

Torah Observant "SHOMER MITZVOT"

שומר מצוות

A Series on Practical Messianic Living and Apologetics (halakhah)
By Torah Teacher Ariel ben-Lyman HaNaviy

EXPLORING THE SHEMA (pt. 3): Memra and Metatron

(Note: all quotations are taken from the Complete Jewish Bible, translation by David H. Stern, Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc., unless otherwise noted)

*Updated: January 11, 2003

Introduction

This is the third installment in an ongoing study into the subject of the Incarnation. In study ONE we introduced the difficult Scriptural concept that the God of the Universe, the Almighty Eyn-Sof (Heb: without borders), YHVH exists in a Unity of Three (Father, Son, Spirit), and that Yeshua is the Word (which was both with God and is God) made flesh. The SECOND study revealed numerous verses from the "Old Testament" (TaNaKH) and the "New Testament" (B'rit Chadashah) linking attributes and vital character traits of YHVH to those of Yeshua. These verses demonstrated that titles, roles, and otherwise exclusive attributes of YHVH are indeed applied to Yeshua, thus demonstrating his "echad" with YHVH.

In this study we shall examine the ancient rabbinic texts for assistance in understanding this difficult subject. Most of my quotes from the TaNaKH shall be from the 1985 Jewish Publications Society (JPS) version of Scripture. This is one of the preferred English versions in use within the Jewish community today, and as such, I highly recommend this version, even to non-Jewish folks.

*My quotations from JPS have cosmetically substituted the original name YHVH wherever the Hebrew text has the Four Letters Y-H-V-H, as opposed to the normative rendering "LORD". This somewhat awkward rendering (ex. "The YHVH is my salvation..." as opposed to "The LORD is my salvation...") is only done for the sake of emphasis.

"The Word" according to Judaism

I am aware of various textual sensitivities and preferences in both the Jewish and Christian communities. Therefore, I shall begin this time with a lengthy and direct quote from a well-known Jewish source of information, the Jewish Encyclopedia,

originally published between 1901-1906. What do the non-Christian sources say about the "Word", mentioned so clearly in Yochanan (John) 1:1?

Quote from the Jewish Encyclopedia (pp. 464-465):

"The Word," in the sense of the creative or directive word or speech of God manifesting His power in the world of matter or mind; a term used especially in the Targum as a substitute for "the LORD" when an anthropomorphic expression is to be avoided.

—Biblical Data:

In Scripture "the word of the Lord" commonly denotes the speech addressed to patriarch or prophet (Gen. xv. 1; Num. xii. 6, xxiii. 5; I Sam. iii. 21; Amos v. 1-8); but frequently it denotes also the creative word: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made" (Ps. xxxiii. 6; comp. "For He spake, and it was done"; "He sendeth his word, and melteth them [the ice]"; "Fire and hail; snow, and vapors; stormy wind fulfilling his word"; Ps. xxxiii. 9, cxlvii. 18, cxlviii. 8). In this sense it is said, "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven" (Ps. cxix. 89). "The Word," heard and announced by the prophet, often became, in the conception of the seer, an efficacious power apart from God, as was the angel or messenger of God: "The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Isra'el" (Isa. ix. 7 [A. V. 8], lv. 11); "He sent his word, and healed them" (Ps. cvii. 20); and comp. "his word runneth very swiftly" (Ps. cxlvii. 15).

Personification of the Word.

—In Apocryphal and Rabbinical Literature:

While in the Book of Jubilees, xii. 22, the word of God is sent through the angel to Abraham, in other cases it becomes more and more a personified agency: "By the word of God exist His works" (Ecclus. [Sirach] xlii. 15); "The Holy One, blessed be He, created the world by the 'Ma'amar'" (Mek., Beshalla?, 10, with reference to Ps. xxxiii. 6). Quite frequent is the expression, especially in the liturgy, "Thou who hast made the universe with Thy word and ordained man through Thy wisdom to rule over the creatures made by Thee" (Wisdom ix. 1; comp. "Who by Thy words causeth the evenings to bring darkness, who openest the gates of the sky by Thy wisdom"; . . . "who by His speech created the heavens, and by the breath of His mouth all their hosts"; through whose "words all things were created"; see Singer's "Daily Prayer-Book," pp. 96, 290, 292). So also in IV Esdras vi. 38 ("Lord, Thou spakest on the first day of Creation: 'Let there be heaven and earth,' and Thy word hath accomplished the work"). "Thy word, O Lord, healeth all things" (Wisdom xvi. 12); "Thy word preserveth them that put their trust in Thee" (I. c. xvi. 26). Especially strong

is the personification of the word in Wisdom xviii. 15: "Thine Almighty Word leaped down from heaven out of Thy royal throne as a fierce man of war." The Mishnah, with reference to the ten passages in Genesis (ch. i.) beginning with "And God said," speaks of the ten "ma'amarot" (= "speeches") by which the world was created (Abot v. 1; comp. Gen. R. iv. 2: "The upper heavens are held in suspense by the creative Ma'amar"). Out of every speech ["dibbur"] which emanated from God an angel was created (Hag. 14a). "The Word ["dibbur"] called none but Moses" (Lev. R. i. 4, 5). "The Word ["dibbur"] went forth from the right hand of God and made a circuit around the camp of Isra'el" (Cant. R. i. 13).

—In the Targum:

In the Targum the Memra figures constantly as the manifestation of the divine power, or as God's messenger in place of God Himself, wherever the predicate is not in conformity with the dignity or the spirituality of the Deity.

Instead of the Scriptural "You have not believed in the Lord," Targ. Deut. i. 32 has "You have not believed in the word of the Lord"; instead of "I shall require it [vengeance] from him," Targ. Deut. xviii. 19 has "My word shall require it." "The Memra," instead of "the Lord," is "the consuming fire" (Targ. Deut. ix. 3; comp. Targ. Isa. xxx. 27). The Memra "plagued the people" (Targ. Yer. to Ex. xxxii. 35). "The Memra smote him" (II Sam. vi. 7; comp. Targ. I Kings xviii. 24; Hos. xiii. 14; et al.). Not "God," but "the Memra," is met with in Targ. Ex. xix. 17 (Targ. Yer. "the Shekinah"; comp. Targ. Ex. xxv. 22: "I will order My Memra to be there"). "I will cover thee with My Memra," instead of "My hand" (Targ. Ex. xxxiii. 22). Instead of "My soul," "My Memra shall reject you" (Targ. Lev. xxvi. 30; comp. Isa. i. 14, xlii. 1; Jer. vi. 8; Ezek. xxiii. 18). "The voice of the Memra," instead of "God," is heard (Gen. iii. 8; Deut. iv. 33, 36; v. 21; Isa. vi. 8; et al.). Where Moses says, "I stood between the Lord and you" (Deut. v. 5), the Targum has, "between the Memra of the Lord and you"; and the "sign between Me and you" becomes a "sign between My Memra and you" (Ex. xxxi. 13, 17; comp. Lev. xxvi. 46; Gen. ix. 12; xvii. 2, 7, 10; Ezek. xx. 12). Instead of God, the Memra comes to Abimelek (Gen. xx. 3), and to Balaam (Num. xxiii. 4). His Memra aids and accompanies Isra'el, performing wonders for them (Targ. Num. xxiii. 21; Deut. i. 30, xxxiii. 3; Targ. Isa. lxiii. 14; Jer. xxxi. 1; Hos. ix. 10 [comp. xi. 3, "the messenger-angel"]). The Memra goes before Cyrus (Isa. xlv. 12). The Lord swears by His Memra (Gen. xxi. 23, xxii. 16, xxiv. 3; Ex. xxxii. 13; Num. xiv. 30; Isa. xlv. 23; Ezek. xx. 5; et al.). It is His Memra that repents (Targ. Gen. vi. 6, viii. 21; I Sam. xv. 11, 35). Not His "hand," but His "Memra has laid the foundation of the earth" (Targ. Isa. xlvi. 13); for His Memra's or Name's sake does He act (I.c. xlvi. 11; II Kings xix. 34). Through the Memra God turns to His people (Targ. Lev. xxvi. 90; II Kings xiii. 23), becomes the shield of Abraham (Gen. xv. 1),

and is with Moses (Ex. iii. 12; iv. 12, 15) and with Isra'el (Targ. Yer. to Num. x. 35, 36; Isa. lxiii. 14). It is the Memra, not God Himself, against whom man offends (Ex. xvi. 8; Num. xiv. 5; I Kings viii. 50; II Kings xix. 28; Isa. i. 2, 16; xlvi. 3, 20; Hos. v. 7, vi. 7; Targ. Yer. to Lev. v. 21, vi. 2; Deut. v. 11); through His Memra Isra'el shall be justified (Targ. Isa. xlvi. 25); with the Memra Isra'el stands in communion (Targ. Josh. xxii. 24, 27); in the Memra man puts his trust (Targ. Gen. xv. 6; Targ. Yer. to Ex. xiv. 31; Jer. xxxix. 18, xlix. 11).

Mediatorship.

Like the Sh'khinah (comp. Targ. Num. xxiii. 21), the Memra is accordingly the manifestation of God. "The Memra brings Isra'el nigh unto God and sits on His throne receiving the prayers of Isra'el" (Targ. Yer. to Deut. iv. 7). It shielded Noah from the flood (Targ. Yer. to Gen. vii. 16) and brought about the dispersion of the seventy nations (I.c. xi. 8); it is the guardian of Jacob (Gen. xxviii. 20-21, xxxv. 3) and of Isra'el (Targ. Yer. to Ex. xii. 23, 29); it works all the wonders in Egypt (I.c. xiii. 8, xiv. 25); hardens the heart of Pharaoh (I.c. xiii. 15); goes before Isra'el in the wilderness (Targ. Yer. to Ex. xx. 1); blesses Isra'el (Targ. Yer. to Num. xxiii. 8); battles for the people (Targ. Josh. iii. 7, x. 14, xxiii. 3). As in ruling over the destiny of man the Memra is the agent of God (Targ. Yer. to Num. xxvii. 16), so also is it in the creation of the earth (Isa. xlvi. 12) and in the execution of justice (Targ. Yer. to Num. xxxiii. 4). So, in the future, shall the Memra be the comforter (Targ. Isa. lxvi. 13): "My Shekinah I shall put among you, My Memra shall be unto you for a redeeming deity, and you shall be unto My Name a holy people" (Targ. Yer. to Lev. xxii. 12). "My Memra shall be unto you like a good plowman who takes off the yoke from the shoulder of the oxen"; "the Memra will roar to gather the exiled" (Targ. Hos. xi. 5, 10). The Memra is "the witness" (Targ. Yer. xxix. 23); it will be to Isra'el like a father (I.c. xxxi. 9) and "will rejoice over them to do them good" (I.c. xxxii. 41). "In the Memra the redemption will be found" (Targ. Zech. xii. 5). "The holy Word" was the subject of the hymns of Job (Test. of Job, xii. 3, ed. Kohler).

The Logos.

It is difficult to say how far the rabbinical concept of the Memra, which is used now as a parallel to the divine Wisdom and again as a parallel to the Sh'khinah, had come under the influence of the Greek term "Logos," which denotes both word and reason, and, perhaps owing to Egyptian mythological notions, assumed in the philosophical system of Heraclitos, of Plato, and of the Stoa the metaphysical meaning of world-constructive and world-permeating intelligence (see Reizenstein, "Zwei Religionsgeschichtliche Fragen," 1901, pp. 83-111; comp. Aall, "Der Logos," and the Logos literature given by Schürer, "Gesch." i. 3, 542-544).

The Memra as a cosmic power furnished Philo the corner-stone upon which he built his peculiar semi-Jewish philosophy. Philo's "divine thought," "the image" and "first-born son" of God, "the archpriest," "intercessor," and "paraclete" of humanity, the "arch type of man" (see Philo), paved the way for the Christian conceptions of the Incarnation ("the Word become flesh") and the Trinity. The Word which "the unoriginated Father created in His own likeness as a manifestation of His own power" appears in the Gnostic system of Marcus (Irenæus, "Adversus Hæreses," i. 14). In the ancient Church liturgy, adopted from the Synagogue, it is especially interesting to notice how often the term "Logos," in the sense of "the Word by which God made the world, or made His Law or Himself known to man," was changed into "Christ" (see "Apostolic Constitutions," vii. 25-26, 34-38, et al.). Possibly on account of the Christian dogma, rabbinic theology, outside of the Targum literature, made little use of the term "Memra."

“Credited to Him as Righteousness”

Throughout his letters, the Apostle Paul (Rav Sha'ul) seems to take great interest in Avraham, referring to him no less than 29 times!¹ Ya'akov (James) also makes use of Father Avraham in chapter 2 and verses 21-23 of his letter, going so far as to bring the binding of Isaac into the equation for us. For Ya'akov, Avraham's faith was perfected by his corresponding actions. Germane to our study, however, is the phrase "*credited to him as righteousness*," penned by Moshe in B'reshet (Genesis) 15:6 and referenced by Sha'ul in Romans 4:3

For what does the Tanakh say? "Avraham put his trust in God, and it was credited to his account as righteousness.

Given its location within Paul's arguments, both from Romans and Galatians, it is clear that the phrase is referring to imputed righteousness, that is, positional (forensic) right standing with HaShem. For Paul, it is axiomatic that Moshe describes this quality chronologically before Avraham receives the covenant of circumcision in B'reshet chapter 17. This bespeaks of the correct order in which to appropriate the covenant responsibilities of God. On the micro, saving faith in God, symbolized by God accrediting his account as righteous (Hebrew צְדָקָה tz'dakah), precedes the patriarch's obedience to the sign of circumcision. On the macro, the covenant of Avraham precedes the covenant with Moshe.

Thus, we can infer that Sha'ul brings Avraham into the argument to show that forensic righteousness is conferred to those who are not circumcised as well as to those who are—read Gentile and Jew respectively.

¹ Assuming Paul wrote Hebrews, the count is as follows: Romans 4:1, 2, 3, 9, 12, 13, 16; 9:7; 11:1; 2 Corinthians 11:22; Galatians 3:6, 7, 8, 9, 14, 16, 18, 29; 4:22; Hebrews 2:16; 6:13; 7:1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9; 11:8, 17.

Or is God the God of the Jews only? Isn't he also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, he is indeed the God of the Gentiles (Romans 3:29).

And,

Now is this blessing for the circumcised only? Or is it also for the uncircumcised? For we say that Avraham's trust was credited to his account as righteousness; but what state was he in when it was so credited - circumcision or uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision! In fact, he received circumcision as a sign, as a seal of the righteousness he had been credited with on the ground of the trust he had while he was still uncircumcised. This happened so that he could be the father of every uncircumcised person who trusts and thus has righteousness credited to him, and at the same time be the father of every circumcised person who not only has had a b'rit-milah, but also follows in the footsteps of the trust which Avraham avinu had when he was still uncircumcised (Romans 4:9-12).

But what is it about the narrative in Genesis that leads Moshe to finally declare Avram/Avraham as righteous at this juncture? Is there something within the story that would cause any reader to make the same assumption? What was going on in the mind of the Holy One? Perhaps we can draw some conclusions by looking at the passage from a telescopic overview. Allow me elaborate.

The flow of the Genesis narrative has been an interactive look at Avraham and his contending with God ever since God called him away from his native land in chapter 12:1-3. There, in what amounts to a unilateral agreement, we find that HaShem promises to increase his offspring beyond numbering. The corresponding covenant ceremony will later be enacted in p'sukim (verses) 7-20 of chapter 15. But leading up to this point, and trailing afterwards, is a grammatical clue as to what—or whom—Avraham actually placed his trust in!

In B'resheet 12:1 Moshe recalls that ADONAI spoke to Avram.² If we trace every occurrence where God and Avram interact we will discover something quite interesting. Continuing with our investigation, HaShem appears to Avram in 12:7,³ and in chapter 13 verse 14 ADONAI again speaks to Avram.⁴ But when we arrive at chapter 15 the narrative appears quite odd. Instead of God appearing or speaking to Avram, the first clause of the first verse records:

אָחַר הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה תִּהְיֶה דְבַר יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם

² וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם

³ וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם

⁴ וַיְהִי וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-אַבְרָם

After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram...

Likewise verse 4 confesses,

וַהֲנִיָּה דְבַר-יְהוָה אֵלָיו לֵאמֹר

And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying...

Verse 6 of chapter 15 reveals Avram's reaction to the Word of the LORD by stating that it was at this moment that he believed the unbelievable and it was credited to him as righteousness. Remember, up until this point, Avram had remained childless, and was beginning to suppose that maybe the heir of his household was to be the recipient of God's promise from Genesis 12:1-3.⁵ The narrative of chapter 15 trails off with statements amounting to "ADONAI said to him, "I am ADONAI,"" (verse 7)⁶ and "That day ADONAI made a covenant with Avram." (verse 18)⁷

Who or what was this mysterious "Word of the LORD" that suddenly⁸ appeared in the parenthesis of the narrative with Avram?

I will let the Chazal (the Sages of Blessed Memory) add their input to this Hebraic feature of the story:

In Scripture "the word of the Lord" commonly denotes the speech addressed to patriarch or prophet (Gen. xv. 1; Num. xii. 6, xxiii. 5; I Sam. iii. 21; Amos v. 1-8); but frequently it denotes also the creative word: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made" (Ps. xxxiii. 6; comp. "For He spake, and it was done"; "He sendeth his word, and melteth them [the ice]"; "Fire and hail; snow, and vapors; stormy wind fulfilling his word"; Ps. xxxiii. 9, cxlvii. 18, cxlviii. 8). In this sense it is said, "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven" (Ps. cxix. 89). "The Word," heard and announced by the prophet, often became, in the conception of the seer, an efficacious power apart from God, as was the angel or messenger of God: "The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Isra'el"

⁵ B'resheet 15:2, 3.

⁶ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי יְהוָה

⁷ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא כָּרַת יְהוָה אֶת-אַבְרָם בְּרִית

⁸ The Hebrew word הִנֵּה "hineh" is explained by Jewish authorities as "...untranslatable. It is often rendered as 'here' or 'behold,' but this is an approximation of an expression that has no equivalent in the Indo-European languages. For this reason, it is often left untranslated. In general, it serves to intensify a statement and to provide emphasis. Here, the intensity denotes that it was a sudden or intense experience." (Navigating the Bible, online commentary to Genesis 15:4)

(Isa. ix. 7 [A. V. 8], lv. 11); "He sent his word, and healed them" (Ps. cvii. 20); and comp. "his word runneth very swiftly" (Ps. cxlvii. 15).⁹

The Word of the LORD is in fact the LORD, ADONAI himself! This much is made clear by the objective text and the subsequent notations that we observed in Hebrew via the footnotes. But let us take it one step further to complete the mystery. In Aramaic, the sister language to Hebrew, the translation of "word" becomes מַאמַר mah'amar, from which we get "memra." Since the Hebrew "Word" was already identified as possessing personality, the corresponding memra likewise took on identity! Early Jewish theologians defined the Memra, or Word of God, with six different characteristics. In the first portion of his Gospel, Yochanan (John) associates each of these qualifications with their Messianic fulfillment in Yeshua. These six claims were:

1. Memra is defined as distinct, yet the same as God. This struggle as to the nature of HaShem persists to this day. Messianic Jews point to the use of the term echad as a composite unity to assist in the explanation of this issue. Yochanan in Yochanan 1:1 stated: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (Complete Jewish Bible). Yeshua Himself spoke of the fulfillment of this attribute when He stated, "I and the Father are one." Yochanan 10:30, CJB
2. The second attribute of the Memra, Word of God, was that it was the agent of creation. Yochanan states that Yeshua fulfills this in Yochanan 1:3: "All things came to be through Him and without Him nothing made had being." . Rabbi Sha'ul succinctly stated this in Colossians 1:15b-16, referring to Yeshua: "He is supreme over all creation, because in connection with Him were created all things — in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, lordships, rulers or authorities — they have all been created through Him and for Him."
3. The third attribute stated that the Memra was the agent of salvation. This is claimed in Yochanan 1:12: "But to as many as did receive Him, to those who put their trust in His person and power, He gave the right to become children of God." Yeshua stated His role as agent of salvation several times, most forcefully in Yochanan (John) 14:6b: "I AM the Way — and the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father except through me."
4. The fourth Jewish attribute of the Memra was that Memra was the agent of Theophany (the visible presence of God). In Yochanan 1:14 one reads: "The Word became a human being and lived with us, and we saw His Sh'khinah, The Sh'khinah of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth." Indeed, one might consider the incarnation reality of God in Messiah Yeshua to be a prolonged Theophany. As Rabbi Sha'ul forthrightly stated in Colossians 1:15a concerning Yeshua: "He is the visible image of the invisible God."

⁹ Jewish Encyclopedia, pp. 464-465.

5. The fifth attribute of Memra was that of being the agent of covenant signing. In Yochanan 1:17 the author writes: "For the Torah was given through Moshe, grace and truth came through Yeshua the Messiah." This was the fulfillment of the prophetic words of Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah), written in the thirty-first chapter of his self-titled book in verses 30 (31) and 32 (33): "Here, the days are coming," says Adonai, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Isra'el and with the house of Y'hudah ... For this is the covenant I will make with the house of Isra'el after those days," says Adonai: "I will put my Torah within them and write it on their heart; I will be their God, and they will be my people."
6. The final attribute of Memra was that of being the agent of revelation. Yochanan writes of this in verse 18 of the first chapter of his Gospel: "No one has ever seen God; but the only and unique Son, who is identical with God and is at the Father's side — He has made Him known." When Philip asked Yeshua to reveal the Father, Yeshua's reply was "Have I been with you so long without your knowing me, Philip? Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" Yochanan 14:9.

Indeed as scholars have summarized: "The writings of John confirm that his understanding of Memra was 100 percent Hebraic. He affirms that Yeshua fulfills all six attributes and all Jewish expectations of Memra."

Conclusions

Avram placed his trust in ADONAI. The raw data gathered from the narrative tells us that it was the Word of ADONAI who received the object of such faith. To be sure, Avram's response is unique, employing the moniker "Adonai, God,"¹⁰ instead of merely YHVH like in 14:22.¹¹ Sarna notes this shift in titles in his commentary to Genesis,

This Hebrew divine title, rarely used in the Torah, appears here for the first time. It is used in a context of complaint, prayer, and request. Here, the word for "Lord" is '*adonai*, "my Lord," not the divine name of YHVH, and its use suggests a master-servant relationship. Abram does not permit his vexation to compromise his attitude of respect and reverence before God.¹²

However, in comparison to Sarna above, we must carefully note that the Hebrew text of ADONAI (אֲדֹנָי) itself is a peculiar rendering. How so? According to 'The Scriptures' translation by the Institute for Scripture Research (ISR) the original

¹⁰ וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

¹¹ "…unto the LORD, the most High God." אֶל-יְהוָה אֵל עֲלִיּוֹן

¹² Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Commentary to Genesis* (The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), p. 113.

Hebrew name of YHVH has been emended by the Scribes in 134 passages!¹³ This means that in 134 places in our existing Masoretic text, the Hebrew may read ADONAI (אֲדֹנָי) but the original word was in fact YHVH יהוה! Richard Spurlock of *Bereans Online*, a well-balanced messianic web site with a nice collection of podcasts for downloading, makes a similar observation in his notes to the course 'Messiah Unveiled':

A most interesting feature of Genesis 15 is evident only in the Hebrew. In the English of Genesis 15:2, the two words 'Lord God' are used. The English translation is that the English translators have up until this point used the scribal tradition of *kere ketiv* [say/write] with regard to the Tetragrammaton [sic]. If you remember, the ancient scribes used a system of circumlocution to encourage the reader to not say the Holy Name out loud. What was written was the four letters of a *yod*, a *hay*, a *vav*, and a *hay*. Under those consonants, the scribes placed the permanent *kere ketiv* in the form of vowel points. The vowel points were for the word 'Adonai' [Lord]. Thus the reader, when they came to the Holy Name, would say, 'Adonai'. The English translators took this tradition to another level. Instead of writing the four letters, they substituted 'LORD' in all capital letters. This informed the reader that the Hebrew behind the word was in fact the Holy Name.

When we get to Genesis 15:2, the translators have a problem—the actual word 'Adonai' is used next to the Holy Name. The problem is that if they followed their translation consistently, it would say, "Lord LORD," which is difficult rendering. Following the scribal tradition of circumlocution (word substitution), they simply write 'Lord GOD.' The 'GOD' is in fact a substitution for the Holy Name in this case...

What is the significance of this word arrangement? This is the first time this word combination is used in Scripture. This word combination is used in other places in Scriptures, but not very often. We need to investigate to see if there is some connection between these passages, and if it is a Messianic connection.¹⁴

What are we to make of this exchange of names and how does it relate to Yeshua and the Memra? May I suggest (under the guidance of the Apostolic Scriptures) that the Memra of YHVH appeared to Avram in such a way as to allow Avram to address him as a servant would address his visible, flesh and blood master in face-to-face reverence and respect? Did Avram see a man? Did he see the invisible YHVH? I can't be dogmatic either way since biblical

¹³ The Scriptures, *Explanatory Notes: Emendations by the Sopherim*, (Institute for Scripture Research), p. 1214.

¹⁴ Richard Spurlock, *Messiah Unveiled* (available at <http://www.bereansonline.org/default.htm>, 2005), p. 34-35.

theophanies are often shrouded in mystery, but my gut feeling is that Avram saw the pre-incarnate LORD Yeshua with his natural eyes and yet called him YHVH! One thing is sure: Avram believed the unbelievable, and it was to the Word of the LORD—the Memra—that he addressed his objective faith! Surely HaShem saw into the heart of the patriarch and recognized the appropriation of the choices that lay before him. What is more, only the LORD himself can supernaturally open the eyes of a man to allow him to make a choice between choosing his Messiah or rejecting him. Avraham chose to lay hold of the Promise given in Genesis 12:1-3 by seeing at the heart of such a promise a glimpse of the Messiah who would bring it to pass! Tim Hegg provides a concluding thought to our study,

The response of God is said, once again, to come via His "word"--"the word of the LORD came to him saying...." God assures Abram that he will indeed have a son, and then He takes Abram outside to give him a sign of the promise He has just made. But the sign itself requires faith. For God shows Abram the stars and declares: "So shall your descendants (literally "seed") be." Not only would Abram have a son, but the descendants of Abram would endure from generation to generation, so that in the end, the offspring of Abram would be beyond counting.

But would God's word—His promise of a son—be enough for Abram? After all, it had been some time (perhaps as much as 20 years by the Sages reckoning) since the initial promise had been given, and there was still no son. Sarai was still barren. In fact, God's word was enough for Abram, as the next verse (v. 6) indicates. "And he believed in the LORD." Moses has reserved this clear statement of Abram's faith for the moment when the promised son is specifically the focus of attention. Surely Abram believed from the time that God first revealed Himself to him. His actions prove his faith: he left Ur, traveled to the place that God had indicated, forsook the idolatry of his fathers, and worshipped the One true God. But Moses intends us to see that Abram's faith was cast upon God in a particular fashion—in connection with the promise of a son. And thus we have the all important verse: "And he believed in the LORD, and He reckoned it to him as righteousness."¹⁵

Memra in the Targums (Targumim)

Targums are very old Aramaic translations of the Hebrew bible. They were authoritative, and spoken aloud in the synagogues along with the Hebrew of the Torah and Haftarah readings. Public readings of the Scriptures in ancient synagogues were accompanied by a translation into Aramaic because that was the spoken language of most Jews in Isra'el and Babylon during the Talmudic era. The normal practice was that after each verse was read from the sacred

¹⁵ Tim Hegg, *Parashah Twelve* (torahresource.com, 2003), p. 2.

Torah scroll, an official translator known as the Turgeman, or Meturgeman, would then recite orally an Aramaic rendering.

Targums were utilized in the synagogues before, during, and after the times of Yeshua— being necessary because many of the Jewish people of that day could not understand Hebrew. That's still true today. Because of their assimilation and worldwide dispersion, the vast majority of modern Jews cannot read, nor speak, nor understand the Hebrew language. Today, no doubt the most important, and the most influential translations of the Scriptures are no longer in Aramaic, but in English. The Targum of Onkelos is commonly included along with a traditional Torah scroll in synagogues, but its teachings have pretty much fallen by the wayside and for the most part, ignored.

As useful and necessary as the Targums at one time were for the Jews of Yeshua's day, their teachings today often contradict the religious beliefs of many modern Jews. In point of fact the religious beliefs of modern Judaism, and that of the Judaism of two thousand years ago, contradict each other in a very important area. That area is none other than the identity, and the nature, of God's word—the Memra' of the Aramaic Targums.

God “speaks”

The most common Hebrew expression for "word" is *davar*, which can mean: word, thing, matter, or affair. *Davar* implies content and reality in one's words. Since God is somehow "untouchable" it is necessary to provide a viable link between YHVH and His earthly creation. One of the important links regarded in ancient rabbinical thought was "The Word", called *memra'* in Aramaic (from the Hebrew and Aramaic root, 'mr which means: to say— the root used throughout Genesis 1 when God "said" and the material world came into reality and existence). The *memra'* concept— that of a Divine Mediator between the unapproachable God and the creature Man— occurs hundreds of times in the Aramaic Targums.

God's word has been of utmost importance ever since the first day of creation week. It is the primary way that God, the untouchable Being, implements His will. It is also how He communicates and interacts with human beings, and how He reveals Himself in a way they can understand. On the one hand, God has done this somewhat through writings. But there is much more to God's word than just ink and letters. Those materials merely constitute an inert, man-made record. On many occasions, when God's words actually came from his heart and from His mouth, it effected much more power and impetus than that of a mere page of historical information.

Why did God even bother to speak during creation? Why didn't The Creator just do His work silently without utterance or sound? To whom, or for whom, was He speaking when He said; "Let there be light." It is clear there is a creative,

dynamic force in The Almighty's voice, a power and energy in His words, a tangible release of Divine life. His word is an extension of His nature, a movement of His will— alive, powerful, and effective— not just letters, syllables, and sounds. There is vigor and activity in God's words extending far beyond the applications of thought and communication.

According to the Targums, which were at one time accepted as sacred Jewish beliefs, God's word is an entity; actually God himself. The Memra' is to be worshipped, served, obeyed, spoken to, and prayed to, as God.

The Targums taught that God's word, the Memra', reigns supreme upon The Almighty's throne.

Deuteronomy 4:7...For what people so great, to whom the Lord is so high in the Name of the Word of the Lord? But the custom of (other) nations is to carry their gods upon their shoulders, that they may seem to be nigh them; but they cannot hear with their ears, (be they nigh or) be they afar off; but the Word of the Lord sits upon His throne high and lifted up, and hears our prayer what time we pray before Him and make our petitions. (Targum Jonathan)

According to the Targums, Ya'akov, an important progenitor of the people of Isra'el, worshipped the Memra' as his God.

Genesis 28:20-21...And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, "If the Word of YHVH will be my support, and will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Word of YHVH be my God. (Targum Onkelos)

God's Word: A Sentient Being

Whenever the Targum orators came to passages where YHVH is anthropomorphic (visible to humans) or where two or more YHVHs are indicated by the text, the Targum often substituted "The Word of the LORD" for one of the YHVHs.

For example in Gen. 19:23-24 the TaNaKH has:

As the sun rose upon the earth and Lot entered Zoar, YHVH rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah sulfurous fire from YHVH out of heaven. (WHV)

The Hebrew grammar here indicates that one YHVH rained fire from another YHVH who was up in heaven. The Targum substitutes "The Word of YHVH" for the first of the two YHVHs as follows:

And the Word of YHVH caused to descend upon the peoples of Sodom and Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the YHVH in heaven. (Targum Jonathan)

Targumists paraphrased the text of Exodus 20:1 by substituting "the Word of YHVH" in place of YHVH.

And the Word of the Lord spoke all the excellency of these words saying (Jerusalem Targum)

It was, according to another Targum, the Word of YHVH whom Avraham trusted in:

Genesis 15:6...And Abraham trusted in the Word of YHVH, and He counted it to him for righteousness. (Targum Onkelos)

Moreover Avraham prayed in the name of the Word of YHVH:

Genesis 22:14...And Abraham worshipped and prayed in the name of the Word of YHVH, and said, "You are YHVH who does see, but You cannot be seen." (Jerusalem Targum)

Although Avraham prayed in the name of the Word of YHVH, his prayer was meant for the other one, the untouchable YHVH who cannot be seen. So the first YHVH, the Memra', acted as a mediator between Avraham and the True God.

The Memra' has a significant role in Avraham's covenant.

Genesis 17:7...And I will establish my covenant between My Word and between you (Targum Onkelos)

Exodus 12:42... Night second; when the Word of the Lord was revealed unto Abraham between the divided parts; when Abraham was a son of a hundred years, and Sarah was a daughter of ninety years, (Targum Jerusalem)

According to another Targum, The Word of YHVH created Man not only in the image of God, but also in the likeness of God's word.

Genesis 1:27...And the Word of the Lord created man in His likeness, in the likeness of the presence of the Lord He created him, the male and his yoke-fellow He created them. (Jerusalem Targum)

The Memra' conversed with Moshe and commissioned him to lead Isra'el to freedom.

Exodus 3:14...And the Word of YHVH said to Moses: "I am He who said unto the world 'Be!' and it was: and who in the future shall say to it 'Be!' and it shall be." And He said: "Thus you shall say to the children of Isra'el: 'I Am' has sent me to you." (Jerusalem Targum)

A partial Targum also expresses that the Word of YHVH was the Creator.

Exodus 12:42...The first night, when the Word of YHVH was revealed to the world in order to create it, the world was desolate and void, and darkness spread over the face of the abyss and the Word of the Lord was bright and illuminating and He called it the first night. (Fragmentary Targum)

The Memra' as Creator can also be seen in the TaNaKH.

Psalm 33:6...By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, by the breath of His mouth, all their host. (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

Noah's covenant was between the Memra' and all mankind.

Genesis 9:17...And YHVH said to Noah, "This is the token of the covenant which I have established between My Word and between all flesh that is upon the earth. (Targum Onkelos)

The Memra' is Isra'el's savior.

Isaiah 45:17, 25...But Isra'el shall be saved by the Word of YHVH with an everlasting salvation. By the Word of YHVH shall all the seed of Isra'el be justified. (Targum Jonathan)

Hosea 1:7...But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and I will save them by the Word of YHVH, their God. (Targum Jonathan)

According to the New Testament, Yeshua is a human manifestation of the Memra'. Somehow (and who can really understand this?) the Memra' became a Jewish human being who, though coming from God, and must be spoken to as God, and prayed to as God, and worshipped as God, and served as God, is itself subject to the real God.

John 1:14...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (NKJ)

John 6:38...For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. (NIV)

1John 1:1-3...That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word Of Life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

Metatron

The usual Hebrew word for angel is mal'ak (mal-awk') which is from an unused root meaning to dispatch as a deputy; a messenger; specifically, of God, i.e. an angel (also a prophet, priest or teacher) Mal'ak has a pretty wide application; and can mean either a celestial being or a human being.

There are a fair number of angel sightings recorded in the TaNaKH. One celestial being in particular (called Metatron in sacred Jewish literature) appears to be so high ranking, and so holy, that it is authorized to go by God's name and to be treated, regarded, received, and worshipped, as YHVH Himself. Just exactly what the story is on that angel is hard to know for sure; but in the Scripture texts it is clear that the demarcation between God and the angel (whose name is his Master's) is so blurred that the two often appear to be one and the same person.

Targum authors struggled with Metatron and paraphrased the TaNaKH's language in several places attempting to side step the obvious because they just couldn't cope with that angel's rank. But if we would all just let the TaNaKH say what it has to say and go along no matter how disturbing it might appear then God's Unfathomable Truths will be revealed unto us.

The Impassible Chasm

A being like Metatron is a necessity because it is impossible for the True God to either communicate, or associate with Man directly. He is just too holy—far beyond the dignity of royals any of us could possibly imagine. Any attempt by Man, with his puny mortal mind, to fully comprehend the lofty nature of God, would be about equal to a gnat trying to drink the ocean. It is a Bible axiom that nobody has ever seen God; not even those of whom the Scripture says they saw and spoke with God such as Adam, Cain, Noah, Avraham, Ya'akov, Moshe, and the prophets. They actually dealt with Metatron.

Exodus 33:18-23...[Moses] said, "Oh, let me behold Your Presence!" And He answered, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim before you the name YHVH, and the grace that I grant

and the compassion that I show. But," He said, "you cannot see My face, for man may not see Me and live." (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

John 1:18... No one has seen God at any time. (NIV)

John 5:37...You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, (NIV)

1Timothy 6:15b-16...God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen. (NIV)

Humans are not permitted to view the unapproachable Light. They are only allowed to view its proxy: The Sh'khinah.

Man's impression of God is that he is so immense and hulking! Solomon said that the heaven of heavens cannot contain God, much less any temple that Man might build for Him. The entire cosmos is like a child's aquarium to the True God. Even if the True God were to fill the universe with His Glory, there would still be lots left over; and The Glory is not even God's real person; it's just a glistening brilliance representing His presence! Metatron, like The Glory, was a proxy acting for God, acting as God, speaking for God, speaking as God, and standing in for God because the True God Himself can't be among human beings in person.

Genesis 16:6-13

Genesis 16:6-13...Abram said to Sarai, "Your maid is in your hands. Deal with her as you think right." Then Sarai treated her harshly, and she ran away from her. An angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the road to Shur, and said, "Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?" And she said, "I am running away from my mistress Sarai." And the angel of the Lord said to her, "Go back to your mistress, and submit to her harsh treatment."

And the angel of the Lord said to her, "I will greatly increase your offspring, and they shall be too many to count." The angel of the Lord said to her further, "Behold, you are with child and shall bear a son; you shall call him Ishmael, For the Lord has paid heed to your suffering. He shall be a wild ass of a man; his hand against everyone, and everyone's hand against him; he shall dwell alongside of all his kinsmen."

And she called the Lord who spoke to her, "You Are El-roi," by which she meant, "Have I not gone on seeing after He saw me!" (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

The JPS rendering of 16:13 is more or less an educated guess because the Hebrew in that verse is very difficult. She could have said: "Have I here seen him who sees me?" In other words; The all seeing God is in THIS place?! I can appreciate her surprise. You might expect to see God in a grand cathedral, but certainly not along a road in the middle of nowhere.

The angel that spoke with Hagar spoke for the LORD: "For the Lord has paid heed to your suffering" and it also spoke as the LORD: "I will greatly increase your offspring"

According to Genesis (verse 13), the angel was actually YHVH. Hagar herself didn't know who it was at the time and so gave The Name a name of her own: El-roi: the god who sees.

According to ancient Judaism, the angel who spoke with Hagar was God's word— The Memra'.

And she gave thanks before the Lord whose Word spake to her, and thus said, Thou art He who livest and art eternal; who seest, but art not seen! (Targum Jonathan)

And Hagar gave thanks, and prayed in the Name of the Word of the LORD, who had been manifested to her, saying; "Blessed be You, Eloha, the Living One of all Ages, who has looked upon my affliction." For she said, "Behold, You are manifested also to me, even as you were manifested to Sara my mistress." Wherefore she called the well: The Well at which the Living and Eternal One was revealed. And, behold, it is situate between Rekam and Chalutsa. (Jerusalem Targum)

Genesis 18:1-19:1

Genesis 18:1-2a...YHVH appeared to him by the terebinths of Mamre; he was sitting at the entrance of the tent as the day grew hot. Looking up, he saw three men standing near him. (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

It soon becomes very apparent in the story that these three male human beings (Hebrew: 'iysh) are not only angels, but that one of them is YHVH. Avraham never called the angel that, but when speaking to the three, he did use the plural version of 'adonai, with a final long vowel— a version of "LORD" which is usually reserved in Scripture to be used only for God.

Genesis 18:3-5...he said, "My lords, if it please you, do not go on past your servant. Let a little water be brought; bathe your feet and recline under the tree. And let me fetch a morsel of bread that you

may refresh yourselves; then go on— seeing that you have come your servant's way." They replied, "Do as you have said." (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

The three men all sat down and ate Sarah's home cooking.

Genesis 18:8...He took curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared and set these before them; and he waited on them under the tree as they ate. (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

Some people, aghast at the idea of angels with natural functions like eating food, have proposed that they only made motions of eating, i.e. they faked it. But these angels were 'iysh— male human beings— fully functioning mortals, not androids.

It is very difficult to tell if Avraham knew at first that these men were angels. But if he didn't, I have no doubt he caught on later when one of them, speaking in the first person, predicted Sarah's impending pregnancy.

Genesis 18:9-10...They said to him, "Where is your wife Sarah?" And he replied, "There, in the tent." Then one said, "I will return to you next year, and your wife Sarah shall have a son!" (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

The "one" who spoke up and made that prediction was YHVH.

Genesis 18:13-14...Then YHVH said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I in truth bear a child, old as I am?' Is anything too wondrous for YHVH? I will return to you at the time next year, and Sarah shall have a son." (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

Genesis 18 is very informative. It reveals that YHVH is able to associate with human beings as one Himself— fully functioning and perfectly normal.

Genesis 22:9-18

Genesis 22:9-18...They arrived at the place of which God had told him. Abraham built an altar there; he laid out the wood; he bound his son Isaac; he laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. And Abraham picked up the knife to slay his son.

Then an angel of the Lord called to him from heaven: "Abraham! Abraham!" And he answered, "Here I am." And he said, "Do not raise your hand against the boy, or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your favored one, from Me."

When Abraham looked up, his eye fell upon a ram, caught in the thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering in place of his son. And Abraham named that site Adonai-yireh, whence the present saying, "On the mount of the Lord there is vision."

The angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, "By Myself I swear, the Lord declares: Because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your favored one, I will bestow My blessing upon you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven and the sands on the seashore; and your descendants shall seize the gates of their foes. All the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your descendants, because you have obeyed My command." (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

The angel that spoke with Avraham followed a very similar format to the one it used speaking with Hagar. It spoke for God, it spoke about God, and it spoke as God. In this instance, it spoke that way within the very same sentence—the second half of verse 12: "For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your favored one, from Me."

If Avraham had followed through on God's command to kill Yitz'chak, his son would have been reckoned an offering to the angel; because that is how the angel spoke about it in verse 12: "you have not withheld your son, your favored one, from Me."

In verses 15 and 16, the angel, this time speaking for YHVH, told Avraham of YHVH's intent to bless him for offering his son.

Genesis 22:15-16..."The angel of YHVH called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, "By Myself I swear, YHVH declares: Because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your favored one," (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

YHVH's preface to the oath left out the angel's previous words: "from Me." So it is strikingly evident that Avraham was blessed for offering Yitz'chak to the angel, not to its Master.

It is most puzzling how that angel can be an ambassador speaking for God, and speaking about God, and yet at the very same time speak as God and receive the worship of a burnt offering unless the angel of the LORD is actually some sort of proxy manifestation of YHVH Himself.

Relating to people in a creature's form would permit HaShem to keep His distance from human beings— thereby protecting His sanctity and dignity— while

at the same time allow The Almighty to associate with them in a limited way without endangering their lives.

Genesis 31:10-13

Genesis 31:10-13... "Once, at the mating time of the flocks, I had a dream in which I saw that the he-goats mating with the flock were streaked, speckled, and mottled. And in the dream an angel of God said to me, 'Jacob!' 'Here,' I answered. And he said, 'Note well that all the he-goats which are mating with the flock are streaked, speckled, and mottled; for I have noted all that Laban has been doing to you. I am the God of Beth-el, where you anointed a pillar and where you made a vow to Me. Now, arise and leave this land and return to your native land." (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

This "angel sighting" occurred in Ya'akov's sleep, in a dream, and is not the first time an angel of HaShem appeared to Ya'akov by this method because he saw the very same angel before in another dream when he "anointed a pillar and made a vow to Me."

Genesis 28:10-22... Jacob left Beer-sheba, and set out for Haran. He came upon a certain place and stopped there for the night, for the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of that place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. He had a dream; a stairway was set on the ground and its top reached to the sky, and angels of God were going up and down on it.

And YHVH was standing beside him and He said, "I am YHVH, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac: the ground on which you are lying I will assign to you and to your offspring. Your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you and your descendants. Remember, I am with you: I will protect you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely YHVH is present in this place, and I did not know it!" Shaken, he said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the abode of God, and that is the gateway to heaven."

Early in the morning, Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. He named that site Bethel; but previously the name of the city had been Luz. Jacob then made a vow, saying, "If God remains with me, if He

protects me on this journey that I am making, and gives me bread to eat and clothing to wear, and if I return safe to my father's house—YHVH shall be my God. And this stone, which I have set up as a pillar, shall be God's abode; and of all that You give me, I will set aside a tithe for You." (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

That very same angel is the HaShem to whom Ya'akov gave credit for protecting him all his life.

Genesis 48:15-16...And he blessed Joseph, saying, "The God in whose ways my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The God who has been my shepherd from my birth to this day—The Angel who has redeemed me from all harm—bless the lads. In them may my name be recalled, and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac, and may they be teeming multitudes upon the earth." (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

Ya'akov worshipped The Angel as God because he believed it was YHVH. And he had good cause to. It spoke for HaShem, it spoke about HaShem, and it spoke as HaShem. Genesis identifies its name as HaShem when, in Ya'akov's dream, he said: "And YHVH was standing beside him." And the Scripture also reports The Angel as saying for itself: " I am YHVH, the God of your father Avraham and the God of Isaac"

Genesis 32:23-31

Genesis 32:23-31...That same night he arose, and taking his two wives, his two maidservants, and his eleven children, he crossed the ford of the Jabbok. After taking them across the stream, he sent across all his possessions. Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn.

When he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he wrenched Jacob's hip at its socket, so that the socket of his hip was strained as he wrestled with him. Then he said, "Let me go, for dawn is breaking." But he answered, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." Said the other, "What is your name?" He replied, "Jacob." Said he, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Isra'el, for you have striven with beings divine and human, and have prevailed."

Jacob asked, "Pray tell me your name." But he said, "You must not ask my name!" And he took leave of him there. So Jacob named the place Peniel, meaning, "I have seen a divine being face to face, yet my life has been preserved." (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

According to Hosea, the "man" who wrestled Ya'akov was an angel.

Hosea 12:4-5a...In the womb he tried to supplant his brother; grown to manhood, he strove with a divine being, he strove with an angel and prevailed— (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

Hosea goes on to say the angel met with Ya'akov at Bethuel.

At Bethel [Jacob] would meet him, there to commune with him. (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

The meeting took place. However, in the Genesis text, it was not an angel who is said to have met with Ya'akov at Bethuel, but HaShem.

Genesis 35:1...God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and remain there; and build an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau." (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

Genesis 35:6-7...Thus Jacob came to Luz—that is, Bethel—in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him. There he built an altar and named the site El-bethel, for it was there that God had revealed Himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother. (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

Genesis 35:9-10...God appeared again to Jacob on his arrival from Paddan-aram, and He blessed him. God said to him, "You whose name is Jacob, you shall be called Jacob no more, but Isra'el shall be your name." Thus He named him Isra'el. (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

Genesis 35:15...Jacob gave the site, where God had spoken to him, the name of Bethel. (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

So by combining Hosea and Genesis, it becomes very obvious that the "man" Ya'akov wrestled with at Peniel was an angel of God who spoke for God, spoke about God, and spoke as God. And actually, the literal rendering of Hosea—saaraah 'et-'Elohiym—means Ya'akov strove with God and won. He actually beat The Almighty in a wrestling match!

Ya'akov named the site "The Face Of God" because he believed it was HaShem who wrestled with him there face to face on that occasion. Many years later, the old boy reminisced about his experiences with God's angel.

Genesis 35:15...And he blessed Joseph, saying, "The God in whose ways my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The God who has been my shepherd from my birth to this day—The Angel who has redeemed me from all harm— bless the lads. (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

For all intents and purposes then, The Angel was Ya'akov's God. Therefore, that angel—whenever it appears as a human being—truly is a divine mortal representing HaShem; and it has to be respected, and worshipped, and treated, as HaShem Almighty.

Exodus 3:1-15

Exodus 3:1-6... Now Moses, tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, drove the flock into the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. An angel of YHVH appeared to him in a blazing fire out of a bush. He gazed, and there was a bush all aflame, yet the bush was not consumed. Moses said, "I must turn aside to look at this marvelous sight; why doesn't the bush burn up?" When YHVH saw that he had turned aside to look, God called to him out of the bush: "Moses! Moses!" He answered, "Here I am." And He said, "Do not come closer. Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you stand is holy ground. I am," He said, "the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

This is the first of many encounters Moshe experienced with YHVH's angel. In this scene, the angel wasn't hiding in the blazing fire—the blazing fire was it; which concurs with Psalm 104.

Psalm 104:4...He makes the winds His messengers, fiery flames His servants. (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

The word for "messenger" in that verse is mal'ak (mal-awk'); the common word for angel. So YHVH's angels are not always human—sometimes they are a blazing fire as in this encounter. When HaShem visits Man, He can assume a variety of natural shapes and textures—even as wind.

This blazing fire is expressly identified as HaShem. It speaks as HaShem, it speaks about HaShem, and it speaks for HaShem. The site it chose for an encounter with Moshe became holy ground during its presence. In every sense of the word, this angel is HaShem Almighty and Moshe reacted to it in just that fashion. He hid his face from the flame because he was afraid to look at HaShem. It is especially notable that the angel did not rebuke Moshe nor tell him in no uncertain terms that it was not HaShem in the bush. Exodus identifies the angel in the bush as truly HaShem.

Exodus 3:4...When YHVH saw that he had turned aside to look, God called to him out of the bush: (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

That angel had been the God of the patriarchs all along, right from day one.

Exodus 3:6...I am," He said, "the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

In the end, the angel not only commissioned Moshe to return to Egypt and rescue the people from slavery, but clearly, and without ambiguity, it revealed its name as not only YHVH; but also as the unique, and the only, Self Existent One.

Exodus 3:13-15...Moses said to God, "When I come to the Isra'elites and say to them 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?" And God said to Moses, "Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh." He continued, "Thus shall you say to the Isra'elites, 'Ehyeh sent me to you.'" And God said further to Moses, "Thus shall you speak to the Isra'elites: YHVH, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you: This shall be My name forever, this My appellation for all eternity. (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

Exodus 13:18b-22

Exodus 13:18b-22...Now the Isra'elites went up armed out of the land of Egypt. And Moses took with him the bones of Joseph, who had exacted an oath from the children of Isra'el, saying, "God will be sure to take notice of you: then you shall carry up my bones from here with you." They set out from Succoth, and encamped at Etham, at the edge of the wilderness. The Lord went before them in a pillar of cloud by day, to guide them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, that they might travel day and night. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people. (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

It is truly amazing how many forms God can assume as an angel. In previous passages He appeared as a male human being, a wind, a blazing flame—and now a cloud. That the cloud was HaShem is obvious from these next passages:

Exodus 14:19-20...The angel of God, who had been going ahead of the Isra'elite army, now moved and followed behind them; and the pillar of cloud shifted from in front of them and took up a place behind them, and it came between the army of the Egyptians and the army of Isra'el. Thus there was the cloud with the darkness, and it cast a spell upon the night, so that the one could not come near the other all through the night. (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

Exodus 14:24...At the morning watch, YHVH looked down upon the Egyptian army from a pillar of fire and cloud, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

HaShem is very versatile. Although YHVH was down on the earth leading the people of Isra'el at that time, He didn't actually have to leave heaven to do it. By His angels, The Almighty can be anywhere at any time doing any task imaginable down here on the planet.

Exodus 23:20-22...I am sending an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have made ready. Pay heed to him and obey him. Do not defy him, for he will not pardon your offenses, since My Name is in him; but if you obey him and do all that I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies and a foe to your foes. (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

That phrase: "pay heed to him and obey his voice" can only apply to HaShem. In all the forty years of wanderings, no other celestial beings issued marching orders to Moshe nor led the people of Isra'el in the right direction. And when it was time to start conquering Kena'an (Canaan), My Name showed up as a male human being and reminded Y'hoshua who his boss was.

Joshua 5:13-15...Once, when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing before him, drawn sword in hand. Joshua went up to him and asked him, "Are you one of us or of our enemies?" He replied, "No, I am captain of the Lord's host. Now I have come!" Joshua threw himself face down to the ground and, prostrating himself, said to him, "What does my lord command his servant?" The captain of the Lord's host answered Joshua, "Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy." And Joshua did so. (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

The Hebrew word Y'hoshua used to address the man is a form of "LORD" used only of HaShem in the TaNaKH. It is very notable that the man did not rebuke Y'hoshua for worshipping him. And just like Moshe's experience with the blazing fire, the man ordered Y'hoshua to remove his shoes because his presence made the site holy just as the blazing fire's presence at the burning bush made that site holy.

Judges 6:11-13

Judges 6:11-13...An angel of YHVH came and sat under the terebinth at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite. His son Gideon was then beating out wheat inside a winepress in order to keep it safe from the Midianites. The angel of YHVH appeared to him and said to him, "YHVH is with you, valiant warrior!" Gideon said to him,

"Please, my lord, if the Lord is with us, why has all this befallen us? Where are all His wondrous deeds about which our fathers told us, saying, 'Truly the Lord brought us up from Egypt'? Now the Lord has abandoned us and delivered us into the hands of Midian!" (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

At first, Gideon, unaware of the true identity of the visitor, starts off by calling him the common, polite form of "lord." Soon he will discover that when the angel said: "YHVH is with you" its words were truly literal.

Judges 6:14...YHVH turned to him and said, "Go in this strength of yours and deliver Isra'el from the Midianites. I herewith make you My messenger." (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

At this point, Gideon began to suspect who the visitor really was and switched over to the Hebrew form of "LORD" that is reserved for HaShem only.

Judges 6:15-18...He said to Him, "Please, my [Lord], how can I deliver Isra'el? Why, my clan is the humblest in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's household." YHVH replied, "I will be with you, and you shall defeat Midian to a man." And he said to Him, "If I have gained Your favor, give me a sign that it is You who are speaking to me: do not leave this place until I come back to You and bring out my offering and place it before You." And He answered, "I will stay until you return." (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

Gideon, overcome with excitement, runs off to prepare an offering for YHVH, who is now left under the tree, delayed by the whim of a mere mortal.

Judges 6:19-24...So Gideon went in and prepared a kid, and [baked] unleavened bread from an ephah of flour. He put the meat in a basket and poured the broth into a pot, and he brought them out to Him under the terebinth. As he presented them, the angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread, put them on yonder rock, and spill out the broth." He did so. The angel of YHVH held out the staff that he carried, and touched the meat and the unleavened bread with its tip. A fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. And the angel of YHVH vanished from his sight. Then Gideon realized that it was an angel of YHVH; and Gideon said, "Alas, O Lord God! For I have seen an angel of YHVH face to face." But YHVH said to him, "All is well; have no fear, you shall not die." So Gideon built there an altar to YHVH and called it Adonai-shalom. To this day it stands in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

After Gideon was convinced beyond a doubt that he really was being visited by YHVH, he became very frightened. YHVH's angel in this instance is stunning. It was human, it received worship, it was visible, and it let a mortal look upon it; yet it was unmistakably YHVH himself. So why then does modern Judaism have so much trouble accepting the New Testament's report that God's word, The Memra', appeared in Eretz Isra'el as a human being back in Yeshua' day? It's not like it's anything new. It is actually quite redundant.

John 1:14...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (NKJ)

Gideon would be amazed at modern Judaism's skepticism. If people don't want to believe Yeshua of Nazareth is in some way YHVH's angel, that's okay by us. But don't ever say it is impossible for HaShem to associate with mortal men as a mortal man Himself. There are just too many examples in the TaNaKH to the contrary.

Exodus 24:1-11

It is a well-known Bible axiom that no man can look upon God in person. Yet the TaNaKH clearly says that on at least one occasion, Moshe and Isra'el's leaders were permitted to see HaShem for themselves.

Exodus 24:1-11...Then He said to Moses, "Come up to the Lord, with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy elders of Isra'el, and bow low from afar. Moses alone shall come near the Lord; but the others shall not come near, nor shall the people come up with him.".....Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy elders of Isra'el ascended; and they saw the God of Isra'el: under His feet there was the likeness of a pavement of sapphire, like the very sky for purity. Yet He did not raise His hand against the leaders of the Isra'elites; they beheld God, and they ate and drank. (1985 JPS TaNaKH)

That is one of the most astonishing passages in the TaNaKH. Try as we might to spiritualize the meaning of that passage, it is so clearly evident that Moshe and his friends saw the God of Isra'el as a real live person standing before them, not just some kind of dream or prophetic vision.

According to a story in the Talmud (b. Sanhedrin 38b) a man identified as a schismatic— a Jewish follower of Yeshua— was talking to a rabbi about Exodus 24:1. The Jewish believer was trying to argue that it seemed odd that God would say to Moshe; "Come up to YHVH" instead of saying; "Come up to Me." Wouldn't that imply that there is more than one divine Person?

The rabbi answered that HaShem was not talking about Himself but about the angel Metatron, the most powerful angel in rabbinical literature, whose name is his Master's. In other words, when HaShem said, "Come up to YHVH", He did not actually mean, "Come up to Me." He meant, "Come up to Metatron, whose name is YHVH." So according to classical rabbinical interpretation, Metatron and YHVH are often one and the same person. So when people in the TaNaKH met with Metatron, they met with HaShem.

Metatron's existence in the TaNaKH lends a great deal of credence to the possibility of yet another with authority to speak as HaShem, to speak for HaShem, and to be worshipped as HaShem: Yeshua of Nazareth.

Hebrews 1:1-3 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. (NIV)

Philippians 2:8-11 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (NIV)

The Name that is above every name is the name YHVH. HaShem granted Yeshua of Nazareth the right to use The Name for himself so that he may speak for HaShem, he may speak as HaShem, and he may receive worship as HaShem just as Metatron did in ancient times. Refusal to worship and serve Yeshua as Almighty God insults the True God, and shows a gross lack of respect for The Name.

Torah Teacher Ariel ben-Lyman HaNaviy yeshua613@hotmail.com