:7.

ISAIAH 30:20 says "...and your eyes will be seeing your Teacher (G-d)...", and ISAIAH 30:27 says "behold, the name of the L-rd is coming..." Maybe ISAIAH 30:20 means they will see a vision of G-d, or they will see the angel of G-d's presence with His name in it.

APPEARANCES OF ANGELS

In GENESIS 31:11, Jacob saw the angel of G-d in a dream, and the angel spoke like it was G-d. It did not say "thus says the L-rd..." Still Jacob did not say he saw G-d "face to face" that time because I think it means when a person is awake and sees G-d.

In JOSHUA 5:13-15, Joshua bowed to an angel and also took off his shoes because the angel said the ground was holy. Maybe the ground was holy because that was where they did the circumcisions in Gilgal in JOSHUA 5:2-9, which might have made the ground holy from the blood, or maybe the ground was holy because G-d's presence (name) was there inside of the angel.

I think this angel was the angel G-d said He will send to lead the people into the land of Israel in EXODUS 23:20-23. The angel even said he is the ruler (captain) of the host of the L-rd and "now I have come."

Some translations say that Joshua fell to his face to the ground and worshiped the angel, but the verb translated "worshiped" in this quote is also used

to mean "to bow." It could say that Joshua fell to his face to the ground and bowed.

There are many examples of the verb “to bow שׁוּחָה” being used when people bowed to other people to show respect without worshiping them. For examples, see GENESIS 23:7, GENESIS 23:12, GENESIS 43:26, 1 SAMUEL 20:41, 1 SAMUEL 25:23, 2 SAMUEL 1:2, 2 SAMUEL 9:6, 2 SAMUEL 14:4, 2 SAMUEL 14:22, 1 KINGS 1:23, and RUTH 2:10. The verb is also used in many quotes to bow to G-d or to worship G-d. For examples, see 2 CHRONICLES 20:18 and JOB 1:20.

In JUDGES 2:1-5, the angel of the L-rd speaks to the people like it was G-d using “I.” I think this angel might be the same angel from JOSHUA 5:13-15 because G-d said He would send an angel before them to take them into the land of Israel in EXODUS 23:20-24.

In JUDGES 6:11, an angel appears to a man called Gideon, and talks to him. Then in JUDGES 6:14-16, G-d talks to Gideon, but it doesn't say if G-d is speaking through the angel's mouth or not. I think G-d is speaking to him through the angel's mouth, but I am not sure. After that, in JUDGES 6:17-21, Gideon brings some food for the angel, and the angel touches it with a staff, and a fire goes up from it, and the angel disappears. In JUDGES 6:22-23, Gideon realizes that he saw the angel of the L-rd face to face and he becomes afraid, but G-d says to him that he should not be afraid because he won't die from seeing the angel. G-d continues to talk to him in JUDGES

6:25-26.

JUDGES 6:21-26 is confusing because the angel talking to Gideon “left from his eyes”, but G-d is still talking to him somehow. Maybe the angel was still there, but could not be seen, and G-d could still speak through it.

In NUMBERS 22:22-31, a man could not see the angel of the L-rd standing near him until G-d opened his eyes and let him see it.

Also, in 2 KINGS 6:8-17, the prophet Elisha and his servant is surrounded by an Aramean army, but he is not worried because he can see many chariots and horses of fire from heaven that are protecting him and his servant. The Aramean army and his servant can't see them, even though they were all around them. In 2 KINGS 6:17, G-d opens the servant's eyes, and he sees them also.

It is also possible that G-d spoke to Gideon in JUDGES 6 in a vision or by His spirit being on Gideon, but it doesn't say that the spirit of G-d is on him until JUDGES 6:34.

In JUDGES 13, Samson's father and mother thought the angel of the L-rd was actually a man of G-d (a prophet), but later they realized it was an angel when it went up a fire to heaven. In JUDGES 13:22, Samson's father said he thought they would die because they saw G-d. Maybe he thought the angel was G-d, or that the fire going up to heaven was G-d taking up his sacrifice, or the angel was the angel of G-d's presence with G-d's presence (name) in it.

Samson's father was wrong to think they

would die because the angel of the L-rd had appeared to other people in the Hebrew Bible before him, and they did not die. If he knew about the Torah, he should have known that people did not die from seeing that angel. He might have also been wrong about the angel being G-d, although it is possible that people then considered the angel of G-d's presence to be G-d since His presence was in it. Maybe they understood that G-d did not appear as an angel, but in an angel.

In DANIEL 3, the king of Babylon has three of Daniel's friends thrown into a furnace, but they survive, and the king sees a fourth man in the furnace with them. In DANIEL 3:25, the king of Babylon says that the fourth man looks like "a son of G-d" or "a son of gods." He probably meant an angel because he also calls the man an angel in DANIEL 3:28. Angels might also have been called "sons of G-d" in GENESIS 6:2, JOB 1:6, and JOB 2:1.

ECCLESIASTES 5:5 is not very easy to understand. It mentions an angel that seems to keep track of vows.

THE ANGEL AND FORGIVENESS

Some commentators say that the angel in ZECHARIAH 3 must be G-d appearing in the form of an angel because in ZECHARIAH 3:4 the angel says that it has caused to pass away from upon the high priest Joshua his iniquity, and that since an angel can't forgive sins, this angel must really be G-d.

It is possible the angel in ZECHARIAH 3:4 had G-d's name or presence in it, so that G-d spoke through the angel to the high priest, and it sounded like the angel was speaking as G-d. It is also possible that the angel was speaking as itself and that it had removed the high priest's sin somehow, possibly by removing his dirty clothing. If the priest was wearing dirty clothing in a holy place, that might be a sin because it might defile the holy place. I don't think the quote really means that the angel or G-d speaking through it forgave the priest's sin.

There are some other quotes that mention angels and the forgiving of sins.

EXODUS 23:20-22 says that G-d sent an angel with G-d's name (presence) in it before the children of Israel in the wilderness, and that they should obey it because the angel won't forgive their sins if they don't.

In ISAIAH 6:5-7, Isaiah sees G-d sitting on His throne, and Isaiah says he has unclean lips, so an angel (one of the seraphim) touches a coal against his lips, and then the angel says that his sin has turned away, and his sin was atoned for.

The Hebrew Bible does not say that the angels in ZECHARIAH 3 or in ISAIAH 6 were told what to do, but somehow they knew what to do. I think angels do what G-d wants them to do without G-d having to always say out loud what to do.

It is also interesting to notice that these sins were supposedly removed or atoned for without mentioning any animal sacrifice or blood atonement.

I also discuss ZECHARIAH 3:4 in it's own chapter in another volume.

PILLAR OF CLOUD AND PILLAR OF FIRE

Some commentators say that G-d appeared in the form of a cloud or a fire that the people of Israel could see. Other commentators say that G-d's presence was in the pillar of cloud by day and in the pillar of fire at night when He led the people through the wilderness, but He did not actually appear as a pillar of cloud or a pillar of fire. For example, see EXODUS 13:21 which says that G-d walked (went) before the people in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night.

EXODUS 14:19-20 says that the angel of G-d that went before the camp of Israel went behind them and that the pillar of cloud that went before them went behind them and stood between them and the camp of the Egyptian army that was following them. I think that there was an angel in that cloud that might have been the angel of G-d's presence.

BURNING BUSH

EXODUS 3:2 says that the angel of the L-rd appeared to Moses in a flame of fire from the midst of a burning bush. Then, EXODUS 2:4-6 says that G-d called to Moses and spoke to him, and Moses was afraid to look at G-d. Maybe at that time Moses did not understand that the angel has G-d's name (presence) in it and that G-d was speaking to him through the angel, so he was afraid to look at G-d. Or maybe G-d's presence was also there and not in the angel, so Moses was right to not want to look at G-d's presence. It is also possible that G-d was actually

speaking to Moses directly because Moses could take hearing G-d's voice, unlike other people. See EXODUS 20:15-18, EXODUS 25:21-22, DEUTERONOMY 5:19-24, and NUMBERS 7:89.

ZECHARIAH 12:8

USUAL TRANSLATION

“In that day, the L-rd will defend
the inhabitant (the inhabitants) ב ש י ם
of Jerusalem,
and will be the weak among them
in that day like David,
and the house (household) of David
like G-d,
like the angel of the L-rd
(is) before them.”

ZECHARIAH 12:9

USUAL TRANSLATION

“And it will be (it will happen) in that day
I will seek to destroy all of the nations
that are coming against Jerusalem.”

ZECHARIAH 12:8 could be understood different ways. It could say that the house (household) (the descendants) of King David will be like G-d and like the angel of the L-rd before the weak people. Or, it could mean that the house of David will be like G-d with the angel of the L-rd before them like the angel of the L-rd is before G-d.

ZECHARIAH 12:8-9
ALTERNATIVE TRANSLATIONS

“In that day, the L-rd will defend
the inhabitant (the inhabitants) יושבי
of Jerusalem,
and will be the weak among them
in that day like David,
and the house (household) of David
like G-d.”

“Like an angel,
the L-rd is before them,
and it will be (it will happen) in that day
I will seek to destroy all of the nations
that are coming against Jerusalem.”

Instead of saying “like the angel of the L-rd”,
it might say “like an angel, the L-rd is before them.”

(This is an excerpt from the book “Hebrew Bible Quotes
that Have Been Misunderstood for Thousands of Years,
Third Edition, Volume 1, © 2021 by Kenneth Greifer.)