

# THE ANGEL OF THE LORD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

## Part One

### INTRODUCTION

- Considerable speculation to accurately understand the nature and mission of the unique Old Testament personality referred to as “*the Angel of the Lord*”
- Fifty+ direct references and many indirect contextual references<sup>1</sup>, will disclose precise details of His personal character and interaction with others
- An identity will emerge that is clearly discernible within each narrative section
- The primary thesis of this study will confirm that these unique traits and actions can be attributable to only one extraordinary person
- Was the eternal Son of God inactive during the Old Testament period?
- Is it possible that the passages concerning this unique person can reveal a specific identity and special ministry in the Old Testament that centers upon the preincarnate Christ?
- Several books<sup>2</sup> have proposed the controversial position that the Hebrew name of Jesus (Y<sup>e</sup>shûa‘ - יֵשׁוּעַ > יִשְׁעַ, *to deliver, save, set free*) existed in the original Hebrew text of the Old Testament through a special code classified as Equidistant Lettering Sequence (ELS).<sup>3</sup>

Even without the discovery of ELS, the Hebrew text itself reveals a significant involvement of the preincarnate Christ in the personal lives of a select group of Old Testament individuals. He interacted with these individuals as one of the most fascinating personalities in the Old Testament, “*the Angel of the Lord!*”

### PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

- Several important factors require clarification before the identity of *the Angel of the Lord* can be determined with any degree of certainty:
  - 1) properly understand the general meaning and basic purpose of an angel or messenger from a lexical perspective
  - 2) involves a grammatical definition of the construct relationship in Hebrew
  - 3) address the various occurrences of the theophanies of God in the Old Testament
- Etymology of the term “Angel or Messenger” – מַלְאָךְ > Mal’āk
  - 1) lexical meaning “angel or messenger”<sup>4</sup> is a translation of the Hebrew term מַלְאָךְ > mal’āk, and is derived from the Ugaritic verbal root l’k, לֵאךְ > “to depute, minister, send a messenger”.<sup>5</sup>
  - 2) Hebrew nouns originate from the verbal root meaning, the range of responsibilities for a divine or human messenger would include, “1) *to carry a message*; 2) *to perform some other specific commission*; and 3) *to represent more or less officially the one sending him*.”<sup>6</sup>
  - 3) responsibilities are further reinforced by the particular verbs associated with mal’āk: “*to send*,” “*to come*,” “*to say*,” “*to speak*,” “*to go*,” “*to return*,” “*to call*,” “*to go out*,” “*to go down*,” and

<sup>1</sup> For example, the usage of the general term “Angel” that refers to the Angel of the Lord in the preceding or following narrative section or to a previous event. (cf. p. 8)

<sup>2</sup> For example, Grant R. Jeffrey, *The Signature of God* (Toronto: Frontier Research Publications, Inc., 1996); Yacov Rambsel, *Yeshua: The Name of Jesus Revealed in the Old Testament* (Toronto: Frontier Research Publications, Inc., 1996).

<sup>3</sup> A specially designed computer program searches a continuous Hebrew text (arranged with no spaces) for the individual letters or consonants of a selected Hebrew word. After finding the first consonant ( ך ), the program searches for the second ( ׁ ) and establishes a certain number of consonants in between those two consonants (for example, 100). Within that set number of consonants (100), the search continues for the third consonant ( ׁ ) and so on until the successful location of all the consonants of the designated Hebrew word ( ׁ ). This search is conducted in two ways, forward and then backward through the Hebrew text.

<sup>4</sup> Willem A. VanGemeren, gen. ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, 5 vols., (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 2:941. Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles a. Briggs, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979), 521.

<sup>5</sup> Ugaritic is a cognate Semitic language to Hebrew. L. Koehler-W. Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the OT* (Eng. trans., Leiden, 1994-); quoted in G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, translated by Douglas W. Stott, 8 Vols., (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 8:309.

<sup>6</sup> R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2 Vols., (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 1:464.

“to bring news or recount.”<sup>7</sup>

- Many noun patterns such as *mal'āk* have a prefixed מ (mēm) added to the three consonant verbal root (מלאך > מלאך) which could designate either location, instrument terms, or abstractions<sup>8</sup> depending on the contextual usage. The commissioned heavenly or human messenger would function as the official representative or instrument through which the specific proclamation would be declared or the appointed task would be accomplished to the appropriate individual or specific group.
- Being sent by someone superior in position, the content of the message or the type of assigned activity could cause a range of potential effects for the recipient(s): *positive benefits* (e.g., *good news, protection, deliverance*), *more neutral impressions* (e.g., *requests, personal summons, diplomatic representatives*), or *negative consequences* (e.g., *threats, physical harm, judgment*).<sup>9</sup>

Since *mal'āk* has a particular grammatical association with *YHWH*, the following explanation will provide a basic definition of this construct relationship. But more importantly, a technical understanding of the construct relationship will refute the argument by some that “*the Angel of the Lord*” could be only one of an innumerable number of heavenly hosts sent by the Lord for His specific purposes.

- Construct Relationship of *mal'āk* with *YHWH* > מְלָאךְ יְהוָה<sup>10</sup>
  - 1) basic definition of the construct relationship:
    - a. “the joining together of two (occasionally three, but rarely four) nouns within a sentence”<sup>10</sup>
    - b. inserting the English preposition “of” between the words in the translation specifying:
      - i. possession – *book of the student*
      - ii. type of relationship – *son of the woman*
  - 2) construct chain of two words:
    - a. first noun = **construct state**
      - i. may or may not involve a form alteration or other textual markers (cf. 3a)
      - ii. shift in the stress from the construct noun to the absolute noun<sup>11</sup>
    - b. last noun = **absolute state**
      - i. remains in the absolute form<sup>12</sup>
      - ii. never undergoes any type of form change
  - 3) construct relationship may be designated by several possible methods in the Hebrew text:
    - a. construct noun may be grammatically connected to the absolute noun with four types of grammatical markers (may be in certain combinations with each other, cf. 4a):
      - i. by a conjunctive accent (> connect words vs. disjunctive accent > separates words, cf. FN 14)
      - ii. horizontal line called a *maqef* (word~word)
      - iii. reduction of a vowel
      - iv. specific construct form
  - 4) construct relationship under consideration, “*the Angel of the Lord*”
    - a. vowel reduction in combination with a conjunctive accent.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>7</sup> G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 8:308.

<sup>8</sup> Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 90.

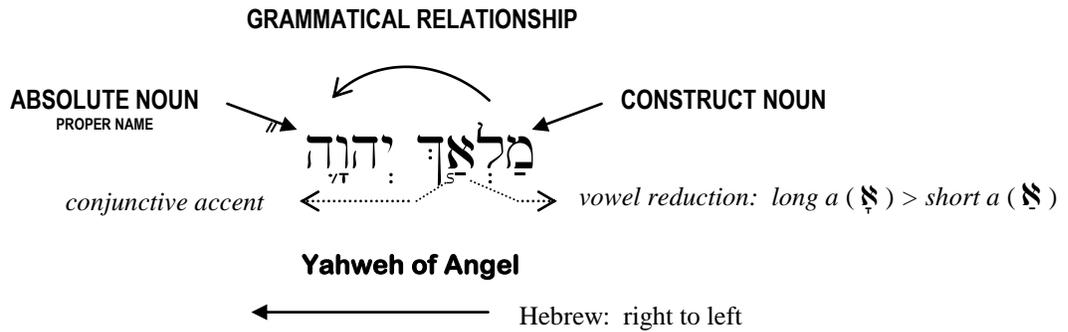
<sup>9</sup> R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 1:465.

<sup>10</sup> Page H. Kelley, *Biblical Hebrew*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), 58.

<sup>11</sup> Page H. Kelley, *Biblical Hebrew*, 58-59, “Nouns joined together in a construct relationship are pronounced as a single speech unit, with the accent falling upon the last noun in the series, i.e., upon the noun in the absolute state.”

<sup>12</sup> An absolute noun is the standard form listed in a Hebrew lexicon.

<sup>13</sup> The long vowel (*qāneš*) in the last syllable of *mal'āk* (מְלָאךְ) has been reduced to a short vowel (*patah*) in *mal'āk YHWH* (מְלָאךְ יְהוָה). The Hebrew accents serve as important syntactical indicators for the primary reason that conjunctive accents connect words and disjunctive accents separate words.



5) “*the Angel of the Lord*” occurs 50+ times and every one of them involves a grammatical arrangement that represents the typical order and form of a true construct relationship.

- Another important factor in translation for a construct relationship is definiteness
  - 1) construct noun (first position) cannot have a prefixed article – “*the*”
  - 2) absolute noun (second position), “specifies the definiteness of the phrase.”<sup>14</sup>
    - a. denotes definiteness in three distinct ways: a prefixed definite article, a pronominal suffix, or by a proper name.<sup>15</sup>
  - 3) rule for definiteness: if the absolute noun is indefinite or definite, then the construct noun will be indefinite or definite.
  - 4) the usage of a proper name in this construct relationship would substantiate that the only possible literal translation of *mal’ak YHWH* is “*the Angel of the Lord*” while eliminating the indefinite translation, “*an angel of the Lord.*”
    - a. In his commentary on Genesis, H. C. Leupold commends the author of a Hebrew grammar that he referenced for opposing the incorrect translation of this construct relationship, “*the attempted translation ‘an angel of the Lord’ is rightly rejected....*”<sup>16</sup>
    - b. Old Testament scholar, A. B. Davidson, also concurs with the exclusive manner of translating this phrase, “*According to the general grammatical rule the rendering ‘an angel of the Lord’ is inaccurate....*”<sup>17</sup>

Because of this distinction from other angelic beings, the importance of theophanies can enter the discussion especially in regard to comparing the physical appearances of God with “*the Angel of the Lord.*”

## OLD TESTAMENT THEOPHANIES OF GOD

- The term “theophany” is a compound Greek word from *theos* meaning “God” and *phainō* meaning “to appear”
- The context of a passage where the phenomena occurs often implies a manifestation of deity, and other passages give direct statements that reveal the occurrence of this incredible act of God.
- Some theologians define this term in a more inclusive manner by characterizing it as any visible representation of God, “*Theophanies are manifestations of deity in visible form.*”<sup>18</sup> While others would apply restrictions to this definition by only specifying some type of bodily form.
- A theophany is a manifestation of God in visible and bodily form before the incarnation. Usually the term theophany is limited to appearances of God in the form of man or angels, other phenomena such as the Shekinah glory not being considered one.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 157.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, 2 Vols., (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1942), 1:501, in reference to Eduard Koenig, *Lehrgebaude der Hebraeischen Sprache*, Part II Syntax, (Leipzig: Hinrichs., 1897), 304 e.

<sup>17</sup> James Hastings, ed., *A Dictionary of the Bible*, 5 Vols., (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1898; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988), 1:94.

<sup>18</sup> Henry C. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, revised by Vernon D. Doerksen, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979; reprint, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 76 (page citations correspond to the reprint edition).

- Associating this doctrine with the physical appearances of “*the Angel of the Lord*” will be a simple transition since they are the primary basis of theophanies in the Old Testament.
  - Reviewing some of the direct statements of the physical appearances of the Lord will be beneficial not only to this association but also to a proper understanding of theophanies.
  - Considering an adequate explanation of the statement, “*and the Lord appeared,*” within an Old Testament narrative context is essential.
- 1) According to the root meaning of this verb, *rā’āh* (ראה) it may have a passive definition, “*to be seen,*” or a reflexive definition, “*to reveal oneself,*” in the Niphal conjugation<sup>20</sup>. The immediate context and translation of this clause<sup>21</sup> supports the reflexive voice as the correct usage. So, not only the self-revelation of the Lord is clearly expressed but this statement also represents some type of visible form.
  - 2) From the eight occurrences<sup>22</sup> of “*and the Lord appeared*” in the Old Testament, only Genesis 18 verifies the bodily appearance of the Lord with supporting textual details.
    - a. Genesis 18:1-2, the Lord and two other men<sup>23</sup> have arrived at the tent of Abraham located by the oaks of Mamre near Hebron. Not only did all three appear in human form as men, but they also utilized one of the normal bodily functions of eating the prepared food set before them (Gen. 18:8). Every aspect of this amazing encounter indicates that the Lord temporarily confined himself to this natural bodily form and its physical functions. The angels who accompanied Him, who are usually non corporeal beings, also assumed a normal human form and function that was easily recognized by Abraham.
  - 3) The Lord “*appeared*” to Abraham (4x – Gen. 12:7; 17:1; 18:1; Acts 7:2) and to others as well—Isaac (2x – Gen. 26:2, 24); Jacob (2x – Gen. 35:1, 9; cp. 48:3); Moses (2x – Ex. 3:16; cp. 4:1, 5; Deut. 31:15); Samuel (1x – 1 Sam. 3:21); David (1x – 2 Chron.3:1); and Solomon (2x - 1 Kings 3:5; 9:2, cp. 11:9) (cp. Elijah, 2 Kings 1:3,5; 19:35). Then, while speaking to Moses, the Lord reiterated that He had previously appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Ex. 6:3).<sup>24</sup>
  - 4) In other visible illustrations of the Lord’s presence, the nation of Israel witnessed the transcendent quality of the Lord when an indefinite form of His glory was manifested:<sup>25</sup>
    - a. the pillar of cloud (Ex. 16:10; Num. 16:42; cp. Deut. 31:15)
    - b. the tent of meeting (Lev. 9:4, 6, 23; Num. 14:10; 16:19; 20:6; cp. Jer. 31:3).
    - c. the pillar of fire (Ex. 13:21-22)
    - d. Mount Sinai (cf. Ex. 19:16 ff; 24:16-18)
    - e. the Tabernacle (Ex. 40:34-38)
    - f. the first Temple (1 Kings 8:10-11)

At this point, three essential questions emerge that require satisfactory answers based upon the biblical evidence:

- 1) Why is this issue concerning a bodily appearance so important?
- 2) Which person within the Godhead is most qualified, as expounded in Scripture, of appearing in this physical manner?
- 3) How does this specifically relate to *the Angel of the Lord*?

The first essential question, the importance of a bodily appearance, can be confirmed as it especially corresponds to the Father and to the Holy Spirit. The following points of argument are readily acknowledged by the majority of evangelical Christians. For the basis of this systematic approach, the impossibility of either the Father or the Spirit appearing in a bodily form will be reviewed to validate the significance of the bodily appearance of “*the Angel of the Lord.*” The only illustrations considered will be those that contextually set up an interaction between the Father and Son and between the Son and the Spirit.

<sup>19</sup> John F. Walvoord, (unpublished: Dallas Theological Seminary), 6-8; quoted in Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4 Vols., (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1993), 3:31.

<sup>20</sup> R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2:823.

<sup>21</sup> Genesis 12:7 is the first occurrence of this clause with the grammatical construction of waw consecutive (indicating sequence) and the Niphal Imperfect 3ms form of *rā’āh* (ראה). The remaining are: Gen. 17:1; 18:1; 26:2, 24; Deut. 31:15; 1 Kings 9:2; 2 Chron. 7:12.

<sup>22</sup> Abraham Even-Shoshan, *A New Concordance of the Old Testament*, 1046.

<sup>23</sup> These other men are identified as two angels in Genesis 19:1. This is the first occurrence of angels in the Bible.

<sup>24</sup> These are the other references from the same verb root, *rā’āh* (ראה), but in different Niphal forms.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

## God the Father

- At notable events in the life of Christ, the New Testament establishes a distinction between the individual persons within the Godhead. When the Father and Son are designated as distinct personalities, the presence of the Father may be apparent by an audible voice heard during an occasion of direct communication.

1) The voice of the Father was heard from heaven during the baptism of Jesus as stated in Matthew 3:16-17 (cp. the parallel passages: Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32):

*And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased."*<sup>26</sup>

- Another example of a similar audible statement by the Father occurred at the transfiguration of Jesus in the presence of Peter, James, and John who personally witnessed and experienced the glory of Christ.

*And six days later Jesus took with Him Peter, and James and John his brother, and brought them up to a high mountain. And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; If You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!" (Matt. 17:1-5)*

- Even Moses and Elijah also supernaturally "appeared"<sup>27</sup> with the glorified Jesus in some type of visible form that Peter recognized.
- After hearing the Father's voice from within the cloud surrounding them, the three disciples reacted with a true sense of fearful uncertainty. Then Jesus promptly responded with personal reassurance towards Peter, James, and John.

*And when the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were much afraid. And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, "Arise, and do not be afraid." And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one, except Jesus Himself alone (Matt. 17:6-8).*

- In another example, the people heard a noise but could not understand<sup>28</sup> the voice of the Father who was personally responding to a specific request from Jesus.

*"Father, glorify Your name." There came therefore a voice out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." The multitude therefore, who stood by and heard it, were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, "An angel has spoken to Him" (John 12:28-29).*

- On each of these occasions, only the Father's voice was heard but He was not seen in any type of definite form by the individuals involved. No additional indication of a visible presence was demonstrated comparable to the human body of Jesus which was present at that specific time.
- Other scenes in Scripture that occur within the throne room of heaven (e.g., Dan. 7:9-10; 13-14; Acts 7:55-56; Rev. 5:1-7) clearly depict a distinction between the Father and Son expressing anthropomorphic terms for the Father to illustrate their personal interaction with each other. Assigning human qualities or behaviors to God are necessary in some situations to establish a direct

<sup>26</sup> All Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977 by the Lockman Foundation unless indicated otherwise.

<sup>27</sup> Aorist Passive Indicative 3s form of ὀφθῆναι (ōphthē) from ὀράω (horaō), "become visible, appear. Mostly of beings that make their appearance in a supernatural manner, almost always w. dat. of the person to whom they appear." Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2d ed. revised and augmented by F.W. Gingrich and Frederick Danker, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957, 1979), 578.

<sup>28</sup> They could not understand because of their unbelief as explained later in John 12:37.

relationship of His revelation with the finite understanding of man seeking to contemplate the infinite knowledge of an omniscient God.

- Other literary expressions may accentuate or communicate in a special way specific elements of His character or conduct. Such as an anthropopathism which “*ascribes human emotions to God*” to reveal certain aspects of His personality (e.g., Zech. 8:1, “*I am very zealous for Zion.*”). Also, a zoomorphism which “*ascribes animal characteristics to God*” to point out in a picturesque manner, particular traits or actions of the Lord (e.g., Ps. 91:4, “*He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you may seek refuge*”).<sup>29</sup>
- Obviously, the usage of these figures of speech would not limit any attribute of perfection or sovereign action of God. In the same way, anthropomorphic terms used for God the Father would not suggest that He maintains any type of physical or bodily existence similar to the human body of Christ.

### God the Holy Spirit

- Biblical examples that establish a distinction between the Son and Holy Spirit provide similar evidence for the significance of a bodily appearance encountered in Scripture.
- Considering the possibility of a physical appearance by the Holy Spirit, the name itself would obviously designate an immaterial essence that would typically not be visible. Although an essential trait of the Spirit, some type of visible representation was manifested at the baptism of Jesus. Matthew 3:16 states that, “*the Spirit of God descended as a dove.*” One of the key words to properly discern in this descriptive action of the Spirit is the particle, *hōsei* (ὥσει), “denoting comparison, *as, like, (something) like*, lit. ‘as if’.”<sup>30</sup> The translation of this comparative phrase of manner<sup>31</sup>, “*as a dove*,” would correspond to a common figure of speech classified as a simile. A simile denotes “a comparison in which one thing explicitly (by using *like* or *as*) resembles another.”<sup>32</sup> This portrayal of the Holy Spirit would not specify He was an actual dove, but perhaps only resembled a comparative trait indicative of that type of bird. The more revealing description in Luke 3:22 also demonstrates that “*the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove*”<sup>33</sup> The additional description in this parallel account, “*in bodily form*,”<sup>34</sup> would affirm the comparative phrase of manner, “*like a dove*” as only a conceptual manifestation that visibly represents the Holy Spirit’s physical presence on that unique occasion. Since this was an inaugural event in the public ministry of Christ, this visible representation of the Holy Spirit served to fulfill several definite purposes.<sup>35</sup>
- At another notable incident of interaction between the Holy Spirit and Jesus, Mark 1:12 points out that “*And immediately the Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness.*” Due to the immediate nature<sup>36</sup> of this personal testing after His baptism, the more vivid present active verb is used in Mark 1:12, “*the Spirit impelled Him.*”<sup>37</sup> By comparison, the aorist passive verbal action described in Matthew 4:1, “*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness,*”<sup>38</sup> emphasizes a more general description of this same event.

<sup>29</sup> Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1991), 151-152.

<sup>30</sup> Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 899.

<sup>31</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond The Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 675.

<sup>32</sup> Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, 148.

<sup>33</sup> Both verses use a different verb form of καταβαίνω (*katabainō*), “to move down, to come down, to go down, to descend”. Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 2d ed., 2 Vols., (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988, 1989), 1:196. The contextual emphasis may focus more on the originating point than the type of action.

<sup>34</sup> σωματικῶς εἶδει (*sōmatikōs eidei*), Dative of manner with attributive adjective—complete agreement in gender (neuter), number (singular) and case (dative). Wesley J. Perschbacher, *Refresh Your Greek* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), 230.

<sup>35</sup> This incident relates to the fulfillment of prophecy (e.g., Isa. 42:1; 61:1), as a personal confirmation to John the Baptist (John 1:32-34) and another verification of His official role as Messiah to the nation of Israel (John 1:29-31). It is also one of the most significant verifications in Scripture of the doctrine of the Trinity and the unity of the individual persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

<sup>36</sup> εὐθύς (*euthus*), This is a typical expression used 42 times in the book of Mark. W. F. Moulton and A. S. Geden, *A Concordance To The Greek Testament*, 6th ed. revised by H. K. Moulton. (Edinburgh, U.K.: T. & T. Clark LTD, 1989), 400.

<sup>37</sup> ἐκβάλλει (*ekballēi*), Present Active Indicative 3s of ἐκβάλλω (*ekballō*), “drive out, expel”, Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 237. An alternative lexical possibility defines this verb as “without the connotation of force: send out”. Because of the immediate action depicted in this context, the verbal meaning would seem to favor the more aggressive idea.

<sup>38</sup> ἀνήχθη (*anēchthē*), Aorist Passive Indicative 3s of ἀνάγω (*anagō*), “lead or bring up”, Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 53. The passive voice would emphasize the external influence of the Spirit to direct this action. In addition, there is a

- As with the Father, figures of speech such as anthropomorphic, anthropopathic, and zoomorphic terms used with the Holy Spirit, convey the same unique impact of this literary technique to communicate in ordinary expressions specific elements of His character or conduct.
- After examining both references, there is not one direct confirmation or even an indirect implication of a visible appearance by the Holy Spirit existing in any type of physical or bodily form comparable to the human body of Christ.

## CONCLUSION

The respective roles within the Godhead, especially that of the Son, answer the second essential question regarding who is most qualified to appear in bodily form. Multiple prophecies in the Old Testament ascribe a divine and human nature to the promised Messiah. The Scriptures also state the specific manner and place of His birth as well as a definitive lineage, thus demonstrating the reality of His humanity. Many aspects of the person and work of Christ are developed in the comprehensive testimony of the Old Testament:

*A somewhat complete Christology may be constructed from the Old Testament Scriptures. This fact serves as an effective contradiction to the persistent contention that the Old Testament is lacking in vital truth.*<sup>39</sup>

One of the most significant reasons for His voluntary condescension and attainment of a sinless human nature was that Christ alone possessed the inherent capacity to “*explain*”<sup>40</sup> the personal character of God the Father (John 1:18) to mankind. For up to this point, no man “*has seen*”<sup>41</sup> the Father in the true fullness of His majesty and glory except the Son—the unique<sup>42</sup> and eternal one who continually exists<sup>43</sup> with the Father (John 1:18; cp. 6:46).

Other major assertions that pertain to this central issue are that Jesus Christ is the only one “*who is in the form of God*” (Phil. 2:6); “*who is the image of the invisible God*” (Col. 1:15); and who is “*the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature*” (Heb. 1:3). One of the New Testament references that clearly illustrates the hypostatic union, the merging of the human and divine natures into one person states, “*For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form*” (Col. 2:9). The remarks by Dr. Walvoord provide an appropriate conclusion:

*The second Person is the visible God of the New Testament. Neither the Father nor the Spirit is characteristically revealed in bodily and visible form. While the Father’s voice is heard from heaven, and the Holy Spirit is seen descending in the form of a dove, Christ, the second Person, is the full manifestation of God in visible form. It is logical that the same Person of the Trinity should appear in bodily form in both Testaments.*<sup>44</sup>

What is the final point of this extensive discussion concerning a bodily presence and how does it specifically relate to “*the Angel of the Lord*”? Without preempting the documentation that will be presented in later sections, there are direct references that “*the Angel of the Lord*” also appeared in bodily form as a man (cp. Judges 13). So, with over fifty direct references, these physical manifestations prove to be one of the main sources of revelation concerning Old Testament theophanies. As based upon the earlier etymological meaning stated for theophany, appearance of God, another term is considered to be synonymous but with a more restrictive theological focus,

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geographical element involved in this context as explained by Bauer’s lexicon, “lit. from a lower to a higher point: ...from the Jordan (below sea level) into the highland.”

<sup>39</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 3:43. Another major work in this area was written by E. W. Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament*, trans. by Theod. Meyer and James Martin, 4 Vols., (British edition, 1872-78; reprint, Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1956).

<sup>40</sup> ἐξηγήσατο (*exēgēsato*), Aorist Middle Indicative 3s of ἐξηγέομαι (*exēgeomai*), “to make something fully known by careful explanation or by clear revelation”, Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 1:341. The demonstrative, ἐκεῖνος (*ekeinos*), before this verb would place a special emphasis on “He” (lit., that one) who is equipped to accomplish this assignment. W. Robertson Nicoll, gen. ed., *The Expositor’s Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 1:692.

<sup>41</sup> ἑώρακεν (*heōrakev*), Perfect Active Indicative 3s of ὁραω (*horaō*) (see footnote 30). The perfect tense describes a completed event in the past with existing results in the present. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 573.

<sup>42</sup> μονογενῆ (“*monogenēs*”), “only, unique, only begotten”, Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 527.

<sup>43</sup> ὁ ὢν (*ho ōn*), Present Active Participle msn of εἶμι, (*eimi*), “be, exist of God”, Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 223. “The participle expresses only durative being and thus more easily becomes timeless.” R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John’s Gospel*, (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1943), 98.

<sup>44</sup> John F. Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 45.

“Sometimes referred to as a Christophany, a theophany usually refers to an appearance of Christ in human form in the Old Testament.”<sup>45</sup>

Combining the testimony of all the previous material, a common thread of evidence constitutes one inevitable observation for this preliminary section, “It is probable that every visible manifestation of God in bodily form is to be identified with the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>46</sup>

### Old Testament References – “Angel”

Book	The Angel of Yahweh / LORD	The Angel of Elohim / GOD	The / His Angel
10x – Genesis	16:7, 9-11; 22:11, 15	21:17; 31:11	24:7, 40
6x – Exodus	3:2	14:18	23:20, 23; 32:34; 33:2
11x – Numbers	22:22-27, 31-32, 34-35		20:16
20x – Judges	2:1, 4; 5:23; 6:11-12, 21 (2x), 13:3, 13, 15-18, 20-21 (2x)	6:20; 13:6, 9	6:22
[1x – 1 Samuel]		[29:9]	
4x – 2 Samuel [3x]	24:16	[14:17, 20; 19:27]	24:16 (2x), 17
2x – 1 Kings [1x]	19:7		[13:18]; 19:5
3x – 2 Kings	1:3, 15; 19:35		
9x – 1 Chronicles	21:12, 15, 16, 18, 30		21:15 (2x), 20, 27
1x – 2 Chronicles			32:21
3x – Psalms	34:7; 35:5-6		
2x – Isaiah	37:36		63:9
2x – Daniel			3:28; 6:22
1x – Hosea			12:4
7x – Zechariah [13x]	1:11-12; 3:1; 12:8		[1:9, 13-14, 19; 2:3 (2x); 4:1, 4-5; 5:5, 10; 6:4-5]; 3:3, 5-6
<b>Totals – 81x / [18x]</b>	<b>51x</b>	<b>6x / [4x]</b>	<b>24x / [14x]</b>

[ ] = general reference to angel (?)

Note: the uses of “angel” in contexts that specify human messengers have not been included.

<sup>45</sup> Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), 649.

<sup>46</sup> John F. Walvoord, (unpublished: Dallas Theological Seminary), 6-8; quoted in Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 3:33.

## THE ANGEL OF THE LORD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT PART TWO

### INTRODUCTION

- As God preserves His truth throughout history, reviewing past interpretations for a consistent testimony of biblical truth can enhance the understanding of the development of specific theological concepts. But cautiously, always keeping in mind that biblical doctrine determines tradition and that tradition may not accurately represent biblical doctrine.
- Two of the major translations from the original Hebrew, the *Septuagint* and the *Latin Vulgate*, and selected quotations from two of the early church fathers will be considered along with some later testimonies with contrasting Jewish viewpoints of this subject.

### HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

#### Earliest Translations of the Old Testament

- In the *Septuagint* (LXX)<sup>47</sup>, the Greek term, *angelos* (ἄγγελος) closely parallels the Hebrew definition for *mal'āk* (מַלְאָךְ) possessing the identical meaning of “angel or messenger”.
- The corresponding Greek phrase rendered for the Hebrew construct relationship, “the Angel of the Lord”, may be the anarthrous phrase *angelos kuriou* (ἄγγελος κυρίου, 21 occurrences with different case forms of *angelos*) in a context of general reference (e.g., Gen. 16:7).
- At other times, it appends the definite article—*ho angelos kuriou* (ὁ ἄγγελος κυρίου, 25 occurrences with different case forms of *angelos*)—within a context of direct discourse as represented by, “the Angel of the Lord said” (e.g., Gen. 16:8, 9, 10, 11), “And Balaam said to the Angel of the Lord” (Num. 22:34) or “And Manoah said to the Angel of the Lord”, (Judg. 13:15).
- It also arbitrarily substitutes the genitive form of *tou theou* (ἄγγελος τοῦ θεοῦ - “the angel of the God”, 8 occurrences with different case forms of *angelos*) for *kuriou* (τοῦ θεοῦ - “of [the] Lord”, which represents *YHWH* in Hebrew) regarding a previous contextual reference using the Hebrew term, *Elohim*, for the name of God (e.g., previous reference, אֱלֹהִים: Num. 22:20; substitution: Num. 22-27, 32, 35).
- Technically, a precise grammatical interpretation of the Hebrew construct relationship, “the Angel of the Lord”, should include a definite article in the translation<sup>48</sup>. Therefore, through subjective judgment or discretionary analysis, only 33 of the 56 occurrences have the definite article in the Septuagint. Of the 33 occurrences with the article, twenty (20) are within the context of direct discourse, with either *the Angel of the Lord* speaking to others (14) or those speaking to Him.
- So, it would be difficult to determine conclusively that the Alexandrian Jewish translators understood a distinction that this “Angel” had a unique identity or that he was only one of the innumerable heavenly hosts at the providential disposal of the sovereign God.
- In the *Latin Vulgate*<sup>49</sup>, the phrase, *angelus Domini*<sup>50</sup> (36 occurrences with different case forms of *angelus*), almost exclusively represents the translation of the Hebrew phrase, “the Angel of the Lord.”
- Within the context of continuous narrative, the phrase may be shortened to only *angelus* (8 occurrences with different case forms of *angelus*; Num. 22:23-24, 26-27, 31-32, 35; Judg. 13:16) or even omitted entirely (7 occurrences with different case forms of *angelus*; Num. 22:25, 31, 34; Gen. 16:10-11; Judg. 13:17-18). In one passage (Judg. 13:16), the phrase, *angelus Dei* (“Angel of God”), arbitrarily replaces *angelus Domini* (“Angel of the Lord”).<sup>51</sup> There is an alteration from the Hebrew in the Latin expression that corresponds to the only reference to a human “messenger of the Lord”. Instead of *angelus Domini*, a

<sup>47</sup> This is the first extensive translation of the Hebrew Old Testament by Alexandrian Jews in Egypt into Greek (c. 250-c. 150 B.C.). Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968, 1986), 503.

<sup>48</sup> Unless that particular language does not have an article or does not require one with a proper name.

<sup>49</sup> A fourth century translation by the noted Biblical scholar, Jerome, that was the official text of the Church for a thousand years (AD 400-1400).

<sup>50</sup> Since Latin does not have a definite article, this phrase would be the literal equivalent of the Hebrew construct relationship with a proper name.

<sup>51</sup> Perhaps this substitution occurred because of a previous contextual reference in Judg. 13:9 to “the Angel of God”, even though the immediate contextual reference is “the Angel of the Lord” (Judg. 13:16).

different Latin word is utilized in Haggai 1:13, *nuntius Domini*, which indicates a human “messenger or announcer.”<sup>52</sup>

In a noteworthy interpretative consideration, Jerome substitutes in the translation of the Hebrew phrase, “*the Angel of the Lord*” (*angelus Domini*) with the Latin word, *Dominus* (Lord, which represents *YHWH*) on two separate occasions (Ex. 3:2; Judg. 6:12). Both of these passages focus upon an exceptional event—the physical appearance of “*the Angel of the Lord*” to Moses and Gideon respectively. In addition, each context alternates between the statements and directives of “*the Angel of the Lord*” and “*the Lord*.” With this significant revision in the Latin translation, there is a strong implication of affiliating the statements and actions of “*the Angel of the Lord*” as being absolutely equal in authority with those of the Lord.

This will be one of the most important factors that the evidence from Scripture will verify—that “*the Angel of the Lord*” and the preincarnate Christ are the same person in the Old Testament!

### Early Church Fathers

In the writings of the prominent leaders of the early church, some also recognized the unique character of *the Angel of the Lord*. As expected, the method of interpretation, literal or allegorical, influenced their understanding of Scripture. The following quotes will reflect those who prefer literal interpretation for no other method would support the same conclusion as this presentation.

- In the *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin Martyr debated Trypho who was of Jewish heritage concerning key biblical issues surrounding Jewish law and the person of Christ.<sup>53</sup> One area of conflict focused on the identity of who appeared to Moses from the burning bush. The following quotation from Chapter LX although long, will reveal the point and counterpoint interchange from the two different perspectives.
- Then Trypho said, “*We do not perceive this from the passage quoted by you, but [only this], that it was an angel who appeared in the flame of fire, but God who conversed with Moses; so that there were really two persons in company with each other, an angel and God, that appeared in that vision.*”
- I again replied, “*Even if this were so, my friends, that an angel and God were together in the vision seen by Moses, yet, as has already been proved to you by the passages previously quoted, it will not be the Creator of all things that is the God that said to Moses that He was the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, but it will be He who has been proved to you to have appeared to Abraham, ministering to the will of the Maker of all things, and likewise carrying into execution His counsel in the judgment of Sodom; so that, even though it be as you say, that there were two—an angel and God—he who has but the smallest intelligence will not venture to assert that the Maker and Father of all things, having left all supercelestial matters, was visible on a little portion of the earth.*”
- And Trypho said, “*Since it has been previously proved that He who is called God and Lord, and appeared to Abraham, received from the Lord, who is in the heavens, that which He inflicted on the land of Sodom, even although an angel had accompanied the God who appeared to Moses, we shall perceive that the God who communed with Moses from the bush was not the Maker of all things, but He who has been shown to have manifested Himself to Abraham and to Isaac and to Jacob; who also is called and is perceived to be the Angel of God the Maker of all things, because He publishes to men the commands of the Father and Maker of all things.*”
- And I replied, “*Now assuredly, Trypho, I shall show that, in the vision of Moses, this same One alone who is called an Angel, and who is God, appeared to and communed with Moses. For the Scripture says thus: ‘The Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the bush; and he sees that the bush burns with fire, but the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will turn aside and see this great sight, for the bush is not burnt. And when the Lord saw that he is turning aside to behold, the Lord called*

<sup>52</sup> D. P. Simpson, *Cassell’s Latin Dictionary*, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1959), 400.

<sup>53</sup> Tim Dowley, ed., *Introduction to The History of Christianity*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 94.

to him out of the bush.’ In the same manner, therefore, in which the Scripture calls Him who appeared to Jacob in the dream an Angel, then [says] that the same Angel who appeared in the dream spoke to him, saying, ‘I am the God that appeared to thee when thou didst flee from the face of Esau thy brother;’ and [again] says that, in the judgment which befell Sodom in the days of Abraham, the Lord had inflicted the punishment of the Lord who [dwells] in the heavens;—even so here, the Scripture, in announcing that the Angel of the Lord appeared to Moses, and in afterwards declaring him to be Lord and God, speaks of the same One, whom it declares by the many testimonies already quoted to be minister to God, who is above the world, above whom there is no other [God]<sup>54</sup>

- The founder of a “small puritanical group”<sup>55</sup> which shared his name, Novatian in his most important work, *Treatise of Novatian Concerning the Trinity*, addressed in several chapters the deity of the Angel who appeared in the Old Testament.
- Moreover, says the Scripture, the same Angel and God visits and consoles the same Hagar when driven with her son from the dwelling of Abraham. For when in the desert she had exposed the infant, because the water had fallen short from the pitcher; and when the lad had cried out, and she had lifted up her weeping and lamentation, “*God heard,*” says the Scripture, “*the voice of the lad from the place where he was.*” Having told that it was God who heard the voice of the infant, it adds: “*And the angel of the Lord called Hagar herself out of heaven,*” saying that that was an angel whom it had called God, and pronouncing Him to be Lord whom it had set forth as an angel; which Angel and God moreover promises to Hagar herself greater consolations, in saying, “*Fear not; for I have heard the voice of the lad from the place where he was. Arise, take up the lad, and hold him; for I will make of him a great nation.*” Why does this angel, if angel only, claim to himself this right of saying, I will make of him a great nation, since assuredly this kind of power belongs to God, and cannot belong to an angel? Whence also He is confirmed to be God, since He is able to do this; because, by way of proving this very point, it is immediately added by the Scripture: “*And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of running water; and she went and filled the bottle from the well, and gave to the lad: and God was with the lad.*” If, then, this God was with the Lord, who opened the eyes of Hagar that she might see the well of running water, and might draw the water on account of the urgent need of the lad’s thirst, and this God who calls her from heaven is called an angel when, in previously hearing the voice of the lad crying, He was rather God; is not understood to be other than angel, in like manner as He was God also. And since this cannot be applicable or fitting to the Father, who is God only, but may be applicable to Christ, who is declared to be not only God, but angel also, it manifestly appears that it was not the Father who thus spoke to Hagar, but rather Christ, since He is God; and to Him also is applied the name of angel, since He became the “*angel of great counsel.*” And He is the angel, in that He declares the bosom of the Father, as John sets forth. For if John himself says, that He Himself who sets forth the bosom of the Father, as the Word, became flesh in order to declare the bosom of the Father, assuredly Christ is not only man, but angel also; and not only angel, but He is shown by the Scriptures to be God also. And this is believed to be the case by us; so that, if we will not consent to apprehend that it was Christ who then spoke to Hagar, we must either make an angel God, or we must reckon God the Father Almighty among the angels.<sup>56</sup>

### Other Testimonies

In his commentary of Genesis 16:7, the 18th century Baptist theologian, John Gill captures the Biblical truth of this verse and contrasts it with the skepticism of the Jewish Rabbis.

- This is the first time mention is made of an angel in Scripture, but it is not to be understood of a created angel, but of a divine Person, as appears from ver. 10, 13. an increated angel, the Logos or Son of God, called the Angel of God’s presence, and the Angel of the covenant, Isa. lxiii.9. Mal.iii.1. who often appeared in an human form before his incarnation, being sent by his divine Father on one account or another; and hence called an angel a messenger or one sent as in the fulness of time he

<sup>54</sup> Roberts, Alexander and Donaldson, James, *Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume I*, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1997.

<sup>55</sup> Tim Dowley, ed., *Introduction to The History of Christianity*, 89.

<sup>56</sup> Roberts, Alexander and Donaldson, James, *Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume 5*, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1997.

was sent in human nature to be the Redeemer of his people; though many of the Jewish writers take this angel to be a man sent of God. Gersom says he was one of the prophets that lived in those times, and observes, that some of their Rabbins say he was Shem, the son of Noah; and Maimonides suggests, that this angel was but a mere man, by comparing this passage with that in Gen. xxxvii 15. *a certain man found him, &c.* but the context most clearly confutes this notion, and proves him to be the almighty and omniscient God; since he promises to do what none but the omnipotent Being could do, and declares such things as none but the omniscient God could know...<sup>57</sup>

- From a more favorable Jewish perspective, Dr. John F. Walvoord states, “Not only Christian theologians but Jewish scholars as well have come to the conclusion that the Angel of Jehovah is more than an angel” and then he quotes A.C. Gaebelein from *The Angels of God*, p. 20:

It is noteworthy and of great interest that the ancient Jews in their traditions regarded the Angel of the Lord, in every instance, not as an ordinary angel, but as the only mediator between God and the world, the author of all revelations, to whom they gave the name *Metatron*.

In addition, Dr. Walvoord mentions another source that is in agreement with A. C. Gaebelein, “Richard Watson, Theological Institutes, I 501, also confirms the support of ancient Jews to this interpretation.”

### SCRIPTURAL EVIDENCE

- A typical approach to the study of Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ focuses predominately upon the Messianic passages that delineate many specific details of His first and second advents. But within that process one major consideration is often neglected—the ministry of the Preincarnate Christ during the Old Testament period. As stated earlier in the Introduction, is it even possible that any member of the Godhead could be inactive in the providential fulfillment of the eternal decrees of God? Consider the numerous passages on the absolute sovereignty of God and His active superintendence over the providential development of His will and purpose for all mankind. From the commencement of time, every created individual has been, is or will be included within the determined guidance of the sovereign prerogative of God.
- In agreement with this sovereign perspective, the New Testament reveals that Christ was personally involved in the Old Testament as the intermediate agent of creation (Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2) and also that the resulting state of creation “holding together” depends upon Him (Col. 1:17, Heb. 1:3). Since this creative act would be an exclusive trait of God, any word or action of the “the Angel of the Lord” attributable to Christ would also require conformity with the perfections of God—His personal attributes and prerogatives.

### Personal Attributes of God

The most significant verification that “*the Angel of the Lord*” is a unique personality in comparison to the other classes of angelic beings are those contexts that ascribe deity to Him through a direct correlation with the Lord’s authoritative word or action. The primary method of this association is the contextual transition between the words spoken by the Lord (*Yahweh* or either God, *Elohim*) and those spoken by “*the Angel of the Lord*.” (*mal’ak Yahweh*).

The longer narratives that follow provide the better opportunity to prove this association. Therefore, a more exegetical approach will be used in this section accentuating the original Hebrew words, phrases, and clauses (check the footnotes for the majority of this information) that highlight these attributes.

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<sup>57</sup> John Gill, *Genesis to Numbers*, vol. 1, *The Baptist Commentary Series* (Paris, AR: The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc., 1989), 117.

## Genesis 16:7-14

“*The angel of the Lord*” (NASB<sup>58</sup>) had located Hagar alone in the wilderness after fleeing from the harsh treatment of Sarai (Gen. 16:6-7). He had an omniscient awareness of her personal circumstances: her name, occupation, and location (16:7-8). He also acknowledged her current status of being pregnant, the gender of the child, and even directed the selection of his personal name (16:11).

- He initially asked her two important questions of personal assessment that focused her attention upon a true evaluation of her situation (Gen. 16:8)<sup>59</sup>. Since Hagar could only answer the first regarding her reason of departure, He gave her two directives to “*return*” and “*submit*” to Sarai’s authority specifying her responsibility<sup>60</sup>. These commands required a response of personal faith and revealed His purpose to resolve her immediate predicament (Gen. 16:9). In addition, He stated a promise of personal blessing that would ensure multiple descendants (Gen. 16:10), the impending expectation of a son (Gen. 16:11), and a prophecy concerning his unstable personal character and antagonistic behavior towards others and the location of his inheritance in the land (Gen.16:12).
- The literal meaning of Ishmael, “*God has heard*”,<sup>61</sup> would be a significant confirmation of the providential involvement of God within the personal affairs of individuals as it clearly states, “*Because (the) Lord has given heed to your affliction*” (16:11)<sup>62</sup>.
- All of these statements by “*the Angel of the Lord*” carried equal weight with the authoritative revelation of the Lord as literally translated<sup>63</sup>, “*Then she called (the) name of the Lord, the one speaking to her*”. This remarkable theophany, “*You (are) (the) God of appearance*” caused a true sense of personal awe from Hagar, “*Have even I seen here after (the) one who sees me?*”, in realizing the implications of this momentous event (Gen. 16:13). The motivation to commemorate such an encounter with God occurs often in Scripture by (re)naming that location to coincide with the main event of that experience as here, lit., “*(the) well of the living one, (the) one who sees me*” (Gen. 16:14).

Often in Genesis, popular etymologies capture the message. These are rhetorical devices that draw from the account the explanation of names. Thus the name was a mnemonic device for remembering the events and their significance.<sup>64</sup>

## Genesis 22:1-19

In the ultimate test of personal obedience for Abraham (Gen. 22:1-19), the primary name for God used in this narrative section is *Elohim* (אֱלֹהִים, “*God*” or אֱלֹהֵי, “*the God*”), as it begins, “*Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham*”<sup>65</sup> (Gen. 22:1, NASB).

- Then after giving Abraham the specific instructions that established his responsibility of obedience (Gen. 22:2), Abraham made the necessary preparations for the journey, “*and he went to the place which the*

<sup>58</sup> New American Standard Bible, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977 by the Lockman Foundation as indicated otherwise they are literal translations from the Hebrew text. The designation, “the Angel of the Lord” is the author’s in comparison to the NASB.

<sup>59</sup> This was also a common method of personal inquiry by Christ to certain individuals in the New Testament for the purpose of seeking the true reality of the their situation or to expose the current status of their personal character. (e.g., Matt. 16:13-17; John 4:1-42).

<sup>60</sup> וְהִתְעַבְרָתְּ תַּחַת יָדַיָּהּ (w<sup>h</sup>ith ‘annî taḥat yadêha), Lit., “Completely submit yourself (Hithpael Imperative fs>ענה) under her hands”. The Hithpael stem indicates intensive action and reflexive voice. So, the subject would initiate and also participate in the designated action.

<sup>61</sup> יִשְׁמָעֵל (yishmā’ēl) > שָׁמַע (shāma’) “to hear, listen to, pay attention, understand”, R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament.*, 2:938.

<sup>62</sup> The reference, “has given heed”, originates from the same verb root (שמע) as Ishmael and provides a special contextual link to that name. Of course, from eternity past this was established within the sovereign plan of God, but only now is evident in the providential framework of time. By this very act, this progenitor of the Arab nations would begin the adversarial relationship with Israel that has existed throughout history and even to this day, achieving the specific purpose of God for those nations.

<sup>63</sup> In the literal translations of the Hebrew, the parentheses represent those words that are not in the original text but added for a better understanding in the transition into English.

<sup>64</sup> Allen P. Ross, “Genesis” in the *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds.(Wheaton: Victor Books, 1988), 57.

<sup>65</sup> וַיִּסְּאֵה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־אַבְרָהָם, Lit., “that the God intensely tested Abraham”, נִסָּה (nissah), Piel Perfect 3ms>נסה, test, try, prove, “In most contexts nāsā has the idea of testing or proving the quality of someone or something, often through adversity or hardship.” R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2 Vols., (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 2:1375.

God had told to him” (Gen. 22:3). While on the way “to (the) land of *the Moriah*”, he and Isaac separated from the other two in the group (Gen 22:4-5).

- Of the three principal elements for the burnt offering besides the altar—wood, sacrificial lamb and fire—Isaac noticed the absence of the lamb. So, he inquired about the missing lamb and Abraham told his son the expected source for that provision, “*God will see to it*” (יִרְאֶה לְיְיָ, *lohêm yir’eh-lô*) (Gen. 22:6-8).
- Arriving at the specific location “*which the God had told to him*”, Abraham completed all the arrangements for the burnt offering and took the knife to sacrifice his son (Gen. 22:9-10). At that very moment “*the Angel of the Lord*” immediately intervened by calling out to Abraham from heaven. In the urgency of the situation, His name was repeated twice (cp. 22:1) and Abraham quickly responded to the voice in the same manner as earlier, “*Behold, I*” (הִנְנִי, *hinnēnî*, i.e., “*Here I am*”, NASB) indicating no distinction between the voice of God (Gen. 22:1) and “*the Angel of the Lord*” (Gen.22:11, 15).
- The highest purpose for this test was explained in its abrupt termination by “*The Angel of the Lord*” in which the proper attitude of worship caused the appropriate actions of personal obedience, “*For now I know that you (are) (a) fearer of God and you have not withheld your son, your only, from Me* (Gen. 22:12) (emphasis mine).<sup>66</sup>
- After the providential provision of the ram by the Lord that Abraham sacrificed in the place of Isaac, he celebrated this event by naming that site, “*(the) Lord, He will provide*”, as it remained until the time of Moses, “*In (the) mountain of (the) Lord, it will be provided*” (Gen. 22:13-14).<sup>67</sup>
- “*The Angel of the Lord*” spoke again from heaven swearing a personal oath of additional blessing to Abraham personally for his obedience which also extended to his descendants<sup>68</sup>, and to “*all the nations of the earth*” through the promised Messiah<sup>69</sup>. Not only are all of these blessings attributable to “*(the) declaration of (the) Lord*”<sup>70</sup> but the sequence of first person statements alternates between “*the Angel of the Lord*” and the Lord, designating deity and equal authority (22:12, 16-18; (emphasis mine):

*And he said, “Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.”* (i.e., *Angel of the Lord*, Gen. 22:12, NASB)

*“By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son,”* (Gen. 22:16, NASB)

*“indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.”* (Gen. 22:17, NASB)

*“In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”* (Gen. 22:18, NASB)

<sup>66</sup> Isaac was the “only son” in the sense that he was the promised son of Sarai and Abraham and that only through his physical descendants would the eternal promises of the Abrahamic Covenant be inherited.

<sup>67</sup> Both names are different stems of the same verb root, יָרָא, יִרְאֶה, *Yahweh yir’eh*, Qal Imperfect 3ms (simple action and active voice) and יִרְאֶה, *Yahweh yir’eh*, Niphal Imperfect 3ms (simple action and passive voice)>רָאָה (*rā’āh*): “see, look at or to provide, usually of God’s provision...(as in English to see to something is to provide for it)”, R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2:823.

<sup>68</sup> Several times as the Abrahamic promises are restated, they are expanded in qualitative terms as here, “and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.”

<sup>69</sup> NKJV – Compare the context of the collective plural, “descendants” in 22:17 with the singular, “descendant” in 22:18 (cp. Gal. 3:15), it is the identical Hebrew word—זָרַעָא (*zar “kā*), “your seed”.

<sup>70</sup> יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ (>אֱלֹהֵי, *n’um Yahweh*); “This root is used exclusively of divine speaking. Hence, its appearance calls special attention to the origin and authority of what is said.” R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament.*, 2:541.

## Exodus 3:1-4:13

- In the context of Exodus 3:1-4:13, Moses has been living in Midian for forty years tending the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro. While shepherding the flock in the vicinity of Horeb, “(the) mountain of the God,” an extraordinary occurrence caught the attention of Moses. Perhaps being some type of unique landmark (“the bush”, occurs 4 times) that he had repeatedly passed by in this area; but this time, miraculously, “the Angel of the Lord appeared to him” in a fire that did not consume that specific bush (Ex. 3:1-3). Beginning in Ex. 3:4, a clear association of deity is contextually arranged in the following narrative with the previously mentioned “Angel of the Lord” as the text continues using “LORD” (יהוה), *Yahweh*) or “God” (אֱלֹהִים, *’elōhîm*) throughout this section of Scripture.
- So it was “**The Angel of the Lord**” who appeared (3:2), the **Lord** who noticed the personal response of Moses, while it was **God** who called out to Moses from the flaming bush (3:4). After Moses had answered, God set the necessary restrictions and conditions for him to safely approach His Holy presence (3:5). Using a formula of disclosure regarding His identity, “I (am) (the) God of your father, (the) God of Abraham, (the) God of Isaac, and (the) God of Jacob”, it provided the personal connection to his own father as well as establishing a historical continuity to the Patriarchs of the nation of Israel.
- Following this statement, the true reality of encountering God’s presence prompted Moses to fearfully avoid looking at “the God” (Ex. 3:6). The Lord acknowledged His intimate awareness<sup>71</sup> and personal concern for the sufferings of the people of Israel (“My people”). Then He explained the two sovereign purposes for His condescension,<sup>72</sup> it was not only “to cause to deliver them”<sup>73</sup> from the harsh oppression in Egypt but also “to cause to bring them up”<sup>74</sup> from that land to (a) good and spacious land, to (a) land flowing of milk and honey” (Ex. 3:7-9).
- Informing Moses of his commission as the Lord’s chosen instrument of deliverance for His people, the impact of such a difficult assignment caused Moses to question “the God” concerning his capacity to complete this task (Ex. 3:10-11). God reassured Moses by stating, “Certainly I will be with you” and also affirmed to him a prophetic verification of the successful completion of this official commission that would honor Him, “When you (singular-Moses) cause to bring out the people from Egypt, you (plural-all the people) will worship the God upon this mountain” (Ex. 3:12).<sup>75</sup>
- Moses responded to “the God” with an obedient desire to go but sought from Him a means of confirmation if the people should doubt the validity of this assignment by asking, “What (is) His name.”<sup>76</sup> Now God reveals to Moses the unique name of self-existence that is an exclusive right of Him alone, “I am that I am.”<sup>77</sup> He instructed Moses to speak to “(the) sons of Israel” an abbreviated name derived from

<sup>71</sup> רָאִיתִי בְּרָאִיתִי, “I have surely seen”; The textual arrangement of an Infinitive Absolute (רָאִיתִי, *rā’îṭî*, Qal Inf Abs) before a finite verb (רָאִיתִי, *rā’îṭî*, Qal Perfect 1cs) of the same verb root (>רָא, *rā’ah*) stresses “the certainty or decisiveness of the verbal idea of the root”; C. L. Seow, *A Grammar For Biblical Hebrew: Revised Edition*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 250.

<sup>72</sup> וָאֵרַד, (*wā’ērād*), “So I have come down”, > יָרַד, (*yārād*) “go down, descend; A theophany is described as God coming down. He leaves His abode and comes to communicate with man directly through the word or indirectly through some instrument”; R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 1:401.

<sup>73</sup> The Hiphil stem is causative action and active voice. Pronominal Suffix 3ms, is a collective singular, i.e., contextually “them”; לְהַצִּילֵם, (*l’haṣṣîlō*), Hiphil Infinitive Construct >צָלַם, (*nāṣal*) “take or snatch away, rescue, recover, deliver from”; Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles a. Briggs, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979), 664.

<sup>74</sup> See previous footnote 19. Pronominal Suffix 3ms, collective singular, i.e., contextually “them”; וְלָבִיאֵם, (*ūl’ha’lō’āṭō*), ‘Hiphil Infinitive Construct >עָלָם, (*’ālah*) “bring up”; Ibid., 749.

<sup>75</sup> תַּעֲבֹדוּ, (*ta’avdū*) > עָבַד, (*’ābar*) “work, perform, serve, worship carry out, honor”, Willem A. VanGemeren, gen. ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, 5 vols., (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 3:304. In the Old Testament, the similar activities of work, serve, and worship overlapped or could even be synonymous (cf. Gen.2:15).

<sup>76</sup> Moses now 80, has been away for forty years; a new generation has grown up since he left Egypt and he has not had any personal contact or involvement with the leaders or the people of Israel.

<sup>77</sup> אֲנִי הָאֵלֵים שָׁמַיָּהּ, (*’eh’yeh ’sher ’eh’yeh*), The vocalization and transliteration of this phrase by others omits the vocal sheva [ ° ]. The metheg, a secondary accent, represents a pause in the first syllable and indicates that the following sheva is vocal.), > הָיָה, (*hāyāh*) “to be, become, exist, happen”, lit., “I exist that I exist”, and has an etymological application to Yahweh, since they share the same verb root. The form of Yahweh (יְהוָה) could express the third person form of *hāyāh*, lit., “He exists”. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 1:213.

the previous one, “**I am, He has sent me to you**”<sup>78</sup>, which was an eternal name and to be a continual memorial name for them (Ex. 3:13-15):

And God (אֱלֹהִים) said again to Moses, “*Thus, you shall say to (the) sons of Israel, **Yahweh** (יְהוָה), (the) God of your fathers, (the) God of Abraham, (the) God of Isaac, and (the) God of Jacob, **He has sent me to you. This (is) My name forever and this (is) (the) remembrance of me for generation of generation.*** (Ex. 3:15) (emphasis mine)

- Again notice the consistent textual linkage of equality in all these various actions, declarations and divine names as the narrative continues: Moses was to approach the leaders of the people first, “*Go and you gather (the) elders of Israel*”<sup>79</sup>, and tell them that the *Lord had appeared* to him (stated again in Ex. 4:1, 5; cp. Ex. 3:2, “*the Angel of the Lord appeared*”) and expressed His personal concern for their circumstances<sup>80</sup> in Egypt. In addition, Moses was to inform them of the Lord’s plan to deliver them from “*the affliction of Egypt*” to a land of abundance (Ex.3:16-17).
- The Lord confirms to Moses that the elders will “*listen to your voice*” and collectively they would go before “(the) king of Egypt” and tell him of the special encounter with “(the) Lord, (the) God of the Hebrews” and to petition him for permission to travel three days into the wilderness and sacrifice “*to (the) Lord, our God*” (Ex 3:18).
- With a special textual emphasis on “*I know*”<sup>81</sup>, the Lord pointed out the prophetic sequence of events that Moses would confront after returning to Egypt (Ex. 3:19). Only miracles<sup>82</sup> of judgment produced by the Lord’s “*hand of strength*” will force the king of Egypt to allow the people of Israel to leave for the land of promise. In the process of leaving Egypt, the people of Israel could expect a sense of retribution, “*...and you shall totally plunder (the) Egyptians*” receiving, “*vessels of silver and vessels of gold, and clothes*” because the Lord “*will give favor in (the) eyes of (the) Egyptians*”<sup>83</sup> (Ex. 3:20-22).
- Since Moses expressed personal doubt that the leaders would believe that the Lord had appeared to him, the Lord demonstrated three attesting signs to Moses that would persuade them to believe in the reality of that event (Ex 4:1-9). For a third time, Moses balked at his assignment; he now distrusted his own ability to effectively speak the message of the Lord, “And Moses said to (the) Lord (יְהוָה, *Yahweh*), “*concerning me Lord (אֲנִי, <sup>ʾ</sup>dônāy), I (am) not (a) man of words...for I (am) heavy of mouth, and heavy of tongue.*” The Lord (יְהוָה, *Yahweh*) answered by reassuring Moses once more that He would teach and guide his words because He is the Sovereign Creator (cf. 4:11), “**I, I will be** (strong emphasis) *with your mouth and I will cause to teach you what you will speak.*”
- Yet again, the rejection of Moses is noted, “and he said, “*concerning me, Lord (אֲנִי, <sup>ʾ</sup>dônāy), Send now by (the) hand (whom) you will send*”, i.e., please, Lord, send someone else. Even in His anger towards this rejection by Moses, the Lord granted him additional assistance by Aaron, his brother, who was on his way to Horeb, “(the) mountain of the God.” (cf. 4:27). Aaron could speak well, but since the official commission was for Moses, the chain of authority would be maintained: from **God to Moses**; from **Moses to Aaron**; and from **Aaron to the people** (Ex 4:10-17).
- The Lord had more than adequately provided the solutions for every objection of Moses. So he took the staff, by which the signs will be performed and departed in obedience to the Lord.

<sup>78</sup> Compare the “I am” (εγώ εἰμι) passages that Christ spoke in reference to Himself in John 8:12, 18, 24, 28, 58.

<sup>79</sup> אֲנִי יִשְׂרָאֵל, (*ʾēzraēl*) > זָקַן (*zāqān*), “be, become old”, a denominative verb derived from the cognate noun (*zāqān*), “beard”. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 1:249. There would be more of an opportunity of accepting this commission from God since these men would be older and would perhaps remember him from the past before he left Egypt.

<sup>80</sup> פָּקַד פְּקֻדָּתִי, (*pāqad pāqadī*, Qal Infinitive Absolute plus finite verb - Qal Perfect 1cs, see footnote 19) > פָּקַד, (*pāqad*) “visit, appoint, punish; The basic meaning is to exercise oversight over a subordinate, either in the form of inspecting or of taking action to cause a considerable change in the circumstances of the subordinate, either for the better or for the worse”, R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2:731.

<sup>81</sup> וָאֲנִי יָדָעְתִּי, (*waʾnīyādaʾtī*), lit., “and I, I know”, Personal pronoun that agrees with the person, gender, and number of the following verb ( PP 1cs, Qal Perfect 1cs).

<sup>82</sup> נִפְלְאוֹתַי, (*niphlōʾāy*) > פֶּלְאָה, (*pālāʾ*) “be marvelous, wonderful; refers to acts of God, designating either cosmic wonders or historical achievements on behalf of Israel; things that are unusual, beyond human capabilities, R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2:723. (cf. Isa. 9:6, “...and His name will be called, *Wonderful*, Counselor, Mighty God, Father of forever, Ruler of Peace. [9:5 in Hebrew]) (emphasis mine)

<sup>83</sup> אֶתְּתֶנָּה, (*wʾnāṭatī eṭ-hēn*), “I will give favor”, *hēn*, “grace, favor > חַנּוּן (*hānan*), be gracious; depicts a heartfelt response by someone who has something to give to one who has a need,” Ibid., 1:302.

## CONCLUSION

Only one specific reference to “*the Angel of the Lord*” but as the context substantiates, an equal possessor of these attributes of God: the association with the other divine names in this context—Lord (יהוה, *Yahweh*), God (אלהים, *‘lōhîm*) Lord (יהוה, *‘dōnāy*) indicating deity; self-existence; holiness; omniscience awareness of all circumstances and stated prophecies; omnipresence in His physical manifestation; omnipotence by working miracles and the capability to fulfill the stated prophecies.

**THE ANGEL OF THE LORD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT  
PART THREE**

**Judges 6:11-24**

- The Lord had placed “(the) sons of Israel” under the control of the Midianites for seven years because of their disobedience. Due to the severe oppression and plunder of the Midianites and the Amalekites during this period, Israel turned to the Lord and appealed for His assistance<sup>84</sup> (Judg. 6:1-6). In response to their request, a prophet was sent to declare the historical deliverance from all past oppressors, the gift of the land to Israel; to stress the covenant relationship of “(the) Lord, (the) God of Israel” and their continued disobedience to Him (Judg. 6:7-10).
- Gideon was threshing wheat in the wine press so that when the Midianites came to plunder the land, they would not be aware of its location and seize it. Then “(the) Angel of the Lord appeared to him” and encouraged Gideon by asserting that, “(the) Lord (is) with you”<sup>85</sup> and also addressing him as a, “strong warrior.” Gideon understood the implications of those statements, but he questioned the reality of the Lord’s favor since the nation was under the domination of Midian, “But at this time, (the) Lord has forsaken us and given us into (the) palm of Midian” (Judg. 6:11-13). Even though “the Angel of the Lord” had appeared and spoken to Gideon earlier, now a major textual transition occurs, changing to the physical presence and words of the Lord (יְהוָה), “and (the) Lord turned toward him” and then He officially commissioned Gideon, “Go, in this your strength and you cause to deliver Israel from (the) palm of Midian. Have I not sent you?” Being skeptical of his personal qualifications to accomplish this assignment, Gideon replied to the Lord<sup>86</sup> by emphasizing the insignificance of his family within the tribe of Manasseh and his own age of immaturity. The Lord reassured him that, “Certainly I will be with you” (cp. 6:12) and for that reason the expressed inadequacies of Gideon were really insignificant, “and you will cause to destroy Midian as one man.” As a final confirmation, Gideon requested a sign<sup>87</sup> that would confirm the true Lord was speaking to him. Agreeing to remain while Gideon departed to prepare an offering, he made the preparations and returned to present it before the Lord and “(the) Angel of the God”<sup>88</sup> instructed him on the procedure for this offering. The offering was consumed by fire as “the Angel of the Lord” touched the staff to the elements of the offering and afterward He abruptly disappeared. Acceptance of this offering was the apparent sign that persuaded Gideon to comprehend the significance of this encounter, “Ah,<sup>89</sup> Master Lord! (יְהוָה יְהוָה, <sup>a</sup>*dōnāy Yahweh*) I have seen the Angel of the Lord, face to face.” The Lord sought to comfort the fear of Gideon since he thought that his death was imminent for seeing the face of God (cf. Ex. 33:20), “And (the) Lord said to him, Peace to you, do not fear; you shall not die.” As others, Gideon memorialized this experience by erecting an altar to the Lord and he called that location, “(The) Lord (is) Peace” (יְהוָה שְׁלוֹמִים, *Yahweh Shālōm*) (Judg. 6:11-24).
- With a direct correlation between the spoken words of the Angel of the Lord and the Lord, this section of Scripture ascribes deity and equivalent authority. The acceptance of the offering and Gideon’s recognition of the divine presence by the Angel of the Lord reinforce this designation of equality with the Lord. Other associated attributes are: omniscience in the prophecy that Midian would be defeated by

<sup>84</sup> וַיִּזְעַקוּ בְּיַד שָׂרָאֵל אֱלֹהֵיהֶם: (wayyiz ‘aqū) > זעק (zā‘aq), “cry, cry out, call; ...almost exclusively in reference to a cry from a disturbed heart, in need of some kind of help”, R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament.*, 1:248.

<sup>85</sup> יְהוָה עִמָּךְ, (*Yahweh ‘imm’ka*), The most common usage of the preposition, עִם (‘im), “involves accompaniment (fellowship and companionship, person + person)” and would indicate personal relationship (cp. Isa. 7:14, עִמָּנוּ אֱלֹהִים, ‘*Immānū ‘ĕl*, “With us (is) God”); Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 219.

<sup>86</sup> In this verse (6:15) Gideon seems to recognize that this is the “Master” because he used Lord (יְהוָה, <sup>a</sup>*dōnāy*) instead of “my lord” (אֲדֹנָי, <sup>a</sup>*dōm*) which usually refers to a human master (6:13).

<sup>87</sup> אֵימֹת, (‘ōt), Most occurrences refer to “miraculous signs” (cf. Ex. 4:8-9); R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament.*, 1:18.

<sup>88</sup> The significance of this construct relationship, “the Angel of the God” (מַלְאָכֵי הָאֱלֹהִים, *mal’āk ha‘ĕlōhîm*) in relation to “the Angel of the Lord” (מַלְאָכֵי יְהוָה, *mal’āk Yahweh*) will be discussed in detail later in this article.

<sup>89</sup> אֵהָהּ, (‘āhāh), injection of lamentation; expressive of grief, William Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, trans. Samuel P. Tregelles, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 16. Benjamin Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992), 10.

Gideon, omnipotence in the fulfillment of that prophecy, omnipresence in the physical appearance of *the Angel of the Lord* (Judg. 6:12) as compared with the Lord (Judg. 6:14ff). Also in this context a distinction in personality is delineated between the Angel of the Lord and the “*Master Lord*” (אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה), “*dōnāy Yahweh*” (Judg. 6:22).

### Judges 13:1-25

- In yet another cycle of committing “*the evil in (the) eyes of (the) Lord*” (הַיָּהוָה), He disciplined Israel by giving them over to the dominance of the Philistines for forty years (13:1). At the appropriate time to raise up a deliverer for Israel, “*the Angel of the Lord appeared*” to Manoah’s wife and told her, “*you shall conceive and bring forth (a) son*” even though she had been barren in the past (13:2-3). She was given specific instructions for the special Nazirite<sup>90</sup> dedication of this son to God (אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה) by abstaining from wine or strong drink and not eating unclean food. This son would be the chosen one to begin the deliverance of Israel “*from (the) hand of the Philistines*” (13:4-5). She then went to her husband, Manoah, and explained to him all the prophetic details spoken by *the Angel of the Lord* concerning the anticipation of this future son. In her description of *the Angel of the Lord* she pointed out His human form, “*(the) man of the God came to me*” as well as His unique appearance, “*and his appearance (was) like (the) appearance of (the) Angel of the God, one being very awesome*”<sup>91</sup> (13:6-7).
- This prompted Manoah to petition “*to (the) Lord*”<sup>92</sup> for two things: 1) “*(the) man of the God*” that the Lord had sent could return a second time; and 2) for the purpose of equipping them to bring up their son. “*(The) God*” granted his request, “*(the) Angel of the God came again*” but Manoah was not with her in the field. So she quickly ran to tell him that the same “*man*” who had previously “*appeared*” to her had now returned (13:8-10). Then Manoah followed his wife “*and they came to the man*” and Manoah inquired if He was the same person who had spoke to his wife earlier. After His confirmation, Manoah sought additional information concerning the life of this expected child, “*What will be (the) judgment of (the) lad and (the) making of him (i.e., his trade or occupation)?*” The “*Angel of the Lord*” responds by only stressing the importance of His previous commands to Manoah’s wife and her responsibility to abstain from any type of wine or unclean food, “*Let her keep*”<sup>93</sup> all that I commanded her” (13:11-14).
- Manoah desired to share a meal with *the Angel of the Lord*, but He declined the invitation and advised him to prepare a burnt offering to the Lord because up to that point Manoah was not aware of His true character, “*for Manoah did not know that he was (the) Angel of the Lord*” (13:15-16).
- Seeking the personal name of this man (cp. 13:6) so that they could honor Him when the prophecy regarding their son had come true, *the Angel of the Lord* stated “*...why (is) this, (that) you ask for my name; for it is wonderful.*”<sup>94</sup> During the sacrifice Manoah and his wife observed Him, “*causing to do wonders*”<sup>95</sup> and as the fire consumed the burnt offering (13:17-19):

...*(the) Angel of (the) Lord went up in (the) flame of the altar.*” Upon having observed that phenomenon, “*they fell on their faces to (the) ground and (the) Angel of (the) Lord did not add (i.e., do) again, (for the purpose of ) to appear to Manoah or to his wife; then Manoah knew that He (was) (the) Angel of (the) Lord.*” (13:20-21)

<sup>90</sup> כִּי־נָזִיר אֱלֹהִים, (*ki nāzîr ʿelōhîm*), “for (a) nazirite of God, > נָזִיר, (*nāzîr*) “consecrated, left to unfettered growth, one consecrated; Willem A.

VanGemeren, gen. ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, 3:73. The nazirite vow could be temporary or like Samson for a lifetime, “for a nazirite of God the lad will be from the womb until (the) day of his death.” (Judg. 13:7)

<sup>91</sup> נִרְאָה מְפֹרָא, (*nîrāʾ mē ʿōd*), Niphal Participle ms > יָרָא, (*yārāʿ*) “fear, be afraid, revere; The Niphal Participle is frequently used to describe things as ‘terrible,’ ‘awesome,’ or ‘terrifying.’”; R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 1:400-401.

<sup>92</sup> אֵל־יְהוָה, (*ʾel Yahweh* - “to (the) Lord”, but when speaking he used Lord, אֱדֹנָי, “*dōnāy*).

<sup>93</sup> תִּשְׁמֹר, (*tišmôr*), > שָׁמַר, (*šamar*), “keep, guard, observe, give heed; The basic idea of the root is ‘to exercise great care over’”, R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2:939. There is a special emphasis on the last clause, “all that I commanded her”, because it (the object) is placed before the verb.

<sup>94</sup> וְהוּא־פֶלִיא, (*wehū ʾpheli ʿ*), > פֶּלִיא, (*pālāʾ*) “wonderful, incomprehensible”, Ibid., 2:723. See footnote 30.

<sup>95</sup> וַיַּפְלֵא לְעֵשׂוֹת, (*ūmaphliʾ lʾʿasôṭ*), Hiphil Participle ms, > פֶּלִיא, (*pālāʾ*) “...in the Bible the root *plʾ* refers to things that are unusual, beyond human capabilities”, Ibid., 2:723.

- Now being enlightened through this experience, he became apprehensive in the realization of *the Angel of the Lord's* divine nature as he confirmed to his wife, “*We will surely die*<sup>96</sup> *because we have seen God*” (אֱלֹהִים). Manoah’s wife consoled him by putting it all in the right perspective:

*If (the) Lord had delighted in causing us to die, He would not have taken from our hand, (the ) burnt offering and (the) gift offering; and He would not have caused us to see all these (things) and at this time He would not have caused us to hear like this. (13:22-23)*

- The prophecy was fulfilled and a son was born who was named, Samson<sup>97</sup>, and he grew up in the blessing of the Lord (יְהוָה). At the appropriate time that he was to begin the process of delivering Israel from the control of the Philistines, the Spirit of the Lord<sup>98</sup> “*caused to begin to stir him*” (13:24-25).
- Common themes of exhibiting the attributes of God by *the Angel of the Lord* continue as demonstrated in previous contexts: recognition and reaction to the divine presence of *the Angel of the Lord* by Manoah and his wife, the revelation that His name is incomprehensible, omniscience in the prophecy of a son who would defeat the Philistines, omnipotence in its prophetic fulfillment, and omnipresence in the physical appearance of *the Angel of the Lord*. In this particular context, *the Angel of God* and *the Angel of the Lord* are synonymous, but also the context maintains a difference in person with the personality of God (אֱלֹהִים) (Judg. 13:9).

### Personal Prerogatives of God

If there could be any limitation of an eternal God with infinite knowledge, holy character, and absolute authority, He could not violate any perfection of His personal attributes. Therefore, any eternal decree or providential action of God would necessitate total harmony with the very nature of God, such as the previous textual illustrations have involved: omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, self-existence, holiness, and deity. As the seventeenth century scholar Stephen Charnock points out:

*The excellency, thereof, of the Divine nature is the natural foundation for his dominion. He hath wisdom to know what is fit for him to do, and an immutable righteousness whereby he cannot do any thing base and unworthy: he hath a foreknowledge whereby he is able to order all things to answer his own glorious designs and the end of his government, that nothing can go awry, nothing put him to a stand, and constrain him to mediate new counsels.*<sup>99</sup>

For centuries, theologians have attempted to categorize the attributes of God. In this process to comprehend the biblical revelation, it is only an attempt to properly understand what constitutes the entirety of His being. Lewis Sperry Chafer explains this point:

*The whole of the divine essence is in each attribute and the attribute belongs to the whole essence. The attributes belong eternally to the essence. The essence has not first existed apart from the attributes.*

The primary prerogative of God in relation to mankind is displayed mainly in His sovereign control and providential superintendence of His creation. By His sole determination and as the following examples from Scripture disclose, the certain execution of His sovereign will involves and also requires positive and negative events in the prescribed course of every individual’s existence.

Intervening in the personal affairs of individuals is His sovereign right and the highest privilege of the recipient, aware or not aware of His interaction as the sole initiator of these providential circumstances.

According to the good pleasure and initiative of the Lord alone, providential expressions of favor, blessing, or even judgment occur at the appointed time within His sovereign plan. A significant number of these divine

<sup>96</sup> מוֹת נָמוּט , (môt nāmût), lit., dying, we will die”, Infinitive Absolute plus finite verb for special emphasis.

<sup>97</sup> שִׁמְשׁוֹן , (shimshôn), > שֶׁמֶשׁ , (shemesh) the sun, “solar, like the sun”, William Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, 839; and Benjamin Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, 728.

<sup>98</sup> רִיחַ יְהוָה , (rûāh Yahweh), “(the ) Spirit of (the) Lord; There is a hint of the Trinity considering the contextual usage of Lord, Angel of (the) Lord, and now Spirit of (the) Lord. (cp. Judges 6, all three also occur)

<sup>99</sup> Stephan Charnock, *Discourses Upon the Existence and Attributes of God*, 2 Vols., (Robert Carter & Brothers, 1853; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 2:368.

actions of providence are represented in Biblical Hebrew by the Hiphil Stem which has the grammatical purpose “to cause an event.”<sup>100</sup>

### Providential Roles

Fulfilling the primary role of a “messenger” (מַלְאָךְ, *mal'āk*), the *Angel of the Lord* initiated the encounter with Hagar, “*The Angel of the Lord found her,*” (Gen. 16:7) and called to Abraham from heaven twice during his test for personal obedience (Gen. 22:11, 15). He physically appeared to Moses in the flaming bush (Ex 3:2), to Balaam at Pethor (probably near the Euphrates River), to the sons of Israel at Bochim upon entering the land under Joshua (Judg. 2:1), to Gideon at Ophrah (tribal area of Manasseh) (Judg. 6:11), and to Manoah and his wife (of the tribe of Dan) (Judg. 13:3). As stated earlier in the lexical meaning of *mal'āk*, usually the messenger was sent by a superior, but this would not be applicable to *the Angel of the Lord*. He is the “sent one” but only in the sense of accepting His intermediary role between the Father and mankind. (cf. I Tim. 2:5)

The following details summarize the positive and negative content of the various messages:

- **Prophetic promises** of personal blessing; Hagar (Gen. 16) and Manoah’s wife (each a son) (Judg. 13); Abraham and his descendants (greatly multiplied) (Gen. 22).
- **Personal assistance**; Elijah (food) (I Kgs. 19) and Abraham (sacrificial ram) (Gen. 22). National/City assistance; Jerusalem and Israel (protection) (Zech. 12:8)
- **Personal judgment**; Balaam (wrong motive) (Num. 22), Ahaziah (seeking false gods), David (disobedience) (II Sam. 24:16-17, cp. I Chron. 21:12, 15-16) (Ps. 35:5-6) National /regional judgment; Israel (disobedience) (Judg. 2), Assyrians (attacked Jerusalem) (II Kgs. 19), Meroz (in Galilee area - curse) (Judg. 5:23).
- **Personal protection**; all (who fear the Lord) (Ps. 34:7)
- **Personal commission**; Moses (deliver Israel from Egypt) (Ex. 3), Gideon (deliver Israel from Midianites) (Judg. 6), Samson, (deliver Israel from Philistines) (Judg. 13), Haggai (messenger of the Lord) (Hag. 1:13; cp. Mal. 2:7).

Many of these providential actions have been addressed in the prior exegetical commentary under **Personal Attributes of God** and find their basis in His personal concern and compassion as the bestower of promise, blessing and favor. Other prerogatives of divine authority such as the performance of miracles, the acceptance of worship or sacrifice, granting a personal request, and the requirement of obedience to His commands are exercised for the benefit or detriment of the intended recipient(s).

Those prerogatives with adversarial intervention or judgment are also dominant providential roles carried out by *the Angel of the Lord*. For example, David, for numbering the military might of Israel (II Sam. 24:16-17; I Chron. 21:12, 15, 16, 30) and Sennacherib, the king of Assyria for coming to attack Jerusalem (II Kings 19:35; cp. Isa. 37:36).

### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Equally important to the unity of the Godhead is the distinction between the three individual personalities. The complementary role of each person within the accomplishment of the sovereign realm of God may be apparent in His providential interaction with mankind.

#### Numbers 22:1-38

- Fearful of this great multitude of people that have arrived on the eastern side of the Jordan, King Balak of Moab has summoned Balaam, a renowned diviner from the East, to pronounce a curse upon them so that they could be defeated (22:1-6).

<sup>100</sup> Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 433. There have been many illustrations of this causative action in the literal translations presented earlier which have “cause to” preceding the verbal action.

- The elders of Moab and Midian departed with the diviner's fee and relayed this special request of King Balak to Balaam near the Euphrates River. Balaam told the leaders of Moab to stay with him while he consulted the Lord (יהוה). By the initiation of God (אלהים), He asked Balaam about these men, and he responded "to the God" (אלהיאלהים) by explaining the request of Balak to curse this "people coming forth from Egypt." Then God commanded Balaam not to go or curse them because they are "(the) one(s) being continually blessed." The next morning Balaam informed the leaders of Balak that the Lord (יהוה) refused to allow him to go with them. The leaders returned and relayed Balaam's denial (22:7-14).
- In response and not to be denied, King Balak "sent more officials, ones being honored more than these" to impress and influence Balaam to accept an even greater amount of compensation for his services. Balaam answered this second group by stating that no amount of payment could influence him because he could speak only the words of the Lord, "I am not able to go beyond (the) mouth of (the) Lord, my God (יהוה אלהי); to do (a) small or large (thing)." Balaam did seek the Lord a second time and this time "God came to Balaam" during the night and permitted him to go with these officials on the condition that Balaam speak only His words (strong textual emphasis), "Surely, the word which I will speak to you, you will do it" (22:15-20).
- As Balaam was making the preparations to leave with the officials of Moab, "(the) anger of God burned because he was going and (the) Angel of (the) Lord stationed himself<sup>101</sup> in the way for (an) adversary to him."<sup>102</sup> Now the distinction of the individual personalities of the Lord and the Angel of the Lord enters the remaining context of this chapter.

On the three different occasions, the donkey that Balaam was riding "saw (the) Angel of the Lord" standing with His drawn sword in their path and attempted to avoid Him. Each time, Balaam struck the donkey to guide it back to the original path. Finally, as the Angel of the Lord positioned Himself so that the donkey could not go to the right or left, it laid down under Balaam.

Then a remarkable conservation occurred between the donkey and Balaam as the Lord enabled the donkey to speak of its consistent loyalty to Balaam up to this point and Balaam expressed his agreement with that assessment.

Now the progression of personal relationships (i.e., Balak with leaders, 22:4-6; Balaam with leaders and with God, 22:7-20) shifted between Balaam and the Angel of the Lord (22:21-35).

- At this moment, the Lord "completely revealed"<sup>103</sup> to Balaam the presence of the Angel of the Lord standing in his path with His drawn sword "and he bowed down (i.e., his head) then he prostrated himself to his nose (i.e., face)" as a sign of respect and honor. Asking Balaam the reason for striking the donkey three times, the Angel of the Lord clarified the purpose for His adversarial role, "Behold I (special emphasis), I have come forth for (an) adversary because the way (i.e., way of Balaam) (is) perverse against me."<sup>104</sup> He also told Balaam that the donkey had saved his life because it had avoided Him. After confessing his sin, Balaam offered to turn back, "if (it is) evil in your eyes", but the Angel of the Lord granted him permission to go with the leaders of Balak. He restated the only condition that God had established earlier (22:20), "but only the word which I shall speak to you, it (special emphasis) you shall speak" (22:21-35).
- On the journey to Moab, Balak was informed that Balaam was approaching so he went out to meet Balaam and questioned him on the reason for the delay. He stressed only the point that he had come now and that, "the word which God puts in my mouth, it (special emphasis) I will speak" (22:36-38).

<sup>101</sup> וַיִּצַב בְּלִפְנֵי יְהוָה, (w<sup>e</sup>yiytyasšēb) > צב, (yāšab), Hithpael Imperfect 3ms, intensive action and reflexive voice, "stand, set or station oneself, present oneself; used of those who set themselves against others, to oppose" R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 1:394.

<sup>102</sup> בְּדֶרֶךְ לְשׂוֹנֵן לִי, (l<sup>e</sup> sātan), > שׂוֹנֵן, (sātan), verb; "be an adversary, resist", noun; adversary, one who withstands; Ibid., 2:874.

<sup>103</sup> וַיִּגַּל יְהוָה, (way<sup>e</sup>gal), > גלה, (gālah), Piel Imperfect 3ms, intensive action and active voice, "uncover, reveal", Willem A. VanGemeren, gen. ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, 1:861.

<sup>104</sup> This would explain the reason for the anger of God (22:22) who had given Balaam His permission to go with the officials of Moab. Balaam apparently had the wrong motive or had accepted the additional funds for he had been told to go and speak only the direct words from God. (cf. II Pet. 2:15)

Not only is there a clear distinction of separate personalities, but a deliberate textual arrangement of equal authority between the words of the *Angel of the Lord* and the other divine names mentioned. The acceptance of worship, confession of sin, and being the revealer of truth would be other prerogatives of God alone. In a special note, a hint of the Doctrine of the Trinity is evident in these chapters (Num. 22-24) when the Spirit of the God is added to the other divine names previously mentioned (cf. 24:16: ‘*Elyôn*-Most High and *Shadday*-Almighty).

### Book of Zechariah

- Within the figurative language of the symbolic visions, there is a personal conversation between the **Angel of the Lord** and the **Lord**. As it begins in the first vision of the red horse, “(the) word of (the) **Lord** came to Zechariah” and he asked the angel to interpret the details of the vision (1:7-9). This angel was not the *Angel of the Lord* for Zechariah addressed him as “my lord.”<sup>105</sup> The **Angel of the Lord** answered by stating that the **Lord** has sent the other three horsemen, “to patrol the earth.” Upon their return and report to the **Angel of the Lord**, He asks the **Lord of Hosts** how long He would “*have no compassion for Jerusalem and the cities of Judah*” since the seventy year captivity had ended and the city had not been restored. The remaining context of Chapter One features the other angel (not the *Angel of the Lord*) speaking to Zechariah and relaying the message from the Lord of Hosts concerning the future restoration of Israel and judgment of the nations “*which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.*”<sup>106</sup> (Zech. 1:10-21)
- The fourth vision of Chapter Three presents an interesting scenario in which Joshua the High Priest (who had returned from the Babylonian captivity with Zerubbabel) and “*the Adversary*” (Satan)<sup>107</sup> who were standing before the **Angel of the Lord**. In verse two, it is the **Lord** who rebuked Satan for accusing Joshua, but in verse three, Joshua “*clothed with filthy garments*” was standing before the **Angel**. He instructed “*those who were standing before Him*” (cf. 3:8) to remove Joshua’s filthy garments. This would symbolize a visible illustration of the complete remission of his sin by the **Angel of the Lord**, “*See, I have caused to take away your iniquity*”<sup>108</sup> (Zech. 3:1-5).

While the previous discussion reveals the oneness in nature between the *Lord* and the *Angel of the Lord* and the divine prerogative to remove an individual’s sin, the following context accentuates the distinction of person.

- Afterwards, the **Angel of the Lord** spoke to Joshua in the typical prophetic formula, “*Thus says the Lord of Hosts*”, pronouncing personal blessing if he will be obedient to the commandments (“*My ways*”) and be faithful in his priestly duties (“*My service*”). The remaining prophecies to be accomplished by the **Lord of Hosts** included the coming of the Messiah (“*My servant, the Branch*”), the removal of “*the iniquity of that land in one day*” (i.e., at the second advent of Christ), and the personal blessing of prosperity in the Millennial Kingdom. (Zech. 3:6-10)

### Other References

Another major factor within the scope of this study is an examination of the grammatical constructions and contextual references which are comparable to the *Angel of the Lord*. Is there a direct link of evidence that can enhance the stated thesis of this presentation by associating an attribute or prerogative of God? Two primary categories will be analyzed: Specific Reference-*The Angel of God* and General References—*Angel, the Angel, My Angel, and His Angel*.

<sup>105</sup> The form used, אֲדֹנָי, (“*dōnāy*), usually refers to a master other than the ‘Master’ (אֲדֹנָי, “*dōnāy*).

<sup>106</sup> F. Duane Lindsay, “Zechariah” in the *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds.(Wheaton: Victor Books, 1988), 1550-1551.

<sup>107</sup> אֲדֹנָי, (“*hasāsātān*), “and the adversary”, > אֲדֹנָי, (“*sātān*), verb; “be an adversary, resist”, noun; adversary, one who withstands; R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament.*, 2:874.

<sup>108</sup> אֲדֹנָי, (“*ōnekā*), > אֲדֹנָי, (“*awōn*), “iniquity, guilt, punishment”; > אֲדֹנָי, (“*awā*), “bend, twist, distort”; Ibid., 650.

## The Angel of God

There are only nine occurrences of this construct relationship<sup>109</sup> in four different grammatical forms—“(the) Angel of God” (Gen. 21:17); “(the) Angel of *the* God” (definite article with Elohim) (Gen. 31:11; Ex. 14:19; Judg. 13:6, 9); “like (the) Angel of God” (I Sam. 29:9); “like (the) Angel of the God” (II Sam. 14:17, 20; 19:28-Eng. 19:27).

- After being expelled from the household of Abraham and exhausting the provisions given to them, Hagar tearfully requested that she not witness the death of her son, Ishmael (Gen. 21:14-16). The *Angel of God* engaged her by calling from heaven and informing her to not be afraid for “*God has heard the voice of the lad.*” He told her to return to the lad and restated the promise in regard to him, “*I will make a great nation of him.*” (cf. Gen. 16:10). The context continues with reference to “*God opened her eyes*” revealing a water source for their survival. Because “*God was with the lad*”, he grew up, lived in the wilderness of Paran as an archer, and received an Egyptian wife chosen by Hagar.
- An association of deity is implied in the statement of prophetic promise “*I will make*” and also in setting up a distinct personality from God. The method of calling from heaven was the same approach as the *Angel of the Lord* with Abraham in Genesis 22.
- In Genesis 31, the *Angel of the God* spoke to Jacob in a dream and expressed a personal awareness of the deceit of Laban during the time he had served him (cf. Gen. 31:7). Declaring that He was “*the God of Bethel*”, Jacob was to fulfill his vow (cf. Gen. 28:10-22) and return to the land of Israel (Gen. 31:11-13).
- The *Angel of God* had been leading the “*camp of Israel*” in the wilderness but re-stationed Himself behind the people as the Egyptian chariots approached to attack them by the Red Sea (Ex. 14:19). Conferring with Ex. 13:21, it states that “*the Lord was going before them*” as they traveled in the wilderness which would be an indirect but strong implication of deity.
- Both references in the book of Judges (13:6, 9) have already been confirmed as synonymous with the Angel of the Lord (pp. 18-20).
- In the four remaining examples, a comparison was arranged (כִּי, *kî*, “like, as”) in which there seems to be a reference of favorable status (I Sam. 29:9), the ability to discern between good and evil (II Sam. 14:17), possession of wisdom (II Sam. 14:20), and good judgment (II Sam. 19:27).

From the contextual illustrations that have consistently alternated between the different divine names throughout the various sections in reference to the *Angel of God*, it is apparent that the *Angel of the Lord* and the *Angel of God* are one and the same—**Preincarnate Christ**.

### Other References to “Angel”

In several passages, the general terms “*Angel*”, “*My Angel*”, and “*His Angel*” are used, but the testimony from other references of the same event would designate a certain identity.

- While speaking to Moses, the Lord stated that he would send “(the) *Angel*” before the people of Israel, “*to guard*” and “*to bring*” them into the land of promise (cf. Ex. 33:2). They were to “*obey His voice*” and not be rebellious “*for He will not pardon your transgression, since My name is in Him.*” The Lord also refers to Him as “*My Angel*” (Ex. 23:20-23; 32:34). An actual statement by the *Angel of the Lord* himself substantiates a conclusion regarding these general references:

Now the angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, “*I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your fathers; and I said, ‘I will never break My covenant with you.’*” (Judg. 2:1; NASB)

<sup>109</sup> Abraham Even-Shoshan, ed., *A New Concordance of the Old Testament*, 2d ed., (Jerusalem: “Kiryat Sefer” Publishing House LTD., 1993), 658-659. This construct relationship would be governed by the same grammatical rules as explained for “the Angel of the Lord.”

- The reference to “*His Angel*” occurs in Genesis 24 as Abraham charged his servant with a solemn oath to seek a wife for Isaac from his descendants in the “*city of Nahor*.” This *Angel* would be sent from “*the Lord, the God of Heaven*” who had called Abraham and given the promise of the land to his descendants. (Gen. 24:7, 40). Although more obscure by context, that qualification plus the attributes and prerogatives suggested in the earlier example seem to relate the person and character of this *Angel* with “*the Angel of the Lord*.”
- Even Jacob who used the general reference “*the Angel*” confirmed a definitive characteristic regarding him, “*who redeemed me*” indicating a divine prerogative only based upon the attribute of deity (Gen.48:16).

## CREATION

Colossians 1:15-17 (NASB)

15 *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.*

16 *For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities all things have been created through Him and for Him.*

17 *He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.*

Initially, the interaction of God with the first man was uniquely direct in his physical and spiritual creation<sup>110</sup> (2:7) and in His personal involvement of preparing the special environment in which Adam was placed (2:8) to serve the Lord God (2:15). Concerned for the man’s personal well-being (2:18), God also provided<sup>111</sup> a female companion to complement him<sup>112</sup> in an intimate relationship (2:20-25).<sup>113</sup>

According to the descriptive nature of the divine actions attributed to the Lord God, the direct interaction indicates or strongly implies a theophany in this section of Scripture:<sup>114</sup>

*“formed the man, (of the) dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils (the) breath of life” (2:7)*

*“planted (a) garden toward (the) East, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed” (2:8)*

*“took the man and caused to put him in (the) Garden of Eden” (2:15)*

*“caused (a) deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs, and closed up (the) flesh at that place” (2:21)*

*“built the rib which He had taken from the man into (a) woman, and he caused to bring her to the man” (2:22)*

*“they heard (the) sound of (the) Lord God walking (himself) in the garden in the wind of the day, and the man hid himself and his wife from (the) presence of (the) Lord God in the midst (the) tree(s) of the garden” (3:8)*

<sup>110</sup> וַיַּצַּר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים (wayyīṣer), waw consec., Qal Imperfect 3ms > צָר (yāsar), simple action and active voice, “and (the) Lord God formed”, to form, to fashion, “its primary emphasis is on the shaping or forming of the object involved”; In the participial form, it has the meaning of “potter,” i.e., someone who fashions clay. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2 vols., (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 1:396. (cf. Gen. 2:19).

<sup>111</sup> וַיִּבֶן יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים (wayyibēn), waw consec., Qal Imperfect 3ms > בָּנָה (bānah), “and (the) Lord God built”, to build, “YHWH is presented in Scripture as the master builder of both the created and historical order”, Ibid., 1:116.

<sup>112</sup> עֲזָר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ: (‘ezer), Nms > עָזַר (‘āzar), “help(er) as corresponding to him”, to help, support, “used in a concrete sense to designate the assistant” in this context; Ibid., 2:661.

<sup>113</sup> וַיִּדְבַק בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיוּ לְבָשָׂר אֶחָד: (w’dābaq), waw conj., Qal Perfect 3ms > דָּבַק (dābaq), “and he will cleave with his wife and they will be for one flesh”, cleave, cling, stick to, join to, “used in the OT of physical things sticking to each other, especially parts of the body”; Ibid., 1:178.

<sup>114</sup> These are literal translations of the Hebrew text.

*“made garments of skin for Adam and for his wife, and He caused to clothe them” (3:21)*

*“expelled him out from (the) garden of Eden” (3:23)*

*“(forcibly) drove the man out; and at the east He caused to dwell the cherubim and (the) flaming sword which (continuously) turned itself, to guard (the) way to (the) tree of lives” (3:24)*

As the literal translations reveal, the verbal actions are significant in the original Hebrew. Some are **simple** action (Qal stem) and others are **causal** (translated with “cause to” from the Hiphil stem) specifying that the Lord God was the causative agent of that action. A few are **intensive** (Piel stem) defining the descriptive force of the action in that context. The grammatical relationship of the **subject to the action** reveals the active voice (subject initiating the action), the passive voice (the subject receiving the action), and the reflexive voice (the subject initiating and participating in the action, e.g., “*the man hid himself*” or “*the Lord God walking himself*”).

Since these actions would involve a physical appearance of God, only Jesus Christ the second person of the Godhead, the Son of God, is the only one qualified to fulfill this unique role. In light of all this evidence, the verbal interchanges representing the personal dialogue between the Lord God and Adam would also be a secondary verification of a theophany or more specifically, a Christophany.<sup>115</sup> (cf. p. 8)

## CONCLUSION

The *Angel of the Lord* throughout His ministry in the Old Testament exhibited the same attributes and exercised the same prerogatives of God. In certain contexts, His words and actions are indistinguishable from Yahweh and Elohim. And yet, at other times, there is a clear textual differentiation to highlight the individual personalities within the Godhead.

His active participation as the providential agent in the fulfillment of the sovereign plan of the Father precludes and enhances the understanding of particular aspects of his New Testament ministry. All of the providential roles in which He interacted with these individuals whether in statements of prophetic blessing (**Prophet**), personal prayer (**Priest**), personal forgiveness /assistance (**Savior**), or even judgment (**Judge**), were precursors to similar actions recorded as fulfilled or still future in the New Testament. Even the physical appearances or theophanies preview His incarnation as the revealed Son of God in the New Testament.

As Dr. John F. Walvoord writes, the primary evidence of this role as the *Angel of the Lord* proves His pre-existence and deity (Sovereign Ruler):

*The theophanies of the Old Testament, being the manifestation of Christ, the Second Person, in visible form constitute an argument for pre-existence in history, as contrasted to the direct statement of the New Testament. The abundant witness to the vital ministry of Christ in the Old Testament period and His evident relationship to so many scenes of revelation in the Old Testament are a convincing proof of His pre-existence. An examination of the character of His ministry as the Angel of Jehovah and His manifestation in other forms will not only reveal His pre-existence but will also demand recognition of His deity. As the Angel of Jehovah, He is God, and the revelation of Him in the Old Testament while sometimes devoid of His inherent glory even as He is found during His life on earth after incarnation is nevertheless clearly a display of the attributes of God.<sup>116</sup>*

and personal involvement in the course of historical events in the Old Testament:

*The combined testimony of these passages portrays the Son of God as exceedingly active in the Old Testament, dealing with sin, providing for those in need, guiding in the path of the will of God, protecting His people from their enemies and, in general, executing the providence of God. The references make plain that*

<sup>115</sup> Excerpted from: John M. Baze Jr., “A Dispensational Model: The Essentials,” *The Conservative Theological Journal* (December 1998)

<sup>116</sup> John F. Walvoord, (unpublished: Dallas Theological Seminary), 6-8; quoted in Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 3:33.

*this ministry is not occasional or exceptional but rather the common and continual ministry of God to His people. The revelation of the person of the Son of God thus afforded is in complete harmony with the New Testament revelation. The testimony of Scripture has been so complete on this point that in general scholars who accept the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture are agreed that the Angel of the Jehovah is the Christ of the Old Testament.*<sup>117</sup>

Adapted from:

John M. Baze Jr., "The Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament – Part I," *The Conservative Theological Journal* (December 1997)

John M. Baze Jr., "The Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament – Part II," *The Conservative Theological Journal* (March 1998)

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<sup>117</sup> John F. Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 53.