

STUDY NOTES FOR KAREN HOERDEL'S "ANGEL OF THE LORD" TEACHING

In Hebrew, the word of "angel" is malakh. A malakh is a messenger, either human or angelic. Yet there is one malakh who stands out from all the rest. The Bible calls him simply, "the angel of the Lord."

Since the time of Abraham, the Jewish people have known about the angel of the Lord. In the Talmud he is given the name Metatron, which indicates a special relationship with God. One meaning of meta and thronos, two Greek words, gives the sense of "one who serves behind the throne" of God. He is also known as "the Prince of the Countenance" because of the close proximity between this angel and God Himself. The implication for the malakh of the Lord is that he is, above all, the messenger of God, the one sent by God, the one who represents God Himself.

His name, then, refers not to his nature but to his function, which is the Being who serves as the supreme messenger of the One True God. This viewpoint can be readily supported from Scripture.

He is first mentioned in Genesis 16. After Hagar fled into the wilderness to escape from Sarah, Abraham's wife, the angel of the Lord found her and admonished Hagar to return to her mistress. He then promised to greatly multiply her descendants and prophesied the birth of Ishmael, who as a result became the progenitor of the Arab Nations.

In Genesis 22, read every Yom Kippur, it is the angel of the Lord who called from heaven to stay the hand of Abraham as he took the knife to slay his son Isaac.

In Exodus 14, he was in the pillar of cloud guiding the Israelites through the wilderness after their flight from Egypt.

In Numbers 22:22-35, the angel of the Lord appeared to Balaam, and gave him orders to be followed.

He instructed Gideon in Judges 6, telling him to deliver Israel from Midian. He prophesied the birth of Samson (Judges 13), directed Elijah to Mt. Horeb (I Kings 19) and commanded King David to build the altar in Jerusalem which later became the sight of the temple of Solomon (I Chronicles 21:18).

It was the angel of the Lord who killed the 185,000 Assyrian soldiers besieging Jerusalem (II Kings 19:35).

In ancient times it was believed that if one saw God, one would die. God stated this directly to Moses on Mt. Sinai: "You cannot see my face, for no man may see me and live" (Exodus 33:20). After Hagar saw the angel of the Lord, it is recorded that she called him Lord and marveled that she was still alive after having seen him (Genesis 16:13). Jacob reacted in similar fashion when he wrestled with a "man" during the night. The man blessed Jacob and changed the patriarch's name to Israel. Jacob responded by calling the place of this encounter Peniel, "saying, 'It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared'" (Genesis 32:30). Jacob identified the "man" as God.

Later in life, when Jacob blessed his son Joseph and his children, he said, “The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my Shepherd all my life to this day, the Angel who has delivered me from all harm...” (Genesis 48:15, 16). The parents of Samson, likewise, recognized the angel of the Lord to be God, “We are doomed to die!...We have seen God!” (Judges 13:22).

The angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in the midst of a burning bush (Exodus 3:2) but then in verse 4, “God called to him from within the bush...” When the Lord delivered the children of Israel from Egypt, the Bible says, “By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light...” (Exodus 13:21).

In Zechariah 1:12, the angel of the Lord is seen interceding on behalf of Israel, calling out to the Lord of Hosts! The Holy Scriptures have given us a paradox: THE ANGEL OF THE LORD IS DISTINCT FROM GOD, YET IS HIMSELF VERY GOD!

The angel of the Lord, God Himself, revealed Himself in a visible, personal way - taking the form of a human being. This writer maintains that not only could the angel of the Lord assume human form, but that, in time, He took on true humanity by being born into the human race!

“Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.” (John 14:9)

The Angel of the Lord Scripture References

Genesis 16:7-13 - with Hagar
Genesis 21:17-18

Genesis 18:1-3, 16-17, 20, 33 - with Abraham
Genesis 19:1, 24
Genesis 22:11, 15-18

Genesis 31:11-13 - with Jacob
Genesis 28:12-15, 20-22
Genesis 32:24-30
Genesis 48:15-16
Hosea 12:3-5

Exodus 3:2-7, 14, 15, 18

Deuteronomy 4:15; Mark 12:26 - with Moses
Exodus 14:19; 13:21; I Corinthians 10:1-4
Exodus 23:20-23; Colossians 1:19; 2:9
Exodus 32:34

Numbers 22:22-35; 23:5 - Balaam
Joshua 5:13-15 - Joshua
Judges 2:1-5 - Israel
Judges 6:11-16, 20-24 - Gideon

Judges 13:3, 6, 9, 13-22 - Samson's parents

Psalm 34:7

Psalm 35:5-6

Isaiah 63:9 (8-10 - the Trinity)

Daniel 3:25, 28

Daniel 6:22

Daniel 12:5-8 cp. Revelation 1:12-16; 10:1-6

Theophany = a manifestation or appearance of a deity or of the gods to man