

"It is clear...that the angel of the Lord in the Old Testament was a preincarnate form of our Lord Jesus Christ, who would later permanently take on flesh when he came as a babe in Bethlehem. But mark it well: the one who came after John had already been before—he was that angel of the Lord. His full deity was always observed and yet he presented the same mystery of the Trinity that would later be observed in 'I and the Father are one' (Jn 10:30) and 'my other witness is the Father, who sent me' (Jn 8:18). It is that word *sent* that ties together the angel, messenger or sent one into an Old Testament theology of christophanies, appearances of God in human form."¹²⁰

Judges 13

"Manoah Interacts With an Elusive Angel"

"Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, so that the LORD gave them into the hands of the Philistines forty years. There was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had borne no *children*. Then the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, 'Behold now, you are barren and have borne no *children*, but you shall conceive and give birth to a son. Now therefore, be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing. For behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines.' Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, 'A man of God came to me and his appearance was like the appearance of the angel of God, very awesome. And I did not ask him where he *came* from, nor did he tell me his name. But he said to me, "Behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and now you shall not drink wine or strong drink nor eat any unclean thing, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.'" Then Manoah entreated the LORD and said, 'O Lord, please let the man of God whom You have sent come to us again that he may teach us what to do for the boy who is to be born.' God listened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again to the woman as she was sitting in the field, but Manoah her husband was not with her. So the woman ran quickly and told her husband, 'Behold, the man who came the *other* day has appeared to me.' Then Manoah arose and followed his wife, and when he came to the man he said to him, 'Are you the man who spoke to the woman?' And he said, 'I am.' Manoah said, 'Now when your words come *to pass*, what shall be the boy's mode of life and his vocation?' So the angel of the LORD said to Manoah, 'Let the woman pay attention to all that I said. She should not eat anything that comes from the vine nor drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing; let her observe all that I commanded.' Then Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, 'Please let us detain you so that we may prepare a young goat for you.' The angel of the LORD said to Manoah, 'Though you detain me, I will not eat your food, but if you prepare a burnt offering, *then* offer it to the LORD.' For Manoah did not know that he was the angel of the LORD. Manoah said to the angel of the LORD, 'What is your name, so that when your words come *to pass*, we may honor you?' But the angel of the LORD said to him, 'Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?' So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering and offered it on the rock to the LORD, and He performed wonders while Manoah and his wife looked on. For it came about when the flame went up from the altar toward heaven, that the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar. When Manoah and his wife saw *this*, they fell on their faces to the ground. Now the angel of the LORD did not appear to Manoah or his wife again. Then Manoah knew that he was the angel of the LORD. So Manoah said to his wife, 'We will surely die, for we have seen God.' But his wife said to him, 'If the LORD had desired to kill us, He would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering from our hands, nor would He have shown us all these things, nor would He have let us hear *things* like this at this time.' Then the woman gave birth to a son and named him Samson; and the child grew up and the LORD blessed him. And the Spirit of the LORD began to stir him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol."

¹²⁰ Ibid., 192.

Approaching the Nature of Yeshua from the Tanach

The birth of Samson would be very important for seeing a period of Israelite rebellion against God, and oppression by the Philistines, reversed (Judges 13:1). Manoah and his wife, whom was barren (Judges 13:2), are informed as to the birth of their important son, by the elusive figure of the “messenger/angel of the LORD.” While initially it may be thought that this entity is a supernatural yet created agent sent from God proper, the recorded details and response of Manoah and his wife suggest that this figure is something much more.

The figure of the “messenger/angel of the LORD” first appeared to Manoah’s wife, announcing that she will conceive and give birth to a son: *v’yeyra malakh-YHWH el-ha’ishah* (וַיִּרְא מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה אֵל), “And YHWH’s messenger was seen by the woman” (Judges 13:3a, Fox). The son to be born was to be specially consecrated to God as a Nazirite (Judges 13:4-5). Manoah’s wife informs her husband about the encounter that she had. She labels the entity who spoke to her as *ish ha’Elohim ba eilav* (אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים בָּא אֵלַי), “A man of God came to me” (Judges 13:6a, ATS). She further describes, *u’mar’eihu k’mar’eih malakh ha’Elohim nora me’od* (וַיְמַרְאֵהוּ כְּמַרְאֵהוּ מַלְאָךְ הָאֱלֹהִים נֹרָא מְאֹד), “and his appearance was the appearance of a messenger of God, very fearsome” (Judges 13:6b, Alter). It can be easily deduced that the entity which spoke to Manoah’s wife had a mysterious identity, given her report, *v’lo sh’iltihu ei-mizeh hu v’et-shmo lo-higid li* (וְלֹא שְׁאַלְתִּיהוּ אֵי-מִזֶּה הוּא וְאֵת-שְׁמוֹ לֹא-הִגִּיד לִי), “I did not ask him where he was from, nor did he tell me his name” (Judges 13:6c, NJPS). It is not stated whether or not Manoah’s wife perceived of this figure as being supernatural, as much as she perceived of him as having a commanding presence.

The figure which Manoah’s wife encountered (Judges 13:7) is treated, at least initially, as an agent sent from God. Manoah prays the word *Adonai, ish ha’Elohim asher shalachta yavo-na ‘od* (אֲדֹנָי אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר שְׁלַחְתָּ יָבוֹא-נָא עוֹד), “Lord man-of-the-God whom you-sent let-him-come now! again” (Judges 13:8, Kohlenberger),¹²¹ or “Please, my lord, may the man of God whom you sent come now again” (ATS). What follows is a response from God proper, with the messenger or angel He had sent returning to Manoah’s wife: *v’yishma ha’Elohim b’qol Manoach v’yavo malakh ha’Elohim ‘od el-ha’ishah* (וַיִּשְׁמַע הָאֱלֹהִים בְּקוֹל מַנּוּחַ וַיָּבֹא מַלְאָךְ הָאֱלֹהִים עוֹד אֶל-הָאִשָּׁה), “And God heeded Manoah’s voice, and the messenger of God came again to the woman...” (Judges 13:9, Alter). Manoah’s wife rushes to him about the appearance, and informs him, *hinneih nir’ah eilav ha’ish asher-ba b’yom eilav* (הִנֵּה נִרְאָה אֵלַי הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-בָּא בַיּוֹם אֵלַי), “Behold, the man who came to me that day has appeared to me” (Judges 13:10, ATS). When Manoah goes out to finally encounter this entity for himself, he inquires as to whether this is the same figure who had previously spoken to his wife: *ha’attah ha’ish asher-dibarta el-ha’ishah* (הֲאִתָּה הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-דִּבַּרְתָּ אֶל-הָאִשָּׁה), “Are you the man who spoke to the woman?” (Judges 13:11a, ATS). Manoah receives the simple response *ani* (אָנִי), the personal pronoun “I,” intended to mean “I am” (Judges 13:11b).

Manoah wants to know what they are supposed to do, with a son to be born to him and his wife (Judges 13:12). And so, the entity conveys how Manoah’s wife is to not drink alcohol or eat unclean things (Judges 13:13-14), with it narrated, *v’yomer malakh YHWH el-Manoach* (וַיֹּמֶר מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה אֵל-מַנּוּחַ), “YHWH’s messenger said to Manoah” (Judges 13:13a, Fox). It is further seen how “Manoah said to YHWH’s messenger...” (Judges 13:15a, Fox; *v’yomer Manoach el-malakh YHWH*, וַיֹּמֶר מַנּוּחַ אֵל-מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה), as he wanted to offer a meal to him. From the narrative up to this point, Manoah did not deduce that this figure—aside from having some clear directions about his wife’s pregnancy—was supernatural, although his refusal of a meal did beg some questions: “YHWH’s messenger said to Manoah: If you detain me, I will not eat of your food, but if you

¹²¹ Kohlenberger, 2:116.

wish to make ready an offering-up to YHWH, you should offer it up—for Manoah did not know that he was YHWH’s messenger” (Judges 13:16, Fox).

The response to the messenger or angel’s word about offering something up to the Lord, from Manoah, is, *mi shemekha ki-yavo (divarekha) [devarekha] v’kibbadnukha* (דְּבַרְיָךְ וְדְבַרְיָךְ וְכִבְדְּנִיךָ), “(מי) שְׁמֶךָ כִּי-יָבֹא” (Judges 13:17, ATS). Here, the verb of note is *kaveid* (כָּבַד), which in the Piel stem (intensive action, active voice), means “to honour” or “to do honour to” (HALOT).¹²² TWOT further details, “In this case the idea is of that which is weighty in the sense of being noteworthy or impressive. Common translations are ‘honorable, honored, glorious, glorified.’ The Niphal and Piel stems normally have these connotations.”¹²³ While not immediately required, the honor expressed could—in light of Manoah’s and his wife’s later reaction to this entity (Judges 13:22)—be retroactively taken as an action of veneration.

The *malakh-YHWH* or “messenger/angel of the LORD,” offers a perplexing response to Manoah’s question, “What is your name?” (Judges 13:17). Judges 13:18 states, *v’yomer lo malakh YHWH: l’mah zeh tishal l’shmi v’hu-peliy* (וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ מַלְאֲכַי יְהוָה לְמָה זֶה תִּשְׁאַל לְשְׁמִי וְהוּא-פֶלִיא), “YHWH’s messenger said to him: Now why do you ask about my name? For it is wondrous!” (Fox). The self-description of the *malakh-YHWH* is *pili* (פֶּלִיא), “wonderful, incomprehensible” (BDB).¹²⁴ A notable place in the Tanach where *pili* will later be seen, is in the Isaiah 9:6 description of the Messiah as “Wonderful Counselor,” and notably alongside of “Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace” (discussed further).

Manoah, once told about the “wonderful” name of the *malakh-YHWH*, then “took the goats’ kid and the gift-offering and offered them up on the rock to YHWH” (Judges 13:19a, Fox). It is narrated that as this took place *v’ya’al malakh-YHWH b’lahav ha’mizbeiach* (וַיַּאֲלֶה מַלְאֲכַי יְהוָה בְּלֶהָב הַמִּזְבֵּחַ), “that YHWH’s messenger went up in the flame of the altar” (Judges 13:20b, Fox). Their physical reaction was, “they fell upon their faces to the ground” (Judges 13:20c, ATS). At this point, they realize that they have encountered nothing ordinary, given the narration, “YHWH’s messenger was not seen again by Manoah or by his wife, so Manoah knew it was YHWH’s messenger” (Judges 13:21, Fox). **For certain, all readers appropriately conclude that the “messenger/angel of the LORD” is a supernatural entity.**

What was the conclusion drawn by Manoah to his wife, regarding their encounter with this supernatural entity who went up into Heaven via the flame? Judges 13:22 specifies, *v’yomer Manoach el-isho: mot namut ki Elohim ra’inu* (וַיֹּאמֶר מְנוּחַ אֶל-אִשְׁתּוֹ מוֹת נָמוּת כִּי אֱלֹהִים רָאִינוּ), rendered by the Kohlenberger interlinear as, “and-he-said Manoah to wife-of-him to-die we-will-die for God we-saw.”¹²⁵ That there is some difference of opinion regarding how to approach the usage of *elohim* (אֱלֹהִים) here, is witnessed in a selection of Jewish translations of Judges 13:22:

- “Manoah said to his wife, ‘We shall surely die, for we have seen a Godly angel!’” (ATS).
- “And Manoah said to his wife, ‘We shall surely die, for we have seen a divine being’” (NJPS).
- “And Manoah said to his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen GOD” (Jerusalem Bible-Koren).
- “Manoach said to his wife, ‘We shall surely die, for we have seen GOD!’” (Keter Crown Bible).

¹²² HALOT, 1:455.

¹²³ John N. Oswalt, “כָּבַד,” in TWOT, 1:426.

¹²⁴ BDB, 811.

¹²⁵ Kohlenberger, 2:118.

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- “And Manoah said to his woman, ‘We are doomed to die, for we have seen God’” (Alter).
- “Manoah said to his wife: We are going to die, yes, die, for it is a god that we have seen!” (Fox).

It has to be fairly recognized how the Hebrew term *elohim* can refer to angels or supernatural beings other than God proper. But it also has to be fairly recognized how the Hebrew term *elohim* can indeed refer to God proper. In *The Jewish Study Bible*, Yairah Amit details for Judges 13:22, “The view that seeing the LORD brings death...causes Manoah to express his fear,”¹²⁶ as the Lord or YHWH proper being in view is stated to be the issue here.

This scene actually closes with Manoah’s wife observing, *chafeitz YHWH l’hamiteinu lo-laqach mi’yadeinu olah u’minchah* (חָפֵץ יְהוָה לְהַמִּיתֵנוּ לֹא-לָקַח מִיָּדֵינוּ עֹלָה וּמִנְחָה), “Had YHWH desired to have us die he would not have taken an offering-up and a grain-gift from our hand” (Judges 13:23, Fox); “Had HASHEM wanted to put us to death, He would not have accepted from our hand an elevation-offering and a meal-offering” (ATS). *This is the action which took place when the malakh-YHWH ascended into Heaven from the fire.* As far as Manoah and his wife were concerned, when they countered the *malakh-YHWH*, they had encountered the LORD or YHWH Himself. If they had encountered something sharply different than the Lord proper manifested to them as an angel/messenger, then the record of Judges 13:23 could have included the more specific terms that had been previously used, such as, “We will surely die, for we have seen the angel of God [*malakh ha’Elohim*, Judges 13:9].”

The significance of the Judges 13 interaction between the *malakh-YHWH* and Manoah and his wife—where a being of unknown origin appears, is then regarded as supernatural, and then testified to be *Elohim* or God—is important for later evaluation of the origins and identity of Yeshua the Messiah. There were people who had reactions similar to Manoah and his wife, such as the Roman centurion (Mark 15:39; Matthew 27:54) and the Disciple Thomas (John 20:28), when they encountered Yeshua—which no doubt play a significant role in understanding who He truly is.

Isaiah 6:1-8

“Isaiah Encounters God’s Heavenly Throne”

“In the year of King Uzziah’s death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.’ And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. Then I said, ‘Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.’ Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth *with it* and said, ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven.’ Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?’ Then I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’”

The death of King Uzziah (Azariah) indicated a significant shift in the prosperity and stability of the Southern Kingdom of Judah (cf. 2 Chronicles 26:1-15). This is the backdrop for the Divine commissioning of the Prophet Isaiah, who experiences a significant theophany involving

¹²⁶ Yairah Amit, “Judges,” in Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 541.