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MICHAEL THE PRINCE AND THE MAN GABRIEL

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Though quite difficult to synthesize and analyze, Ms. Heller has handled the material in a very sophisticated manner. She has shown in a rather convincing fashion that the Rabbis use angelology to reconcile the paradoxes of good and evil, and immanence and transcendence in relationship to God. In addition, she has demonstrated the real ambivalence the Rabbis felt towards angelology, which is seen in their portrait of the archangels as protective guardians who have limited power, but who can divert the masses from belief in the one God. She correctly postulates that the potential threat of angelology as well as anti-Jewish Gnostic and Christian polemics are the reasons which account for the Rabbis' ambivalence.

Ms. Heller is to be highly commended for her research and text analysis. She has gathered all the relevant extant material and presented it in a highly meaningful fashion. Though work remains to be done, e.g., a greater consideration of the influence of Babylonian beliefs regarding the heavenly hierarchy, this thesis is a highly successful attempt at understanding the rabbinic view of angelology.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Norman J. Cohen

May 6, 1981

THE RABBINIC ACCOMODATION  
OF ANGELOLOGY IN THE MIDRASH:  
MICHAEL THE PRINCE AND THE MAN GABRIEL

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of  
Requirements for Ordination

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. CHAPTER I: AN OVERVIEW: THE TREATMENT OF ANGELOLOGY IN RABBINIC THOUGHT	9
III. CHAPTER II: THE POWER PLAY BETWEEN GOD AND THE ANGELS: DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS	17
IV. CHAPTER III: MICHAEL AND GABRIEL: THEIR NATURE AND FUNCTION	38
V. CHAPTER IV: THE FUNCTION AND STATUS OF ANGELS IN BIBLICAL NARRATIVES	67
VI. CHAPTER V: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	97
VII. NOTES	105
VIII. BIBLIOGRAPHY	112

INTRODUCTION

Midrash is one of the most dynamic forms of Jewish literary expression. The characteristic of the Midrash which is most fascinating and significant is its endeavor to address a broad range of concerns of human life and to synthesize the multiplicity of issues into a vivid folk literature of enduring value. As human beings experience continual change, the Midrash, in form and content, is a diversified body of literature which reflects the internal and external changes in the worlds of the rabbis, redactors and compilers.

The Midrash is dynamic on three levels. First, the vitality of Torah engenders a similar vigor in the scope and depth of rabbinic interpretation of the text. Second, the rabbis' keen intellect, deep devotion to the text and the people, and their awareness of the problems and realities of their communities, all contribute to the diversity of attitudes and the sensitivity of the Midrash. Rabbis creatively use Scripture and folklore as vehicles for addressing issues within the community. Third, the historical circumstances of the Jewish communities, especially in Palestine and Babylonia, underwent frequent changes. Jews were prone to adapting and assimilating as well as rejecting customs and ideas of the surrounding cultures. Turbulence in the political arena not only resulted in great hardships, but led to the shaping of a new identity and emphases of interests for the Jewish people. Further redefinition was required when, for instance in the mid-fourth century, Christianity merged with Roman rule, or in 640 c.e. the Moslems ruled. In both cases, Jewish leadership was forced to contend with both political and theological issues. Thus, the

rabbis, in their efforts to sustain the word of Torah as a living, viable force, communicated their theological, religious, political, sociological and psychological views through the Midrash. They set a brilliant, unequalled precedent for all those who yearn to impart Torah as a living, meaningful force.

The choice to focus upon the rabbinic treatment of angelology reflects my interest in the dynamics and synthesis of the aforementioned concerns in the Midrash. Angelology is ambivalently perceived by the rabbis, and this ambivalence is partly the consequence of sociological and polemical pressures as well as theological and scholarly agendas. Although the Bible frequently mentions angels, their existence seems incongruous with monotheism and a rational perspective so prevalent in Jewish thought. Angelology is one of the most well-developed concretizations in Jewish mysticism and esoterica, and is both embraced and disavowed by the rabbis. Thus, the examination of angelology presents the opportunity to study the rabbis' endeavors to integrate and reconcile these influences and forces within their world-view.

Since angelology is such an extensive topic, appearing in many historical periods and diverse literatures, this study has been limited mainly to the treatment of angels by the rabbis, in conjunction with relevant biblical verses. Furthermore, midrashim and aggadot which feature the archangels Michael and Gabriel are presented to allow a more intensive focus. They are not arbitrarily selected, for these two angels, aside from Satan and other demonic figures, are more frequently and explicitly identified with regard to traits, roles and functions. They are set apart from the vast host of God's ministering angels, and other archangels are mentioned with considerably less concern and frequency.

Indeed, in Genesis Rabbah 78:1, the amora, Rabbi Helbo, illustrates how Michael and Gabriel are distinguished from the mass of angels. The latter are limited to the sole role of praising God,

and once fulfilling their task, die off. However, Rabbi Helbo excludes Michael and Gabriel from the angelic community, for "it is they who are the princes of heaven. All of them (the angels) are replaced, but they are not replaced." Therefore, I will examine the enduring qualities and colorful identities of these two archangels. By discerning the attitudes towards them and the patterns of their roles, functions and placement within the heavenly hierarchy, a general understanding of the rabbinic treatment of angelology might be attained.

Midrashic passages which include Michael and Gabriel were located through verse and subject indices. The verse indices, such as Aaron Hyman's Sefer Torah ha-Ketuvah u'Mesorah 'al Torah, Nevi'im u'Ketuvim, and the verse and subject indices from Theodor-Albeck's Bereshit Rabbah, vol. III, and the Soncino Press' Babylonian Talmud and Midrash Rabbah, were helpful in locating many important midrashim. The subject index to Louis Ginzberg's anthology, Legends of the Jews, was most helpful in locating primary texts, and Ephraim Urbach's chapter on the "Celestial Retinue" and his notes in The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs also pointed the way to valuable sources.

The material is organized into five chapters. The first chapter presents a general overview of the rabbinic treatment of angelology. In the second chapter, I analyze the relationship between God and His heavenly familia. Michael and Gabriel are then evaluated with regard to their nature and function in the third chapter. Finally, the two archangels' portrayal in the rabbinic rendition of biblical narratives is presented in chapter four. Chapter five is a summary of the material and contains the conclusions drawn therefrom.

The first chapter will focus upon three basic concerns. The first is the non-uniform approach of biblical references to angelology, which is also evident in the rabbinic exegesis

of Scripture. The second issue is the nature of extra-cultural influences upon biblical and rabbinic attitudes towards angelology with regard to monotheism. The third concern is the impact of popular Jewish folklore, which is a substantial influence with which the rabbis must reckon. The treatment of angelology by rabbis is perceived as being influenced by textual, external and internal factors.

The second chapter will discuss the relative power of God and the angels, especially with regard to creation, revelation and redemption. The role of the angels as intercessors and their function in resolving the paradoxes of good and evil, and God's immanence and transcendence by the rabbis will be analyzed.

The nature and function of Michael and Gabriel will be examined in chapter three. Each archangel will be discussed regarding his individual roles, traits and activities. Then, the relationship between their roles and stature as cohorts and rivals will be analyzed.

The fourth chapter will demonstrate how the archangels function in the biblical narratives according to the rabbis. Their relation to Israel's patriarchs and leaders are presented in the chronological order in which the narratives appear in the Bible. The status of the righteous human being and that of the angels will be compared.

In the final chapter, conclusions will be drawn about the general perspectives of the texts presented, and the rabbinic tradents who are associated with interpretations which utilize angelology, and incorporate the presence of Michael and Gabriel. Polemical tendencies evidenced in the Midrash will be correlated with the historical circumstances. The conclusions regarding the rabbis' use of angelology as a means of reconciling the divine paradoxes of good and evil, and the immanence and transcendence of God are presented. The potential threat of angelolatry, as

as well as the challenge of anti-Jewish Gnostic and Christian polemics, are dealt with as key forces which influence the rabbis to limit angelic functioning within their theology and partially account for their general ambivalence toward angelology. However, since the most important rabbinic emphasis is upon God's unity and omnipotence, angels, which are understood as well-integrated and colorful embellishments in the theology and midrash of the rabbis, are shown to be basically superfluous to the covenantal relationship between God and Israel.

CHAPTER I

AN OVERVIEW:

THE TREATMENT OF ANGELOLOGY IN RABBINIC THOUGHT

Angelology presents a serious challenge to rabbinic thought. As a function of their roles as expositors and interpreters of the Bible, the rabbis could hardly avoid its numerous references to angels, *mal'akim* or messengers. The Bible does not present a unified conceptualization of angels, and their appearance in various books reflects different historical perspectives and differing attitudes towards angelology. In addition, the particular worldview and historical context of the rabbis must be considered if their conceptualization of angels is to be understood.

The primary concern with regard to angelology in rabbinic thought is that of the dialectical tensions with which the rabbis are forced to contend. While interpreting and attempting to reconcile the diverse views of angelology in Scripture, they also endeavor to maintain the structure of what they consider to be "normative" theology. Monotheism, the invincible unity of the Godhead, is their principle theological concern. Angelology must necessarily be contained within the theological borders mandated by this monotheistic concept, and therefore the need to develop a "heavenly hierarchy."

The rabbis utilize angelology in their quest to resolve eternal issues, which include the accounting for both good and evil in the world; rationalization of the persecution which Israel suffers; the immanence and transcendence of God; the cycle of creation, revelation and redemption; and the concept of Israel's chosenness. The rabbis' responses to these concerns are frequently formulated in the light of political and social perspectives. Their interpretations involve polemics directed against Gnostic and Christian sects.

Furthermore, the rabbis are forced to accomodate popular Jewish

folkloristic beliefs prevalent in their communities. Angels are important elements of the liturgy and the ritualistic behavior of the people. Aspects of popular belief systems reflect extra-cultural influences, and the rabbis are not isolated from these influences and fully acknowledge their effects.<sup>1</sup>

However, a significant distinction must be emphasized; while the rabbis employ angelology in their interpretations, they do not sanction angelolatry. They understand the manifold dangers of angel-worship, and they endeavor to circumscribe the role and function of angels in the midrash.

#### A. Biblical Angelology and Rabbinic Exegesis

The Bible reflects an ambivalent attitude toward angelology. Samuel Cohon notes that "the Bible indicates the embarrassment caused by the belief in the existence of angels." Despite a few exceptions, the pre-exilic literary prophets and Deutero-Isaiah, the Deuteronomic and Priestly Codes consistently avoid references to angels. In contrast, the E and J documents, Isaiah 6, and the post-exilic books of Ezekiel, Haggai, Zechariah 1-8, Malachi, Isaiah 14, I Chronicles 21, assorted Psalms and most prominently Daniel accord great exposure and status of angels in their theologies.<sup>2</sup> However, as Mark Shapiro indicates, "Even the vast number of instances in which the biblical account is embellished by descriptions of angelic action do not lead one to conclude that the angels are on a par with God and humanity as actors in the cosmic drama".<sup>3</sup> Angelology becomes more fully developed and serves as an active force in heavenly and human affairs in apocryphal works such as the Books of Jubilees, Enoch, and the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs.<sup>4</sup>

The rabbis realize that the Bible presents varied and dissimilar approaches to angels, in addition to an inconsistent and uneven concept of angelology.<sup>5</sup> They believe that references to angels in many biblical passages are meant to represent God, and that the Bible employs the angelic motif in order to avoid corporeal

descriptions of God. Urbach indicates that some tannaim do not hesitate to remove the angels from verses whose purpose was actually to stress the nearness of God to His people, or when they fear that the task assigned to the angel might raise him to the level of an independent power. Furthermore, they frequently ignore angels in phrases such as "angel of the Lord" (Genesis 16:7), and they interpret it as the Divine Presence, the Shekhina.<sup>6</sup> Sometimes the term "angel" is introduced into the text as a homiletical technique, thus interjecting the Divine Presence into the rabbis' interpretations. They also interject angels into the schema of biblical episodes in order to avoid anthropomorphisms.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the tannaim exhibit a tendency to remove angels' roles in passages relating to Israel's redemption while utilizing the theme of the Shekhina. Amoraic interpretations also reflect this tendency.

The extensive utilization of angelology in apocryphal literature is both modified by and absorbed into the interpretations of the amoraim and tannaim. However, some actively negate its usage. The rabbis mention characteristics, functions, names and conflicts of angels, but Urbach remarks that these motifs-

serve to testify that ampler and more detailed accounts relating to the themes that have reached us through the apocryphal writings were also known to them-only they purposefully avoided transmitting them. But many of their colleagues did not proceed at all along the path of absorption and adaptation, but chose the way of interpretation which led to eradication and nullification.<sup>8</sup>

The tannaim not only seek to nullify the sphere of angelic influence, they negate their reality or empty the meaning of angelic functioning by humanizing them.<sup>9</sup> However this trend does not ultimately accomplish its mission; for positive accommodation and acceptance of angelology is evidenced throughout amoraic midrashim and aggadot. Indeed, angelology enjoys a renaissance in the later midrashic works, such as Midrash Vayosha and Ma'ase Avraham.

B. Angels and Monotheism: Biblical and Rabbinical Attitudes in Light of Extra-Cultural Influences

The development of angelology in the Bible is considerably influenced by other cultures and religions. Cohon indicates that one of the causes resulting in the belief in angels is inherent in the "need of harmonizing the lingering survival of defunct polytheism with the pure faith of monotheism".<sup>10</sup> The gods of the nations and the deified forces of nature must be subordinated to YHWH, the universal God. No longer independent powers, they reemerge as the guardian princes of nations, individuals and the embodiments of the elements, i.e., water and fire, and of life and death.<sup>11</sup> Bernard Bamberger suggests that the Book of Daniel reflects Greek influence with regard to the guardian angel concept because it was written in close approximation to the Macabbean period.<sup>12</sup> Ben Sirah reports that other nations have guardian angels, but Israel is God's own portion.<sup>13</sup> However, Erwin Goodenough finds evidence that Jews believed in the protective guardianship of angels. He records that many amulets have been found with Egyptian or Greek figures with Jewish names, frequently invoking names of angels, especially those of Michael and Gabriel. Goodenough states, "We can now see more clearly than at first why the rabbis felt that the angels of popular Judaism smacked of polytheism."<sup>14</sup>

The dilemma concerning the transcendence and immanence of God is addressed by the Bible. Attitudinal changes toward angelology with regard to this issue clearly reflects the imprint of other cultures. Cohon notes that with the growing transcendence of God, a gap between the world and the Divinity requires a bridge. God thus was seen as intervening in human affairs by means of a messenger. God speaks directly to the pre-exilic prophets, yet the post-exilic apocalyptic prophets receive revelations through the agency of the angels. This later monarchical conception of God, portraying Him with an entourage of angels, represents an aspect of transcendence. Cohon attributes this conception to the contributions of Babylonian and Persian cultures. The Babylonian pantheon features a chief god well-attended by numerous subordinate deities. Persian dualism presents Ormuzd and Ahriman surrounded

by retinues of good and evil spirits or angels.<sup>15</sup> YHWH also presides over His kingdom, with Satan operating under God's sovereignty as his critical district attorney.<sup>16</sup>

The rabbis' avoidance of anthropomorphism and their emphasis upon God's immanence with regard to revelation and redemption indicate their keen interest in protecting and maintaining monotheism.<sup>17</sup> This is especially true with regard to the creation theme. Because the angels are utilized to compensate for God's corporeality, His immanence in human history and Israel's experience is threatened. Yet the tendency to ascribe transcendence to God had become prominent. This conceptual change is manifest in the Hellenistic understanding of Plato's theology of the *Timaeus*.<sup>18</sup>

In the *Timaeus*, which is Plato's account of the creation of the world and man, he posits a belief in the transcendence of the Highest, necessitating that he "postulate one or more mediating links between the infinite and the finite; and of these links, the World-Soul is in Plato the most important."<sup>19</sup> The World-Soul is the immanent and non-corporeal "steward or vicegerent of the Creator or Highest God who is always present in the Universe."<sup>20</sup>

A parallel may be drawn between the danger of affirming the dualistic nature of God in Plato and the rabbis' dilemma. They endeavor to reconcile God's non-corporeal divinity and omnipotence with His material creation and human history, specifically Israel's relationship with God. Angels become a useful tool of divine immanent intervention; allowing for God's superior presence, while not challenging God's transcendent pre-eminence. Plato's concept of the World-Soul also avoids gross anthropomorphisms. Furthermore, Adam notes that "the *Timaeus* did more than any other literary masterpiece to facilitate and promote that fusion of Hellenism and Hebraism," while Grote states that the "Platonic *Timaeus* became the medium of transition, from the polytheistic theology which served as philosophy among the early ages of Greece, to the omnipotent montheism to which philosophy became subordinated after

the Christian era."<sup>21</sup>

Cosmological speculation was a serious activity for the rabbis for two reasons. First, this issue is the focus of polemical debates among the rabbis and both Gnostic and Christian sects. In addition, the rabbis desired to curb the development of Jewish Gnosis and to strengthen the foundations of their mainstream Judaism. However, the literature dealing with creation "as part of Jewish Gnosis was originally confined to initiates but was later shared by wider circles and was presented in popular homilies, as the speculations regarding angels in the midrashim indicate."<sup>22</sup> Jacob Neusner explains that the reproduction of Jewish cosmogonic legends and the resurrecting of ancient mythology was due to the Jews' need to compete with the prevalence and attractiveness of Gnostic, Iranian and other pagan cosmogonies.<sup>23</sup> They wanted to develop their own mythological traditions, which emphasize that God and not the angels created man, that the Most High God created the universe and not a lesser figure, that He did so despite opposition (from the angels), and that He intended only good. Jewish cosmological speculation is conceived through the application of the visions of Ezekiel, Daniel and Isaiah, as well as the narrative of the Genesis story.

Dualistic theologies and their influence upon Gnosticism and Christianity comprised a great challenge to the rabbis. Gnosticism merges Persian dualism of active hostile powers and passive forces of good with the Greek dualism which juxtaposes the corporeal world of evil against the spiritual world of goodness.<sup>24</sup> Gnostic belief systems bred cults devoted to asceticism and secret knowledge. Cohon indicates that Gnostic speculation is particularly dangerous, since a dualistic trend appears in Judaism as an expression of piety, as demonstrated in the cult of the Essenes.<sup>25</sup> The Jewish concept of God's presence in history was challenged by Gnostic attacks against Israel's God. YHWH was considered to be the inferior creator and the demiurge of the evil and satanic material worlds by the Gnostics. Consequently, the rabbis utilize angels to demonstrate the distance between evil and God in His creation.

However, Christianity poses another problem, especially with regard to revelation. Christian teachers attribute Israel's inferior status to God's indirect communication with her through lowly angels rather than through the agency of Jesus, His own son. As a result, the angels' role as intermediaries between Israel and God at Sinai is basically eliminated by the rabbis. The rabbis clearly stress God's direct communication with Israel. More importantly, the rabbis suspend angels between the divine paradoxes of immanence and transcendence and good and evil in order to maintain the supreme unity of God while fighting polemical battles.

#### C. Angels and Popular Jewish Folklore

Angelology was entrenched in popular Jewish folklore in the areas of liturgy, ritual and superstition. Thus problems developed when the popular culture ascribed independent powers to the angels, and the rabbis strictly forbade angelolatry to counteract the forces of superstition. Yet, George F. Moore stresses that "the religious importance of Jewish notions and imaginations about the angelic hierarchy, its occupation in heaven, and its commissions on earth is in small proportion to their abundance."<sup>26</sup> He considers angelology as a superfluous embellishment to normative Judaism:

Doubtless, the belief in the attendance of a guardian angel helped the pious to realize God's constant providential care, and the recording angel, keeping a memorandum of all a man's words and deeds to be reported to God, may sometimes have steadied a vacillating conscience, but for the rest, angels, whether in sermons or folklore, hardly belonged to religions at all; they were not objects of veneration, much less of adoration.<sup>27</sup>

Religious concepts are not only formulated by scholars, they are shaped by the people devoted to the religion. Thus, the religious significance of a concept should be evaluated by scholarly criteria, and also by the indigenous manifestation of the concept amidst the populace. The liturgy includes many ref-

erences to angels, and Urbach remarks that

It appears that in the sphere of popular religion the worshippers were not content to merely mention the names of angels in hymns and praises, but did so also in prayers and supplications for the fulfillment of human needs, even of a very material nature.<sup>28</sup>

Neusner confirms that both the rabbi and the ordinary person believe that God and angels hear and answer prayers.<sup>29</sup> Names of angels even find a place in the public liturgy of the synagogue despite the protests of rationalistic leaders.<sup>30</sup>

The ritual of affixing mezuzot upon the doorposts of homes and rooms hails from superstitions and a deep-seated belief in guardian spirits which protect the home. Scrolls decorated with angelic figures and their names along the borders which fit into the mezuzah have been found and are dated to the rabbinic period.<sup>31</sup> Amulets are protective devices used to ward off evil spirits such as Lilith, but they also are expressions of folklore and superstition.<sup>32</sup> Although they may be considered superstitious ritual objects, amulets and charms represent part of the "science of the times", and their efficacy were readily accepted by the Jews.<sup>33</sup> They adapt a popular superstition or science and imbue it with their own belief system.

With regard to magic, Goodenough indicates that Jews are reported by Marcel Simon to possess an overwhelming regard for angels and demons which develops into angelolatry.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, they are accused of directing their religious cult activities to the angels and archangels, moths and the moon in the Kerygma Petri. Goodenough acknowledges the author's bias and polemical intent evident in the aforementioned statements. Yet he states, "all Jewish magic was not this unorthodox; to be sure, some of it seems to Simon to have been as orthodox as the views of the rabbis, who themselves accepted much of angelology, even though they resisted angelolatry."<sup>35</sup>

#### D. Summary

Thus the rabbinic view of angelology comprises a complex network of theological, sociological, folkloristic, polemical and political elements. Generally, when the rabbis utilize angelology, it is for the sole purpose of concretizing value concepts.<sup>36</sup> Yet the rabbis are products of their environments; mysticism, cults of secret knowledge, magic and folklore also contribute and shape their attitudes toward angels. The rabbis acknowledge that the angels are holy; celestial beings who possess supernatural powers, yet they do not concede that the angels are empowered with any efficacy of their own. Max Kadushin notes that such mystical qualities ascribed to angels by rabbis are not comparable to mystical qualities projected by the primitive mind.<sup>37</sup> Kadushin clearly summarizes the function of angels in rabbinic thought:

Angels serve as background to bring out more prominently, in concrete fashion, God's active love for mankind and for the world, how they enhance the vividness with which God's justice is apprehended, both in reward and punishment, how they serve to underline the vast importance of Torah, how they bring into relief God's concern for Israel and how they dramatize an aspect of Kiddushat haShem.<sup>38</sup>

CHAPTER II

THE POWER PLAY BETWEEN GOD AND THE ANGELS:  
DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The relationship between the angels and God might be described as a cosmic power-play. The majority of texts emphasize God's superiority and omnipotence over against celestial beings. The quantity and vigor of statements stressing God's stature indicate the rabbis' need to formulate and structure limitations on angelology. The rabbis' agenda is to circumscribe the role of the angels in regard to such themes as: creation, their position in the heavenly hierarchy, revelation, redemption, angelolatry, and the attributes of justice and mercy in conjunction with the problem of dualism.

God is not only the Lord over earthly creatures, He is also the angels' master. The Hebrew name for the Lordship of God, *Adon*, signifies His dominating power which the angels fear. Rabbi Phineas, citing the opinion of Rabbi Joshua ben Levi, states that the verse, Psalms 68:18 ("The Lord is among them") implies that "His Lordship is upon the angels". Hence, in *Pesikta Rabbati* 21:10, Michael and Gabriel are presented as trembling under God's dominion. In *B... Hagigah* 14a and *Genesis Rabbah* 78:1, the rabbis emphasize that the angels exist solely for the purpose of praising God's Glory, because a new group of angels is created daily and die once they have sung their praises. Interestingly, according to these texts only Michael and Gabriel endure as celestial entities. By circumscribing angelic functioning, the rabbis warn those who, because of human weakness and limitations, seek them instead of God. Michael and Gabriel are reduced to metaphoric expressions of God's power. In the *Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan*, Chapter 2 (version 1), Gabriel is presented as one in a cast of thousands created and dominated by God:

'And behold, the glory of the Lord, God of Israel, came from the way of the east, and His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth did shine with His glory.' (Ezekiel 43:2). 'The sound of many waters' refers to the angel Gabriel. 'And the earth did shine with His glory' refers to the presence of the Shekhina. Now, is there not an inference to be drawn here: If Gabriel, who is but one of thousands and myriads upon myriads that stand before Him, has a voice which travels from one end of the world to the other, how much more so the King of kings of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, who created the whole universe, who created the beings on high and the beings below! But the eye is shown what it can see and the ear is permitted to hear what it can hear.

#### A. The Creation Theme

God's power is most evident and significant with regard to His role as the creator. The rabbis reserve this exclusive function for God, and they state that the angels did not exist before creation; they were part of God's creation and not creators:

Rabbi Judan says that the Holy One, blessed be He, is alone in the creation of His world. When were the angels created? Rabbi Johanan says that they were created on the second day, as it is written in Scripture, 'Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain', and 'Who makest winds Thy messengers' (Psalm 104:3-4). Rabbi Hanina states that they were created on the fifth day, as it is written, 'and let fowl fly upon the earth.' (Genesis 1:20); and 'and with twain (two wings) he did fly' (Isaiah 6:2). Rabbi Luliani B. Tabri says in Rabbi Isaac's name, 'Whether we accept the view of Rabbi Hanina or Rabbi Johanan, we all agree that none were created on the first day, lest you should say, Michael stretched (the world) in the south of the firmament and Gabriel in the north, while the Holy One, blessed be He, measured it in the middle. Rather, 'I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretched forth the heavens alone; that spread the earth by Myself' (Isaiah 44:24). 'By Myself' ( *בְּיָמִי* ) is written, meaning 'Who was with Me as a partner in the world's creation?' (Genesis Rabbah 1:3).

Another view presented in B.T. Hagigah 14a posits that from every utterance issued by God an angel is created, as it is said, "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their hosts" (Psalm 33:6). The rabbis also endeavor to preserve God's unique role as creator in their efforts to justify the first person plural verb in the text, "Let Us make" in Genesis 1:26. They suggest that God consulted the angels regarding man's creation, yet He ignored their advice.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the grammatical difficulty presented by the verb, *נִבְרָא*, does not interfere with rabbinic theology. In B.T. Hullin 60a, Rabbi Hanina bar Papa clearly demonstrates that the angels do not participate in the process of creation; they can only praise God's creation from the sidelines. Furthermore, he seems to agree with Rabbi Johanan with regard to his belief that the angels were created on the second day:

Rabbi Hanina bar Papa expounds, 'May the glory of the Lord endure forever, let the Lord rejoice in His works' (Psalm 104:31). This verse was said by the Angel of the Universe. For when the Holy One, blessed be He, enjoined 'after its kind' (Genesis 1:12) upon the trees, the plants applied unto themselves an a fortiori argument saying, If the Holy One, blessed be He, desired a motley growth, why did He enjoin 'after its kind' upon the trees? Moreover, is there not here an a fortiori argument? If upon trees which do not grow up in a motley growth, the Holy One, blessed be He, enjoined, 'after its kind', how much more so does it apply to us! Immediately, each plant came forth after its kind. Thereupon, the Angel of the Universe declared, 'May the glory of the Lord endure forever; let the Lord rejoice in His words.'

Notice that God empowers nature with a more significant role than that of the Angel of the Universe. Since nature operates based upon its own logical system, angelic intervention is unnecessary. The Angel of the Universe refers to either Michael or Metatron, yet the title of the role is more impressive than the importance

of the angel in question.<sup>4</sup> The rabbis accentuate the belief that the stature ascribed to the Angel of the Universe is subordinate to God and the inherent nature of His creation.

#### B. Angels: Their Names and Place in God's Creation

The attribution of names to angels is significant because names identify, catalogue and validate their functioning and characteristics. Certain angels assume greater importance when they are named because they are set apart from the crowd of administering angels. Angels are messengers of God who created them to carry out particular tasks, from which their names are derived.<sup>5</sup> Cohon indicates that some rabbis were cognizant that the elaborate development of the personal names of angels was something new in Judaism.<sup>6</sup> Note, for example, the following tradition:

Rabbi Simeon ben Lakish states: The names of angels were brought from Babylonia. Before the Exile, Isaiah spoke merely of seraphim or fiery angels. After the Exile, we have 'the man Gabriel' and 'Michael, your prince'. (B.T. Rosh haShanah 1:2)

The rabbis minimize the importance of angelic names as a claim for independence by stressing how their names are adjoined to the name of God. In Pesikta Rabbati 21:10, Rabbi Phineas, in the name of Rabbi Levi, mentions that the name of the Lord, 'El, is joined to the names of the angels. Since the angels are His couriers, God's name is engraved upon their hearts in the form of a quadrate seal.<sup>8</sup> An interpretation of Exodus 15:2 reflects the same emphasis; that the angels are only identified in subordinate association with God:

Israel spoke before the Holy One, blessed be He, saying, Sovereign of all worlds, 'There is none like Thee among the ministering angels,' and therefore all their descriptive names (contain part of the word) ELOhim; for example: MichaEL and GabriEL. 'Who is like you among the

minor deities, O Lord?' (Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer, Chapter 42)

While Elim (אֱלִים) might refer to deities of surrounding cults in the biblical text, this midrash clearly indicates that the rabbis perceive the angels as a challenge to God's omnipotence. They carefully distinguish between God and his celestial retinue, especially the midrashic equivalent to the "minor deities" of the Bible, the archangels. Furthermore, because the biblical text comes from the narrative describing the miracle at the Sea of Reeds, the midrash implies that angels can only facilitate God's plans and redemptive acts.

However, the rabbis praise God's wisdom in making peace in the heavens by ascribing a unique name to each archangel. God did this in order to prevent jealousy among the angels as well as to avoid confusion: "When He calls for one of them, that one comes and stands before Him and He sends him whithersoever He pleases."<sup>9</sup> God's name is carefully safeguarded against the potential misinterpretation that *יהוה*, "Lord," might ever apply to an angel. In Genesis 18:3, Abraham addresses the chief of the three strangers who visits him. In Genesis Rabbah 48:9, the three men are believed to be the three archangels, Michael, Gabriel and Raphael. In B.T. Shevuot 35b, Rabbi Hanina and Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah say in the name of Rabbi Eliezer of Modiin that the "*יהוה*" Abraham uttered to the men was sacred and not secular, because in truth he asked God not to withdraw His presence while he entertained the angels. Angels are not associated with God's Lordship in any way. This contrasts to the view found above in Pesikta Rabbati 21:10, in which the angels' identification is closely connected to God. They are concretizations and representatives of God's mastery and divinity.

God designed the heavens in which the angels are ascribed certain positions in relation to God's throne. While Michael is usually positioned on God's right hand side, and Gabriel on

His left, various texts change their positions.<sup>10</sup> Two texts in particular, Pesikta Rabbati 46:3 and Numbers Rabbah 2:10, link each archangel, Michael, Gabriel, Uriel and Raphael, to a corresponding tribal position and associated etymology:

'The Lord by wisdom established the order of the world; with design He readied the heavens' (Proverbs 3:19). Even as the Holy One, blessed be He, created four points from which the winds blow, so He placed four angels around His throne, namely, Michael, Gabriel, Uriel and Raphael. And so, too, He caused four standards to be set up in the camp in the wilderness. Michael's place at his right corresponds to the place where Reuben set his standard ( מ' ד' צ' ), a place which put Reuben on the south side of the Tabernacle...Why is the angel at God's right called Michael. Because when the children of Israel would be passing through the Red Sea, he would open his mouth and say, 'Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the mighty?', (Exodus 15:11), and when the Torah would be finished, he would say, 'There is none like unto God, O Jeshurun,' (Deuteronomy 32:26). The word 'who' (mi), in 'Who is like unto Thee,' and the words, 'like unto God' (Ka-'El), in 'There is none like unto God,' taken together, make up the name 'Michael' ...Gabriel's place, at the east, corresponds to that of Moses and Aaron and of the Kingdom of the House of David. And why is he called Gabriel? His name is made up of the words Gabri, 'By means whereby I prevail' and El, God. Because it is written of Judah, 'for Judah prevailed (gabar) above his brethren' (I Chronicles 5:2), and it is also written of a scion of Judah, (Hezekiah and the Messiah), 'And his name is called Wonderful in counsel is God the Mighty ('El Gibbor)' (Isaiah 9:5). (Pesikta Rabbati 46:3)

The structure of the heavens as described in Ezekiel and the midrash reflects hellenistic and Babylonian influences.<sup>12</sup> Cohon states that the "distinction between the upper and lower spirits, and the 'four angels of the presence of the Lord,' who stand near the crystal throne of God, which is encircled by fire

and surrounded by Seraphim, Cherubim and Ophanim hails from Babylonia. The four archangels correspond to the Babylonian rulers of the four parts of the earth; and in addition, the seven archangels may correspond to the seven Babylonian planetary spirits or possibly to the Parsi Amesha Spentas or Fravishis.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, the rabbis apparently borrow blueprints for the placement of angels and heavenly architecture from other cultures, yet this process is subtle and does not represent a mere reduplication. The extra-cultural influences serve as a supplement to the rich vision of Ezekiel and the growth of merkavah mysticism.

Therefore, the angels, while accorded a name and place in God's heavenly abode, never sit upon His throne, nor can they use His name. They surround His throne, sing His praises, and carry out His will. Their names include His, and these names indicate the types of missions they are assigned or their primary characteristics.

#### C. Revelation: The Sinai Scenario

Three different parables found in piska twenty-one of Pesikta Rabbati discuss God's direct communication and close relationship to Israel. God does not reveal the Torah through the agency of messengers at Sinai, and Israel's status as God's "son" indicates that angels are superfluous to the relationship between God and Israel:

Rabbi Abbahu states further in the name of Rabbi Johanan: Consider the analogy of a king who was giving rapid orders in a loud voice at the door of his palace. A general said: He is about to commission me to explain his orders. A military governor said: He is about to commission me to explain his orders. When they saw him take hold of his son's hand, they said: He intends to commit his orders, fully explained, directly to his son. So, too, with the Holy One, blessed be

He. When He gave the commandments on Mount Sinai, at first he uttered them loudly all at once, as it is said, 'And God spoke all these words (at once) saying' (Exodus 20:1). Thereupon, Michael said: He is about to commission me to explain His words. And Gabriel said: He is about to commit them to me to explain. But as soon as He went on to say, 'I am the Lord thy God', they said: In giving His children the Torah, He is committing His commandments, fully explained, directly to Israel, His son. (Pesikta Rabbati 21:5)

The anti-Christian polemic of the parable is clear, and the rabbis emphasize that God himself reaffirms his choosing Israel as His child. The Christian charges directed against Judaism, that Jews worshipped angels and required a lowly intermediary to communicate with God, are challenged by Abbahu's comments. He demonstrates that the angels themselves are aware of their own status, and more importantly, they acknowledge Israel's chosenness. A similar intention is evident in a parable cited by Rabbi Phineas in the name of Rabbi Joshua ben Levi. He compares Israel, having matured in Egypt, to a prince who never met his kingly father as he grew up. The prince experiences difficulties in recognizing his father at the reception welcoming him home. Israel, at the foot of Mount Sinai, experiences the same difficulty:

When the Holy One, blessed be He, came down on Mount Sinai, Michael and his retinue, and Gabriel and his retinue came down. And Israel, staring at each one of them, kept saying, 'This is He, this is He.' The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: 'My children, why are you looking at such as these? You will have no benefit from them. You are My children, I am your Father, as it is said, 'I am become a Father to Israel' (Jeremiah 31:9). You are My people-'And ye shall be My people' (Ezekiel 36:28). And I am your God-'And I will be your God' (Ibid.). (Pesikta Rabbati 21:11)

This midrash explicitly acknowledges that the angels were present at Sinai, although the rabbis indicate that the angels are not instruments of revelation. Rabbi Judah II, the Patriarch, explains the difference between God and a mortal king in the following parable. While Michael and Gabriel and their respective retinues accompany God at Mount Sinai, their appearance is solely cosmetic:

Rabbi Judah II, the patriarch, says:  
It is the way of the world that when a mortal king goes to a May festival, he goes forth with some ten men, but when he goes to war, he goes forth with companies and legions. The Holy One, blessed be He, does not act thus. When He revealed Himself at the Red Sea to wage wars for His sons, He appeared to them by Himself, 'The Lord is a man of war' (Exodus 15:3); but when He came down on Mount Sinai to give Torah to Israel, Michael and his retinue came down with Him, Gabriel and his retinue; 'and the Lord my God shall come, and all His holy ones with Him' (Zechariah 14:5).  
(Pesikta Rabbati 21:9)

#### D. Angels and Redemption: The Red Sea

A parable from Pesikta Rabbati 21:9 states that God was alone when he appeared at the Red Sea to wage war for His children. However, the angels appear and participate in the miracle at Yam Suf in other midrashim. Nonetheless, the angels, especially Michael and Gabriel, are not chiefly responsible for the miracle. They only help the action along. Note the following example:

Rabbi Johanan says: When Moses, Aaron and the elders of Israel came to the Red Sea and they wanted to enter, they looked around and noticed among the escapees several levies of troops and frightened people. Rabbi Meir says: there were four hundred openings at the sea for escaping, there were one hundred for every soul, and for each person sixty thousand warriors were

appointed. Therefore, Gabriel came and made them enter the sea because Pharoah saw them. (Yalkut Shimoni I:165)

The angels actively protect the Israelites when they cross the Red Sea by speeding their escape or transforming into a protective wall. Both Michael and Gabriel become barriers between the Israelites and the Egyptians, although these "walls" are composed of different elements:

Moses spoke before the Holy One, blessed be He, saying, Master of all worlds, the enemy is behind them and the sea is in front of them, which way shall they go forward? What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He sent Michael and he became a wall of fire between (Israel and) the Egyptians. The Egyptians desired to follow after Israel, but they were unable to come (near) because of fire. (Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer, Chapter 42)

The next midrash follows the biblical text more closely. Gabriel becomes the wall of water which protects Israel:

'And the waters were a wall unto them' (Exodus 14:22). At the time when Israel descended to the sea, Gabriel descended with them, and he surrounded them and guarded them like a wall. And he announced: (between the waters of the Red Sea), 'Take heed of Israel who is destined to receive the Torah from the right hand of the Holy One, blessed be He!' (Yalkut Shimoni I:234)

Here Gabriel not only protects them, but warns the Egyptians of their folly, for the Israelites are chosen by God and they are destined to be saved at this juncture. In Midrash Yalkut Shimoni I: 241, Michael and Gabriel also defend Israel before God in the heavenly court of law, when He presides over the case of Egypt and Israel at the Red Sea. Therefore, their protection and defense of Israel is expressed in their strategic and physical

acts, as well as in the court of law.

The angels also destroy the Egyptians, usually following God's direct orders. They are portrayed as bloodthirsty dogs, anxious to fulfill their missions of punishment:

'And it came to pass in the morning watch, that the Lord looked upon' (Exodus 14:24). During the night Gabriel wanted to kill the Egyptians. The Holy One, blessed be he, said to him, 'Make them wait until the time that the fathers of my people acted,' as Scripture says, 'And Abraham arose early in the morning' (Genesis 22:3). When Gabriel heard this, he did not touch them the entire night...(In the morning) the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Michael, Go, and do justice to them (the Egyptians). Michael grabbed them and removed their heads and threw them out upon the seas, as it is written, 'You broke the sea in pieces by your strength. You shattered the heads of the sea, monsters in the water'. (Psalm 74:13). (Yalkut Shimoni II:235)

While God may instruct the angel to "do justice" and is ultimately responsible for the punishment rendered, the angel is left with the 'dirty work.' This may be due to the rabbis' desire to emphasize God' overwhelming mercy for the suffering. He might have compassion upon the Egyptians and never fulfill His own orders. The angels are less vulnerable to pleas for mercy and cries of pseudo-repentance. Thus, they are fit for their appointed tasks:

'Who is like unto Thee?' (Exodus 15:11). The sages, may their memories be for a blessing, say that when Israel sang this song before the Holy One, blessed be He, Pharoah heard it (the song) while he was being thrown about in the sea. He raised his finger to the heavens and said, 'I believe in You, for You are the Righteous One, and I and my people are the evil-doers, and there is no God in the world

except You. At that very moment, Gabriel descended and placed a chain of iron around Pharoah's neck, and he said to him, Wicked man! Yesterday you said, 'Who is God that I should listen to His voice?' and now you say, 'God the Righteous and Merciful One.' Immediately Gabriel pulled him to the depths of the sea. (Midrash Vayosha)<sup>14</sup>

#### E. Redemption: The Angels and the Messianic Age

The legends concerning Leviathan, the sea monster, and Behemoth, the land beast, with regard to the messianic banquet do not exist in tannaitic literature. They are found in post-tannaitic literature and especially the later midrashim, such as the Alphabet of Rabbi Akiba.<sup>15</sup> The texts describing the battle between the angels and the monsters employ both Michael and Gabriel, as well as referring to the administering angels in general.<sup>16</sup> The most significant aspect in these tales is the angels' inability to complete their tasks of destroying the monsters. God is the only one capable of annihilating Leviathan and Behemoth, and thereby He precipitates and brings on the messianic era.<sup>17</sup> The real purpose of the Leviathan is that he is served as a delicacy to the pious in the world to come. Thus, the righteous experience the final victory over evil jus. as God does,<sup>18</sup> but the angels remain impotent:

When Rabbi Dimi comes, he says in the name of Rabbi Jonathan: Gabriel is to arrange in the future the chase and hunt for Leviathan, for it is said, 'Can Thou not draw out Leviathan with a fish hook? Or press down his tongue with a cord?' (Job 40:25). And the Holy One, blessed be He, will not help him; he will be unable to prevail over him; for it is said, 'He only that can make his sword to approach him' (Job 40:19). (B.T. Baba Bathra 74b-75a)

The messianic theme is more visible in the later midrashim, such as the Alphabet of Rabbi Akiba. In contrast to the tradition about God's triumph over the Leviathan and the Behemoth, this midrash indicates that the Messiah, with the accompaniment of angels, will destroy the wicked in this world. However, it does state that God will fulfill His judgement of the wicked in the world to come:

And when the Messiah comes to Israel, Michael and Gabriel, the princes of the host, these holy and mighty princes will accompany him, and they will battle with the wicked from the third hour unto the ninth hour, and they will slaughter nineteen thousand myriads of the wicked of the nations, as it is said, 'Let sinners cease out of the earth' (Psalm 104:35). And when will great numbers praising the Holy One, blessed be He, prevail in the world? At the time when all the wicked will cease from the earth, as it is said, 'And when the wicked perish, there is joy' (Proverbs 11:10). However, in the world to come, the Holy One, blessed be He, will descend from the heavens by Himself, and He will carry out justice with the wicked. (Alphabet of Rabbi Akiba 'e)

#### F. The Angel as Intercessor: the Danger of Angelolatry

The angelic role of an intermediary is both accepted and rejected in rabbinic thought. The concept of the angel as an intercessor between a human being and God is a threat to the essence of monotheistic belief. The need for a "telephone line" in the communication between Israel and God may indicate the strengthening of the idea of God's transcendence. However, the immediacy and intimacy of prayer and worship requires a more personal God who communicates directly. Thus, angels become divine substitutes as much as intercessors because they seem more accessible. Two attitudes emerge regarding the angel as intercessor; one is highly accepting while the other clearly

condemns the reliance upon angels as a channel of communication.

Although any angel might serve as an intercessor, the following midrash indicates that there is one intercessory spirit ( *רוח סליחה* ):

Abaye asks Rabbi Dimi: To what do you in the West (Palestine) relate the following verse: 'Go not forth hastily to strife, for what wilt thou do in the end thereof when thy neighbor put thee to shame. Debate thy cause with thy neighbor, but reveal not the secrets of another' (Proverbs 25:8-9). (He answers:) When the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Ezekiel (16:3), 'Go and say unto Israel, 'An Amonite was thy father, and thy mother was a Hittite,' the Intercessory spirit said before the Holy One, blessed be He, Sovereign of the Universe! If Abraham and Sarah came and stood before Thee, wouldst Thou say (this) to them and put them to shame? 'Debate thy cause with thy neighbor, but reveal not the secret of another.' But has he so much license (to reproach God so freely)? Yes. For Rabbi Jose bar Rabbi Hanina says, he has three names: Pisakon, Itamon, and Sigaron: Pisakon, because he argues against the Most High; Itamon, because he hides the sins of Israel; and Sigaron, because when he concludes a matter, none can reopen it. (B.T. Sanhedrin 44b)

The Soncino translation notes that Pisakon refers to Gabriel, who always intercedes on behalf of Israel. Kohut suggests that the three names are of Arabic origins and respectively denote shame, sin and pain.<sup>19</sup> However, Gustav Davidson notes that Pisqon, Itmon and Sigron represent three of the many names of the angel Metatron, and the latter is used when Metatron shut the doors of heaven against prayer.<sup>20</sup> Despite the variance of opinion concerning to whom these names refer, the fact remains that a heavenly intercessor possessing three names is believed

to exist, and rightfully intercede, according to this school of thought.

A tradition in B.T. Shabbat 12b demonstrates the rabbis' concern that the administering angels hear and understand prayers:

Rabbah b. Bar Hanah says: When we followed Rabbi Eleazar to inquire after a sick person, sometimes he would say to him (in Hebrew), 'May the Omnipresent remember thee in peace;' at others, he said this in Aramaic. But why might he do this? Did not Rabbi Judah say: One should never petition for his needs in Aramaic; the Ministering Angels do not heed him, for they do not understand Aramaic?' An invalid is different because the Divine Presence is with him, (and therefore does not need the aid of an angel).

From this midrash one can infer that the rabbis believe angels are needed for the communication of prayers except in special situations. In the Soncino translation, it is noted that according to Tobit 12:12;15, "angels were held to mediate between God and man, carrying the prayers of the latter to the former." However, it qualifies this notion by stating, "this is not to be compared with prayer or to worshipping angels, from which Judaism is free."<sup>21</sup>

The negative attitude toward the angel as intercessor is most evident in the Palestinian Talmud, Berakhot 13a.<sup>22</sup>

Amora Rabbi Judan argues against prayers which are recited to angels: 'If a human being has a patron, if he finds himself in trouble he does not enter his house suddenly, but he comes and stands at his patron's door and calls his slave or a member of his household, and he says: 'So-and-so is standing at the door of your court.' Now he, (the patron), may or may not invite him in. But

the Holy One, blessed be He, is not so. If trouble comes upon a person, let him not cry either to Michael or to Gabriel, but let him cry unto Me, and I shall answer him forthwith. This is the meaning of the verse, 'whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered ' (Joel 3).

Rabbi Judan's intention is clear; while he acknowledges that Gabriel and Michael might possibly serve as God's intermediaries, he simply states that there is no need to do so. The potential that one might transfer the direction of one's prayers from God to angels is great. The following midrash emphasizes that Israel alone chooses to worship God, while "others" might select lesser divine beings as their object of worship. Note that the critical decision is made at Sinai, when Israel meets God:

Rabbi Isaac expounds upon: 'The Lord is my portion', saith my soul, 'Therefore will I hope in Him' (Lamentations 3:24). Rabbi Isaac says, to what is this similar? To a king who enters a country and his commander, and his lieutenant and his military governor enter with him. There are those of the inhabitants who will select the commander to rule over them. Some will select the lieutenant for themselves, and yet others will select the military governor. Said one who was openminded and bright, 'I only select the king, for why do all the others disappear, but the king does not change (or is not succeeded)?' Thus, it was with God when he descended to Mount Sinai. Groups of angels descended with him: Michael and his retinue, Gabriel and his retinue. There are some nations of the world who select Michael for themselves, and there are others who select Gabriel for themselves. However, Israel selects the Holy One, for themselves. They say: 'The Lord is my portion,

saith my soul', behold, 'Hear O  
Israel, the Lord is our God, the  
Lord is One.' (Deuteronomy  
Rabbah 2:34)

Rabbi Isaac's interpretation is anti-Christian and anti-Gnostic in nature. He implies that the Jews only choose an eternal God, not a mortal man like Jesus, nor a destructive demiurge. Note that Michael, serving as the gentle guardian of his flock, is a parallel to Jesus and Gabriel is correlated to the demiurge; both are bent on destruction and harsh justice. The midrash may also be a political charge against foreign Roman intruders. He sternly warns Israel to choose God as their political guardian and only object of worship. Angels are transitory and powerless beings, they cannot provide enduring protection for Israel. Only God is eternal; He never changes despite the turbulence of the contemporary religious and political situations.

#### G. Angels and the Attributes: Justice and Mercy

Difficulties with the monotheistic concept are most evident with regard to the problem of good and evil. The reconciliation of these two realities, and their being subsumed under a unified Godhead was a theological necessity. The rabbis struggled with this eternal paradox and their responses inadequately addressed the dilemma. They ascribed the two qualities to God's nature, and these attributes became entities unto themselves. The quality of mercy ("רחמים") and the attribute of justice ("דין") are evocations of God's sentiment and actions. Because rabbinic thought is dominated by the idea of God's love, or mercy, this attribute appears to merge with the Godhead.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, the Middat haDin is more frequently juxtaposed to God's position; this attribute distinctly addresses and challenges God in the heavenly court.<sup>24</sup>

Max Kadushin states that the concepts of Middat haDin and Middat Raḥamim are substantive; they classify events, situations

and actions, and they endow these events and actions with significance and consequently may be considered value concepts. He further indicates that these terms stand for concepts which are sufficiently individualized to merit their own distinctive symbols. Apparently, despite instances when each concept is explicitly identified, the two archangels and Sammael often serve as the symbols of those concepts. Kadushin indicates that the rabbis exclusively utilize angels in the concretizations of value concepts, especially with regard to God's love and sense of justice.<sup>25</sup>

The symbols distinguishing these value concepts include right and left-handedness, the opposing elements (fire and water), prayer and appeal versus war, life and death and Michael and Gabriel. Midrash Tanhuma Buber Mishpatim 1:6 describes God upon His throne with a host of angels to his right and left. A parallel is created between these directions and mercy and justice. The right hand signifies trust, while the left is regarded as sinister, or even a sign of death. A description of the merkavah in Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer, Chapter 4, exhibits this symbolism:

Four classes of ministering angels minister and utter praise before the Holy One, blessed be He: the first camp (led by) Michael on His right, the second camp (led by) Gabriel on His left, the third camp (led by) Uriel before Him and a fourth camp (led by) Raphael behind him; and the Shekhina of the Holy One, blessed be He, is in the center. He is sitting on a throne high and exalted. His throne is high and suspended above in the air...One half (of His Glory) is hail and the other half is fire, at His right hand is life and at His left is death...

Gerald Friedlander states that fire and hail represent the two divine attributes of justice and love.<sup>26</sup> Significantly, these

polar attributes are balanced together in one image. Mercy is associated with the right hand, Michael, hail (snow, in Numbers Rabbah 12:8) and life. Justice corresponds to the left hand, Gabriel, fire and death.<sup>27</sup> The link between these elements and angels is further developed in their characterizations. Michael is usually portrayed as the guardian and defender of Israel, and the high priest of the heavens. Water (snow or hail) is his appropriate element, since it symbolizes purity, redemption and mercy. In contrast, Gabriel is associated with the fire element since he is often perceived as the angel of destruction which is the instrument of God's wrath and judgement.

The reconciliation of mercy and justice in the heavens is attributed to the miraculous power of God to make peace between such contradictory forces:

The children of Israel are bidden to gaze upon the King of the Universe, who makes peace among His creatures In reference to this comment Rabbi Johanan cites, '(Merciful) dominion and fear are at peace with Him' (Job 25:2); and, in keeping with Rabbi Jacob of Kefar Hanan's identification of (merciful) dominion as Michael and fear as Gabriel, asserted that the words 'are (at peace) with Him' imply the surrender of both angels to God so that one does not injure the other. (Pesikta de Rav Kahana 1:3)<sup>28</sup>

The attribute of mercy is not always disassociated from God as an independent force, although justice is set apart. However, this tendency could have encouraged Gnostic heresies, for justice becomes a powerful counterpoint to God's mercy. Rabbi Akiba's view permits this line of thinking, as demonstrated by his interpretation of Daniel 7:9 ("I beheld Till thrones were placed, and one that is ancient of days did sit,"):

How should the verse 'Till thrones were placed' be explained? One (throne) was for Himself and one for David: this is Rabbi Akiba's view. Rabbi Jose protested to him: Akiba, how long will you profane the Shekhina (by asserting that a human being sits beside God)? Rather, one (throne) for justice and the other for mercy. Did he accept (this answer) from him or not? Come and hear! For it has been taught: One is for justice and the other for charity; this is Rabbi Akiba's view. Said Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah to him: Akiba, what do you have to do with Aggada? Confine yourself to (the study) of Nega'im and Ohalot. But one was a throne, the other a footstool: a throne for a seat and a footstool in support of His feet. (B.T. Sanhedrin 38b)<sup>29</sup>

Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah fully understands the underlying dualism and inherent danger in distinguishing between God's justice and mercy. While he recognizes the paradox, he minimizes the danger it presents to monotheism simply by avoiding explicit discussion. He does not agree that God's judgement is equal to His mercy; the image of judgement as a footstool, a humble aid for the reign of mercy is forceful. Therefore, while he stresses that only one throne of power is established, he also implies that that power is one of mercy and love, and that the world is not equally ruled by harsh judgement.

CHAPTER III

MICHAEL AND GABRIEL

THEIR NATURE AND FUNCTION

The archangels Michael and Gabriel are exceptional in God's celestial retinue. They quantitatively and qualitatively stand out with regard to their involvement in the relationship between God and Israel. Bamberger states that both Michael and Gabriel appear as Israel's champions, though Michael is most usually accorded this distinction.<sup>1</sup> Michael is frequently portrayed as the defender and guardian of Israel who appeals to God's mercy, and he himself is a symbol of mercy. Gabriel may act as a defender of Israel, yet he fulfills this role through the harsher aspect of divine judgement.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, both are perceived as guardian angels in various midrashim.<sup>3</sup> In order to balance His creation, God provided each nation with two guardian angels and gave Israel, as its protectors, Michael and Gabriel. When Israel sins, the patrons of the Gentiles make accusations before God. Then Michael and Gabriel plead for their people and so God is able to show them mercy and reduce the power of the other princes. Apparently, Michael and Gabriel are trusted as friends of Israel. It is evident that their ability to defend Israel is highly esteemed, because the rabbis express great disappointment and anger with regard to their role in the destruction of the Temple: " 'All her friends have dealt treacherously with her. They are become her enemies ' (Lamentations 1:2). These are Michael and Gabriel."<sup>4</sup>

#### A. Michael: The Great Prince

The angel Michael is mentioned for the first time in the Book of Daniel. The man "Gabriel" informs Daniel that Michael

is "one of the chief princes" (אחד השרים הראשונים) (10:13); that he is "Your (Israel's) prince" (כ' אים מ'באל) (10:21); and that he is "the great prince" (מ'באל הגדול) (12:1). The Book of Daniel describes Michael's sole duty as to "stand (ק'מ) for the children of Israel," or to be the defender (standing in the heavenly court) of Israel. Only Michael's function is briefly described in Daniel; he does not communicate with Daniel nor is his physical presence felt by Daniel as is Gabriel's. Yet Michael appears more highly esteemed by the rabbis, despite exceptional references to Gabriel's defense of Israel.<sup>5</sup>

The rabbis accord several titles to Gabriel. He is identified as "the great prince" (שר הגדול); "the prince of the Divine Presence" (שר הכבוד); and "the prince of the universe" (שר העולם).<sup>6</sup> Merkavah mystics identify Michael by his secret name, Metatron, whose function and eminence is consolidated with those attributed to Michael.<sup>7</sup> Ginzberg notes that in the Babylonian Talmud, all the functions that had formerly been ascribed to Michael were transferred to Metatron, although numerous references to Michael are found there.<sup>8</sup>

The rabbis do present clues and reasons as to why Michael is appointed as Israel's guardian and pleads on her behalf before God. The names of Michael and Metatron reflect the nature of their function, especially with regard to redemption. The rabbis explain that Michael's name was composed of the Israelites' proclamation of God's mercy and greatness at the Red Sea adjoined to a verse from Deuteronomy 33:26, which also expresses God's elevating the cause of Israel.<sup>9</sup> Thus Michael's name is symbolic of the manifestation of God's ultimate mercy, that of redemption. Metatron is considered to be the angel of greatest power among the angelic hierarchy. Metatron's name is similar to that of God. This idea is based upon the scriptural verse, "For My name is in him" (Exodus 23:21); and upon the identical numerical value of מ'ט'ט'ט' and 'צ'ל.<sup>10</sup> While these angels

represent the merciful aspect of God, repeated efforts to credit the source of mercy to God are striking.<sup>11</sup>

The reason why Michael serves as Israel's guardian angel is specified in Yalkut Shimoni.<sup>12</sup> Some of the early aggadists posit that Michael was the angel who wrestled with Jacob at the Jabbok. The Yalkut Shimoni text concurs with this view and adds the detail that in order to compensate for the injury he had inflicted on the patriarch during their struggle, Michael was assigned thenceforth to care for him and his descendants.

Michael defends Israel by physically intervening in Israel's battles. Ephraim Urbach remarks that the tannaim did not assign Michael to any part in the past wars of Israel, and that "only in late midrashim does Michael take his place as the guardian angel of Israel, who fights their battles, as in the apocalyptic works themselves."<sup>13</sup> The following is an example of Michael's strategic involvement with the warring Nebuchadnezzar:

Another interpretation: 'And Joseph was brought down to Egypt'. That is to say, 'I have seen servants on horses' (Ecclesiastes 10:7). This is Nebuchadnezzar, the one who destroyed the Holy Temple. But he did not enter it because he was afraid. What did he do? Michael descended and seized his horse and he made him (horse and rider) enter the Holy of Holies, and the Holy Spirit said, 'I have seen servants on horses.' This is Nebuchadnezzar. 'And princes walking as servants upon the earth' (Ibid.). This is Michael, as it is said in Scripture, 'Except Michael, your prince' (Daniel 10:21). (Midrash Tanhuma Buber vaYeshev 13)<sup>14</sup>

Michael prevents Nebuchadnezzar from acting "righteously," in order that God would not consider him favorably. Thus Nebuchadnezzar remains a true enemy of Israel, and God does not appear to sanction the enemy's cause.

Michael also serves as Israel's defense attorney in the heavenly court of law. He argues against illustrious prosecutors such as Sammael, the guardians of the other nations of the world, the Attribute of Justice, and with the great Judge Himself. For example, in Exodus Rabbah 18:5, Michael argues with Sammael; and their contrasting natures are quite evident:

'Except Michael your prince' (Daniel 10:21). Rabbi Jose says: To whom are Michael and Sammael similar? To an advocate and prosecutor standing in a court of law. One speaks and then the other speaks. One completes his case, and the other completes his case. When the advocate knows that he is victorious, he begins to praise the judge who determines the verdict. The prosecutor appeals to add a point, but the advocate says to him: Be silent and let us hear from the judge! Thus do Michael and Sammael stand before the Shekhina; and Satan prosecutes and Michael argues on behalf of the innocence of Israel. And when Satan comes to speak, Michael silences him. Why? As it is said in Scripture, 'I will hear what God the Lord will speak; for He will speak peace unto His people' (Psalm 85:9). Behold, 'In the night I will call to remembrance my song' (Psalm 77:7).

Michael defends Israel against the guardians of Egypt and the princes of the nations in other courtroom battles. In the following version of a frequently cited courtroom midrash found in Yalkut Shimoni I:243, Michael is presented as the successful advocate of Israel who signals Gabriel to bring in the most critical and condemning evidence of his case. As the midrash opens, the prince of Egypt appeals to God's mercy:

He said before Him: Master of the Universe, both judgement and truth abide with You, but may it be Your will that You save the Israelites and not destroy the Egyptians. Rabbi Joshua ben Levi

says, when Michael saw that the princes of the world were speaking in defense of Egypt, thereupon he gestured to Gabriel. Then Gabriel flew to Egypt in one flight, removed a brick of plaster from the building in which a baby had been stuck. He stood before the Holy One, blessed be He, and said before Him: Master of the world, in this manner they enslaved Your children. When the Attribute of Justice saw it, he said: Do justice with Egypt, for most of them are guilty. Thereupon, the Egyptians drowned.

While Michael appears only to gesture to Gabriel, the midrash indicates that he was an active participant in this court scene. However, a similar scene is vividly depicted in which Egypt stands trial for her sins against Israel, and Michael's role is diminished by God's rapid-fire debate with Uza, the prince of Egypt. Michael appears incapable of articulating a defense of Israel or a prosecution of Egypt:

Another interpretation of : 'Thus the Lord saved Israel that day' (Exodus 14:30). Can it really be that Israel was in the hand of Egypt? Uza, the prince of Egypt, presented his case before the Holy One, blessed be He, and he said before Him: Master of the Universe, with regard to this nation which you are taking out from Egypt, I have a claim against her. Let Michael their prince come, and he shall argue this case with me before You. Thereupon, the Holy One, blessed be He, called Michael to come and testify with Uza. Uza, the prince of Egypt, opened and said before Him: Master of the Universe, You decreed concerning this nation that they (Israel) would be enslaved under the power of my nation for four hundred years, as it is said, 'And shall serve them, and they shall afflict them' (Genesis 15:13). And they have only yet been slaves for seventy-six years from the birth of Miriam, and they have not yet reached their time to flee. Therefore, give me permission and I will return them under the power of my nation until the four hundredth year, as You had established; thus

Your oath will be fulfilled. At that moment, the Holy One, blessed be He, told Michael to respond with an answer. Thereupon Michael was silent. Then the Holy One, blessed be He, responded and said to Uza: Allow Me to argue in favor of My children. My children are enslaved only because of one statement which Abraham My beloved spoke. He asked me, 'O Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it (the land)?' (Genesis 15:8). And I answered, 'Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger' (Genesis 15:3). I made no mention of the land of Egypt, I only said 'In a land which is not theirs.' And it is already revealed and known that from the time of Isaac's birth they were strangers and the four hundred years have already been completed. You have no right to enslave My children. At that moment, God saved Israel and, therefore, it is written in Scripture, 'Thus the Lord saved Israel that day.' (Yalkut Shimoni I:241)

Michael seems incapable of answering the questions posed by the guardian angels of the nations. The text stresses that God Himself has to defend and speak for Israel, which naturally assures Israel's victory. In the next midrash presented, God explicitly states that he will plead on behalf of Israel. Michael simply cannot compete with God, and the rabbis ascribe Michael's silence to their interpretation of the verb in the verse, "And at that time shall Michael stand (מַלְאֲכֵי)" (Daniel 12:1). The purpose of this midrash is to emphasize that only God can provide the answers to questions concerning judgement and mercy. Furthermore, God directly saves His children on the Day of Trouble, the advent of the messianic era. Michael's role is inconsequential, not only at the Red Sea, but during the End of Days:

On this day (of trouble), the Holy One, blessed be He, will say to (the guardian angels of) the nations of the earth: Come and show your cause against My children, the children of Israel. 'Produce your cause, saith the Lord' (Isaiah 41:20). And when those reply: Master of the Universe, who will make up the pleas for Israel? God will

say: If one may speak thus of Him, 'I,' as it is said, 'the God of Israel is He who will give His people strength and strong defenses' (Psalm 68:36). Thereupon the nations of the earth will ask: 'Does this mean that in divine judgement there is partiality? These committed incest and these committed incest; these shed blood and those shed blood. Why then, are these made to go down to Gehenna, and why are those not made to go down? Here upon the angelic defender of the children of Israel will find himself unable to answer, as is said, 'Then shall Michael stand still, the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was' (Daniel 12:1). What can 'standing still' mean here except inability to answer, as in the words, 'They stand still and answer no more' (Job 32:16). And because Michael will be unable to answer, the Holy One, blessed be He, will say: Michael, thou art unable to answer and unable to speak in defense of My children, and so I shall speak of their righteousness and save them, as is said, 'I that speak of righteousness am mighty to save' (Isaiah 63:1). (Midrash Psalms 20:3)

Michael serves as the advocate of Israel who argues against the Attribute of Justice. An important discussion concerning the suffering of children for their father's sin is presented, in which Michael is portrayed as a passionate defender of Israel. Despite his legal acumen, the inevitability of judgement regarding the ten martyrs is overwhelming. Although Michael's plea for mercy is defeated, Urbach notes that "the Attribute of Justice triumphed at the time of religious persecutions in order that the Attribute of Mercy might prevail for the generations to come."<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, Michael's role as a symbol of God's love and mercy is minimized, for God's word prevails in judgement:

And should you say: But the Torah ordained, 'Neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers' (Deuteronomy 24:16), why then did these (ten) die for

the iniquity of their fathers? This is no contradiction, for (the sages) say: This was the point of contention between the Attribute of Justice and Michael, the guardian angel of Israel. The Attribute of Justice said: It is written in the Torah, 'For it is no vain thing for you' (Deuteronomy 32:47). Now the tribal eponyms sold Joseph and transgressed (the law of) 'and he that stealeth a man ...,' they were, therefore, liable to death. But neither they nor their children have yet paid the penalty for the wrong done to Joseph. Michael answered: It is however, written in the Torah, 'neither shall the children be put to death for their fathers.' And so the children are not liable to death on account of their fathers. Said the Attribute of Justice to the Holy One, blessed be He: Dost Thou then show no respect of persons? If Thou dost give a good reward to the children because of the merit of the fathers, wilt Thou not (also) exact retribution from the children on account of the iniquity of their fathers? Either make the children pay the penalty or annul the oath. By this argument, the Attribute of Justice defeated Michael, for there was no answer; and so he agreed that their children should pay the penalty. And their sentence was that righteous men should die rather than that the Holy One, blessed be He, should annul the oath concerning their merit. (Genesis Rabbati 37:26)

While Michael is presented as experiencing success, defeat, and incompetence in his advocacy of Israel, the midrashim generally assume that Israel is a willing defendant. However, two midrashim in Pesikta Rabbati indicate that Israel rejected or ignored Michael's services. Israel appears to be interested solely in a direct communication with God, especially since He is the ultimate source of abundant mercy. Note the following illustration in Pesikta Rabbati 44:10:

Another interpretation: 'Return, O Israel, unto the Lord'. Israel said to Him: Master of the Universe, if we resolve upon a return, wouldst Thou have a witness present to testify that Thou didst receive us? He replied:

I would have your advocate, Michael, be your witness, as it is said, 'And at that time Michael shall stand up...who standeth for the children of thy people' (Daniel 12:1). Then Israel said: We seek no witness but Thee. Whereupon God said to them: Come then, seek My face, and I Myself will bear witness concerning you. And you have a way of learning that God Himself will bear witness, for consider this question: Which measure is the greater, the measure of goodness or the measure of wrath? Clearly, the measure of goodness.

Michael's presence is acknowledged in Pesikta Rabbati 30:4, and although he is identified as Israel's guardian angel, his only function in this midrash is to praise God. Jerusalem opts to eschew the services of a defense lawyer and take on the power of attorney herself. Michael is pictured as a mere spectator, applauding at the appropriate moment:

Accordingly, when the Holy One, blessed be He, comes to say to Jerusalem: Accept comforting from Me, as is said, 'Open to Me, my sister' (Song of Songs 5:2), she will reply: I shall accept no comforting from Thee until I and Thou have reproofed each other...(Jerusalem argues her case against God, then)...At once the Holy One, blessed be He, will accept the reproof from Jerusalem, and will say: I was foolishly arbitrary with you, as is said, 'I acted in lordly fashion toward you' (Jeremiah 3:14)...And the Holy One, blessed be He, will cause the righteousness of Israel to be known to the nations of the earth. In that time, Michael and Jerusalem will say: 'The Lord hath brought forth our victory; come and let us declare in Zion the work of the Lord our God' (Jeremiah 51:10).

In addition to the tendency to minimize Michael's status and function, the rabbis strictly oppose any expression of worship to him. These emphatic statements may be viewed as an attempt to confine his popularity within acceptable limits. The following example is drawn from B.T. Hullin 40a:

A Baraita teaches: If a man slaughters (an animal) as a sacrifice to mountains, hills, seas, rivers, deserts, the sun, the moon, the stars and planets, Michael the Archangel, or a small worm, it is regarded as a sacrifice of the dead. Abaye explains: It is no difficulty. Here, (in the Mishnah), he declares it to be a sacrifice to the deity of the mountain. There is indeed support for this view, for (in the Baraita quoted) they are all stated together with Michael the Archangel. This is conclusive.

Idolatry may be defined as the worship of the spirit represented by a physical and visible entity, and not worshipping the entity itself. Michael is the only "spirit" in the list, and worship of him is associated with the worship of sun and moon gods, desert gods, as well as with astrology. The rabbis attitude about these cultic gods is blatant; they compare them to a lowly worm. One must assume that such a strong, explicitly stated injunction against such worship indicates that Michael was a popular "cultic" figure.

The issue of image-making is also controversial for the rabbis. Some figures are determined to be representative of cult objects, others are considered to be ornamental. While Abaye agrees with the Baraita which says that sacrifices to Michael are considered to be idolatrous, he indicates that images of Michael are not objects of worship. Michael's figure engraved upon utensils is ostensibly ornamental:

Mishnah: If one finds utensils upon which is the figure of the sun, or moon, or a dragon, he casts them into the salt sea. Rabban Simeon ben Gamliel says: If it is upon precious utensils, they are prohibited, but if upon common utensils, they are permitted.

Gemara: Is this to say that (the heathens) worship these objects and no others? (Against such a conclusion), I cite the following: If one slaughters an animal in the name of seas, rivers, a desert, the sun, moon stars and planets, Michael the Prince, or a tiny worm, behold, these come within the category of sacrifices to

dead objects. Abaye explains: As to worshipping they might worship whatever they take hold of; but in regard to the making of images for worship, they do so only of these objects (listed in the Mishnah) which are specially honored by them; but as for the other figures, they only make them for ornamental purposes. (B.T. Avodah Zarah 42b)<sup>16</sup>

Images of angels, with their names, decorate charms, amulets and mezuzah scrolls of Jewish antiquity.<sup>17</sup> Evocation of their names and images was considered a form of protection against demons and evil spirits. Furthermore, Michael was considered to be a psychopomp, the guardian who protected souls after death and brought them to heaven or gehinnom. Thus Michael is frequently identified with the Greek god, Hermes. Erwin Goodenough found a charm upon which was engraved Hermes, a caduceus (a cock) and the inscription of the name Michael in the Jewish catacomb at Vigna Kaddanini in Rome. Goodenough states,

That Michael is named here together with the fact that the symbols appear in a catacomb, suggests that this cluster was connected with the idea of immortality, and that Michael may have been recognized as the Jewish counterpart of Hermes as psychopomp, at least by some Jews. It was a most obvious identification from the functional point of view, or from that of the religious value each of the two stood for.<sup>18</sup>

Michael is also identified with the Egyptian figure of Anubis, who is also conflated with Hermes. Goodenough suggests that Jews borrowed pagan symbols in order to give concrete form to their angels.<sup>19</sup>

Although such ornamentation may not have been perceived as forms of angel-worship, stern caution is directed against all those who might ascribe so much importance to Michael or Metatron that they might believe in the existence of two deities. The rabbis utilize the character of Elisha ben Abuya, or Aher, to illustrate the folly and danger of dualism, or any form of angel worship which

angers God and threatens the foundations of monotheism. Even Aher's repentance could not be accepted by God:

Aher mutilated the shoots. Of him, Scripture says. 'Suffer not thy mouth to bring thy flesh into guilt, neither say thou before the messenger (מַלְאָךְ), that it was an error; wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thy hands? For through the multitude of dreams and vanities there are also many words; but fear thou God' (Ecclesiastes 5:5-6). What does it refer to? He saw that permission was granted to Metatron to sit and write down the merits of Israel. Said he: It is taught as a tradition that on high there is no sitting and no emulation, and no back, and no weariness. Perhaps, God forbid, there are two deities! Thereupon, they led Metatron forth, and punished him with sixty fiery lashes, saying to him: Why did you not rise before Him when you saw Him? Permission was then given to him to strike out the merits of Aher. A Bat Kol went forth and said: Return ye backsliding children, except Aher. (B.T. Hagigah 15a)<sup>20</sup>

Michael is also perceived as the principal servant of God. Cohon remarks that "instead of receiving the worship of men, Michael himself stands like a high priest in the Temple of the heavenly Jerusalem and offers up sacrifices to God."<sup>21</sup> According to B.T. Hagigah 12b, Michael dwells in the fourth of the seven heavens which are conceptualized by the merkavah mystics. The seven are cited by the Resh Lakish, and he says concerning the heaven, Zebul:

Zebul is that in which (the heavenly) Jerusalem, and the Temple and the Altar are built, and Michael, the Great Prince, stands and offers thereon an offering, for it is said, 'I have surely built Thee a house of habitation (בֵּית); a place for Thee to dwell in forever' (Kings 8:13). And whence do we derive that it is called heaven? For it is written: 'Look down from heaven, and see, even from Thy holy and glorious habitation' (Isaiah 63:15). (B.T. Hagigah 15b)

The Midrash 'Aseret haDibberot concurs with the Hagigah passage regarding Michael's function and abode. Yet, this text focuses upon the sacrifices he offers up as his office dictates:

Above Shehakim is Zebul. And in Zebul is built an altar. And Michael, the Prince of Israel, is the High Priest, and he stands and offers sacrifices upon it every day. And what sacrifices does he offer up? Could it really be that he sacrifices sheep? Rather the Sages say that Michael is the Prince of Israel, and he is the High Priest in the heavens since the day that the Temple was destroyed, may it be built speedily in our lifetime, and the priesthood ceased. And what does he sacrifice? The souls of the righteous; until the Temple will be built again; because then the Holy One, blessed be He, will send down the Temple which is in Zebul to Jerusalem below.<sup>22</sup>

The despair apparent in the above midrash is two-fold. Not only does Israel lose her ability to properly worship God, her righteous are sacrificed, perhaps because of her inability to worship according to the laws of Torah. The righteous are compared to sheep herded en masse, pure and meek, to the sacrificial altar. Michael is the priest by proxy for Israel; he runs the holding operation until Israel's Temple is fully restored. Indeed, it is ironic that Israel's guardian angel sacrifices her righteous. Yet, this view is challenged by Rabbi Johanan, who emphasizes that continuous study of the priestly laws would be considered a valid substitute for the actual practice in God's eyes. The righteous do not require heavenly representation, nor are their lives lived and sacrificed in vain. He affirms that by maintaining the priestly traditions through their study, they will be able to fulfill the ordinance of the biblical passage:

'And Solomon sent to Hiram, the King of Tyre, saying...'Behold, I am about to build a house for the name of the Lord, my God, to dedicate it to Him, and to burn before Him incense of sweet spices...This is an ordinance forever to Israel' (II Chronicles 2:2-3). Rabbi Giddal says in the name of Rab: The words, 'This

is an ordinance forever' allude to the altar built in heaven, beside which Michael, the great guardian angel, stands and brings an offering (the souls of the righteous). But Rabbi Johanan maintains: These words refer to the disciples of the wise who occupy themselves with the laws of the priests' service and of whom God says, 'I will reckon it for them, as if in their days the House of the Lord were still standing firm' (Midrash Psalms 134:1)<sup>23</sup>

#### B. Gabriel: The Man Clothed in Linen

The angel Gabriel is usually representative of fire, judgement, punishment and destruction. He is explicitly named in the Book of Daniel 8:16 and 9:21. However, he is not called an angel, but rather is referred to as "the man Gabriel" (9:21), and this characterization is associated with the man clothed in linen in verse 12:6 of Daniel. Consequently, Gabriel is further associated with the man in the linen robe in Ezekiel (9:2; 10:6). He explains Israel's perilous future to Daniel, and he is the judge of doom and destruction in Ezekiel. He fights against the guardian princes of other nations, usually in consort with Michael. While he is the angel of destruction, he defends Israel by directing his energies against her enemies. Yet Israel also receives the brunt of his fury, or rather God's anger through the agency of Gabriel.

While Michael may appear to be more highly regarded in rabbinic literature, Gabriel is considerably more active. The biblical portrayal of Gabriel's destructive nature is carried through in the rabbinic literature; the midrashic presentations serve to amplify the highly vivid biblical text regarding Gabriel. Since he is God's agent of destruction, therefore God is one step removed from the evil realities of the world. Acts of destruction are readily credited to Gabriel, which reflects an attitude in direct contrast to the ambivalence concerning Michael's role in the manifestation of God's mercy. If Michael can be characterized as the attorney, Gabriel is certainly the policeman. Gabriel may appear in court, but he acts less as the defending

angel than the one bringing damning evidence for the attorney and the court. He is the 'angel of the streets,' frequently blamed for his over zealous protection of law and order.

This image is appropriate because it is juxtaposed against God's desire to forgive and love Israel. While God, as the Judge, may implement His sentences of justice Himself, he usually orders Gabriel to carry out the "dirty work." Thus Gabriel is more active in order to distance the worldly evil from a merciful and increasingly transcendent God. This "destruction by proxy" theme, in addition to its emphasis on God's sole involvement in creation, revelation and redemption, indicates a polemical agenda. Anti-Jewish Gnostics posit a dualistic theology in which they

distinguished between the supreme God and the God of Israel. The latter, they contended, could not be the supreme God since much that is credited to Him in the Torah cannot be reconciled with such a being. They, therefore insisted that while 'Elohim (theos) designates 'the supreme God,' who is the source of goodness, YHWH is the God of this world, i.e., the Demiurgos, who fashioned the material universe,<sup>24</sup> the satanical cause of evil and rigid justice.

The rabbis' response to this theology was to reverse their reinterpretation of the divine names, and to even avoid the usage of "Elohim."<sup>25</sup> Similarly, to counteract the challenge that the God of Israel was a God of harsh justice and evil intentions, they portrayed Gabriel, angels of destruction and Sammael or Satan as being responsible for the evil in the world. Yet, in order to promote God's goodness and supremacy, they continually emphasize His comprehensive nature, His ability to make peace out of all the divine contradictions, including the problem of good and evil.<sup>26</sup>

Gabriel is an angel of fiery temperament, and the element which symbolizes him is fire. The nature of his fire, as described in B.T. Yoma 21b, is "fire which pushes other fire away." This description is derived from the episode in Daniel 3:27, in which

Nebuchadnezzar sees a fourth man accompanying Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego in the burning furnace. The "man" is identified as an angel of God, and these two titles further allude to Gabriel.

Gabriel's functions and roles are established in the biblical texts and are greatly elaborated upon in the Midrash. In the following midrash, Rabbi Joḥanan ascribes three roles to Gabriel: chancellor, executioner and high priest. However, though Michael usually claims the latter role, Gabriel is associated with the priesthood because of his garb, rather than his stature or character:

And it is written, 'And behold, six men came from the way of the upper gate, which lieth toward the north, every man with his weapon of destruction in his hand; and one man in the midst of them clothed in linen, with a writer's inkhorn on his side. And they went in and stood beside the brazen altar' (Ezekiel 9:2). It is written here, 'And behold, six,' however were there not five decrees, as it was written: 'And to the others He said in my hearing, 'Go ye through the city after him and smite; let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity, slay utterly the old man, the young man and the maiden, the little children and the women' (Ezekiel 9:5). Rabbi Joḥanan says: the harsh angel between them, this is Gabriel, as it is written, 'And one man in the midst of them clothed in linen with a writer's inkhorn on his side. The angel functioned in three capacities: chancellor ( שופט ), executioner and high priest. A chancellor, as it is written, 'With a writer's inkhorn on his side'; an executioner, as it is said, 'He hath utterly destroyed them, He hath delivered them to the slaughter' (Isaiah 34:2); and the High Priest, 'He shall put on the holy linen tunic' (Leviticus 16:4)... 'And the Lord said to him, 'Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem' (Ezekiel 9:4). These are written, says Rabbi Simon ben Lakish, and the harsh angel who was among them, he is Gabriel. (Lamentations Rabbah 2:3)

Gabriel inflicts punishment upon Israel's enemies and he interferes with their plans. In order that God should not favor Nebuchad-

nezzar, Gabriel prevents Nebuchadnezzar from acting upon his righteous thoughts. King Merodach Baladan sends a greeting to King Hezekiah, who has just recovered from an illness. Baladan orders one of his couriers thusly:

Write thus to him: Peace to King Hezekiah, peace to the city of Jerusalem, and peace to the great God! Now, Nebuchadnezzar was Baladan's scribe, but just then he was not present. When he came, he asked them: How did ye write? And they told him: We wrote thus and thus. Ye called him the great God, but ye mentioned Him last! Thus, said he, ye should have written: Peace to the great God, peace to the city of Jerusalem, and peace to King Hezekiah. Let the reader of this letter, they said to him, become the messenger. So he ran after him, but when he had taken four steps, Gabriel came and made him halt. Had not Gabriel come and stopped him, nothing could have saved Israel. (B.T. Sanhedrin 96a)

Gabriel also guarantees punishment to the traitors of Israel. Note the following passage in B.T. Sanhedrin 26a-b, in which Shebna, Hezekiah's chamberlain, suffers humiliation and pain by the hands of the Assyrians because of Gabriel's intervention:

'He will violently roll and toss thee like a ball into a large country' (Isaiah 22:18). It has been taught: He (Shebna), sought the shame of his master's house; therefore, his own glory was turned to shame, 'Thou shame of the Lord's house' (Ibid). For when he went out (on his way to surrender to Sennacherib), Gabriel came and shut the city gate in the face of his servants (who were following him). Upon being asked: Where are your followers? He answered: They have deserted me. Then you were merely ridiculing us, the Assyrians exclaimed. So they bored holes through his heels, tied him to the tails of their horses, and dragged him over thorns and thistles.<sup>27</sup>

Gabriel directly punishes Israel's enemies, and the rabbis demonstrate the keenness of their imaginations as they describe the

punishments rendered:

'And the Lord sent an angel, which cut off all the men of valour, and the leaders and princes in the camp of the King of Assyria' (II Chronicles 32:21). Wherewith did he (the angel) smite them? Rabbi Eliezer says: He smote them with his hand, as it is written, 'And Israel saw the great hand' (Exodus 14:31), implying the hand that was destined to exact vengeance on Sennacherib. Rabbi Joshua says: 'He smote them with his finger, as it is written, 'Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh: This is the finger of God' (Exodus 8:14), implying this is the finger destined to punish Sennacherib'. Rabbi Eliezer, the son of Rabbi Jose, says: The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Gabriel: Is thy sickle sharpened (to mow down the Assyrians)? He replied: Sovereign of the Universe! It has been sharpened since the six days of Creation, as it is written, 'For they fled from the swords, from the sharpened sword' (Isaiah 21:15). Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai says: It was the time for the ripening of fruits, so the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Gabriel: When thou goest forth to ripen the fruits, attack them, as it is written, 'As he passeth he shall take you: for morning by morning shall he pass by, by day and by night, and it shall be a sheer terror to understand the report' (Isaiah 28:19) ...Others say, he, (Gabriel) breathed into their nostrils, and they died, as it is written, 'And he shall also blow upon them, and shall wither' (Isaiah 40:24). Rabbi Jeremiah b. Abba says: He smote his hands at them, and they died, as it is written, 'I will also smite mine hands together, and I will cause my fury to rest (Ezekiel 21:22). Rabbi Isaac the Smith says: He unsealed their ears for them, so that they heard the Hayyot sing (praises to God), and they died, as it is written, 'At Thine exaltation the people were scattered' (Isaiah 33:3). (B.T. Sanhedrin 95b)<sup>28</sup>

Gabriel plants the seeds of Israel's destruction because Israel yields to corruption, and becomes a traitor to her own cause. Gabriel's act is indirect but has long-term consequences. The midrash indicates that Israel suffers because she worships other gods and adopts cultic and social practices of other nations:

Rab Judah says in Samuel's name: When Solomon married Pharaoh's daughter, she brought him a thousand musical instruments and said to him, These we play in honour of that idol, those in the honour of that idol, yet he did not forbid her. Rab Judah says in Samuel's name: When Solomon married Pharaoh's daughter, Gabriel descended and planted a reed in the sea (variation: the Red Sea), and it gathered a bank of sand around it upon which the great city of Rome was built. In a Baraita, it was taught: On the day that Jereboam brought the two golden calves, one into Bethel and the other into Dan, a hut was built and this developed into Greek-Italy-Magna Graecia. (B.T. Shabbat 56b)<sup>29</sup>

The midrash cautions Israel that what may appear to be a minor transgression is likely to have far-reaching and dangerous consequences. By submitting to human weakness and the lure of the unknown, Israel brings on her own subjugation. Israel's judgement is evident in the results of her actions, and Gabriel is the catalyst of that judgement.

Gabriel punished Israel directly as well. In Ezekiel 9:22ff, God instructs the man clothed in linen to walk through Jerusalem and mark the foreheads of the righteous with a "נ", so they would escape death by the hands of the angels of destruction. The midrash basically repeats the biblical account, and adds a few details. Some texts state that he marked a "נ" with ink on the foreheads of the righteous to repel the angels of destruction, and a "נ" of blood on the foreheads of the wicked in order to incite the angels of destruction. While Gabriel acts upon God's orders, and judges Israel based upon God's criteria, his role and image is still one of a fearful, harsh judge. Note the following illustration:

For Rabbi Aha b. Rabbi Hanina says: Never did a favorable word, (literally, 'a good attribute') go forth from the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be He, of which he retracted for evil, save the following, where it is written; 'And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark

(  $\aleph$  ) upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for all the abomination that be done in the midst thereof' (Ezekiel 9:1). The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Gabriel: Go out and set a " $\aleph$ " of ink upon the foreheads of the righteous, that the destroying angels may have no power over them. Said the Attribute of Justice before the Holy One, blessed be He: Sovereign of the Universe! Wherein are these different from those? Those are completely righteous men, while these are completely wicked, replied He. Sovereign of the Universe, it continued, they had the power to protest but did not. If it was revealed and known (fully) to them, then had they protested the wicked would not have heeded them. Sovereign of the Universe, said he, If it was revealed to Thee, was it revealed to them? Hence it is written, 'Slay utterly the old man, the young man and the maiden, and little children and women, but come not near any man upon whom is the mark, and begin at My sanctuary. Then they began at the elders which were before the house' (Ezekiel 9:6). Rabbi Joseph remarks: Read not ' $\aleph$   $\aleph$   $\aleph$ ', but ' $\aleph$   $\aleph$   $\aleph$ ', (My sanctified ones): This refers to the people who fulfilled the Torah from aleph- " $\aleph$ ", to " $\aleph$ ." (B.T. Shabbat 55a)<sup>30</sup>

The midrash further elaborates upon the "burning coals" theme found in Ezekiel 10, in which God orders the man in white linen to "go in between the wheel work (of the chariot), even under the cherub, and fill both thy hands with coals of fire from between the cherubim, and dash them against the city." The rabbis describe Gabriel's impatience with Israel as he waits for them to repent, and they contrast him with God. Even though God gives orders to destroy Israel, he suspends the orders as he mercifully awaits Israel's repentance. Gabriel's eagerness to punish Israel for her sins is offset by God's gentleness and concern for every righteous individual:

Rabbi Johanan says in the name of Rabbi Simon ben Yohai: Every place in which it is said in Scripture: 'And he said, and he said (twice),' one can only interpret. 'And he spoke unto the man clothed in linen, and said' (Ezekiel 10:2) What did the Holy One, blessed be He, say?

He said to the angel and the angel said to the cherub, even though the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded me (to take the coals), I cannot enter (do not have permission to enter) before your partition, rather do me an act of kindness, and give me (two) coals of yours; 'and took thereof, and put it into the hands' (Ezekiel 10:7). What does it 'and took and put' mean? Rabbi Pinhas says: they cooled them and placed them in his palm. Rabbi Joshua of Sikhnin in the name of Rabbi Levi says: For six years Gabriel kept the almost-extinguished coals in his hands. He reasoned that Israel would repent, but they did not, and when they did not repent, he sought to dash the coals upon Israel with fury. The Holy One, blessed be He, called out: Gabriel, Gabriel, gently, gently, there are those among them who are righteous with one another, as it is said in Scripture, 'And there appeared in the cherubim the form of a man's hand under their wings' (Ezekiel 10:8). (Midrash Samuel 24:8)<sup>31</sup>

While the traditions vary with regard to the length of time which Gabriel waited (2,3, to 6 years), the rabbis' perspective is certain. In Midrash Tanhuma haNidpas - Tazriah 12, the same theme is employed to interpret Psalm 5:5; "For Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness". The text explicitly reinforces the concept of God's distance from evil:

'For Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness.' Behold, the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, is not mentioned regarding evil. And thus you find that when the angels of destruction came to destroy Jerusalem, as it is said, 'And behold, six men came' (Ezekiel 9:2), the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Gabriel: Fill both thy hands with coals of fire from between the cherubim, and dash them against the city, as it is written, 'and He spoke unto the man clothed in linen' (Ibid. 10:2). Gabriel came and stood beside the wheel. The Cherub said to him: What do you desire? Gabriel said to him: God commanded me to do so and so. He said: Take them. Then Gabriel said: Place them in my hand, 'and the cherub stretched forth his hand from between the cherubim' (Ibid. 10:7). Rabbi Johanan says in the name of Rabbi Simon ben Yohai, Do you not mean to say that if the

coals had not cooled off (as they passed) from the cherub's hand to Gabriel's hand, that no remnant or survivor from the 'enemies of Israel' (Israel) would remain? And the Holy One, blessed be He, does not want to do evil by His own hands, but rather by the hands of an angel. However, in the future, He will do goodness and mercy by His own hands. As it is said in Scripture, 'And I will sprinkle pure water upon you' (Ezekiel 36:25). Behold, 'For Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness'. (Psalm 5:5)

Gabriel's title and role is threatened because he disobeys God. Elaborations upon the burning coals theme appear in B.T. Yoma 77a in which God tells Michael that Israel has sinned by worshipping the sun (Ezekiel 8:16), and Michael pleads with God not to destroy Israel for the sake of the righteous in her midst. However, God's anger overcomes him and he vows to annihilate all of Israel. Thus he instructs Gabriel, the man in linen, to destroy Israel (Ezekiel 10:2-7). However, Gabriel is punished by God for not executing His command completely, and Gabriel loses his position to Dobiel, the guardian prince of Persia. Gabriel is not only reluctant to annihilate Israel, he also pleads for Israel. Subsequently, he is restored to his position. The midrash intimates that although Gabriel is able to avert destruction while being the agent of it, he is unable to save Israel from Greece. Thus, the image of Gabriel is ambivalent. He is portrayed here as the reluctant angel of destruction, and God appears as the zealous Lord of wrath. Yet, the underlying intention is to highlight God's absolute power over angels. God is the only judge of both justice and mercy. The angels may not make judgements themselves; they are only permitted to enact God's judgements. The angel's expression and pleas for mercy are of no avail, and he is caught in a double-bind situation; he simply cannot win. The following illustration is found in B.T. Yoma 77a:

Rabbi Hana b. Bizna says in the name of Rabbi Simon the Pious: Were it not for the fact that the coals of the hand of the cherub became cold in the hands of Gabriel, there would not have been any left over from the 'enemies of Israel', one to remain or one to

escape, for it is written, 'And behold the man clothed in linen, who had the inkhorn on his side, reported, saying, I have done according to all that Thou hast commanded me' (Ezekiel 9:2). Rabbi Johanan says: In that hour, Gabriel was led out from behind the curtain and received forty fiery strokes, and he was told: If you had not executed the command at all, well you simply would not have executed it. But since you did execute it, why did you not do as you were commanded (and fetch the coals yourself, rather than asking the cherubs for them)? Furthermore: Do you not know that one brings no report about mischief? Thereupon Dobiel, the guardian angel of the Persians, was brought in and placed in his stead, and he officiated for twenty-one days. This is what is written: 'But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days; but lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I was left over there beside the Kings of Persia (Daniel 10:13). Twenty-one provinces and the port of Mashmahig were given to him. Thereupon he said: Put down for me Israel for the poll-tax! They did so. When they were about to sign, Gabriel came forth from behind the curtain and said: It is vain for you that ye rise early, and sit up late, ye that eat the bread of toil, so He giveth unto His beloved in sleep' (Psalm 127:2). No attention was paid to him. He said before Him: Lord of the Universe, if all the wise men of other nations were in one scale of the balance, and Daniel, the man of pleasant parts, in the other, would he not be found to outweigh them all? The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Who is it that pleads the merit of My children? They replied: Lord of the Universe, it is Gabriel. He said: Let him come in, as it is written, 'and I am come (in) because of thy words (Daniel 10:12). Having commanded that, they brought him in. Gabriel noticed that Dobiel held the document in his hand, and he wanted to take it from him, but the latter swallowed it. Some say it was also signed, but as Dobiel swallowed it, the signature was blotted out. Hence there are some people in the kingdom of Persia who are obliged to pay poll-tax, while others are free from it. 'And when I go forth, lo the prince of Greece shall come' (Daniel 10:20).<sup>32</sup> Gabriel cried and cried and none minded him.

Therefore, Gabriel as well as Michael is portrayed in a manner that magnifies God's power and affirms that God is the ultimate Judge meting out due reward and punishment. While the angels may challenge God's decisions, they do not possess the independence or power to effect change without the sanction of God.

### C. Michael and Gabriel: Cohorts and Rivals

Michael and Gabriel constitute a dynamic pair, either they function as a team or they act as rivals. The rivalry is a result of both their polar natures and the rabbis' ascription of superiority of one in relation to the other. While Gabriel is referred to as a man and a manifestation of God's anger and punishment, he may not be perceived of in as positive a light as is Michael. Ginzberg remarks that "although in Jewish angelology Michael is superior to Gabriel, so that he alone bears the title 'prince,' one must not fail to note that, at least among Babylonian Jews, Gabriel's prestige almost equals that of his rival, Michael."<sup>33</sup> Nonetheless, while Gabriel appears more active and more often in the midrash, Michael maintains his superior status. The two angels complement one another; one is of fire and fearsome, while the other is of snow and is merciful. Despite their opposing natures, they do not harm one another, because God makes peace in the heavenly hierarchy:

Rabbi Levi says: Michael is completely made of snow, and Gabriel is completely made of fire. Although they stand next to one another, they do not injure one another. (Deuteronomy Rabbah 5:12)

Michael and Gabriel consult and rely upon one another, as they endeavor to execute God's will. Like the sages, they discuss and argue over difficulties in the Torah:

It is written, 'And I will make thy pinnacles of Kadkod' (Job 40:29). 'Bind (Kadkod) refers

to a small object, such as an amulet, which one attaches or binds to a string. Rabbi Samuel ben Nahmani says: There is a dispute (regarding the meaning of Kadkod) between two angels in heaven, Michael and Gabriel. Others say: (The dispute is between) two amoraim in the West (Palestine). (B.T. Baba Batra 75a)

While they work together, sometimes they function in different roles which suggests their status:

'Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said unto that certain ( *'jinn* ) one who spoke' (Daniel 8:13). Who is 'that certain one?' Rabbi Johanan says he is Michael, for he stands before God. Rabbi Hanina says he is Gabriel, the one who speaks for Israel, for he would say 'How long shall be the vision concerning the continual burnt offering?' (Daniel 8:13). (Midrash Tanhuma Buber Genesis 23)

According to Rabbi Hanina, Michael only stands before God, while Gabriel is an interpreter for Israel. However, the text from B.T. Berakhot 4b explicitly discusses Michael's superiority over Gabriel as a function of Michael's greater achievement:

'The Lord upholdeth all that fall' (Psalm 145: 14). Rabbi Eliezer b. Abina said furthermore: Greater is (the achievement) ascribed to Michael than that ascribed to Gabriel. For of Michael it is written, 'Then flew unto me one of the Seraphim' (Isaiah 6:6). Whereas of Gabriel it is written, 'The man Gabriel whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly in flight' (Daniel 9:21). How do you know that this 'one' (of the seraphim) means Michael? Rabbi Johanan says: By an analogy from (the words) 'one', 'one'. Here it is written, 'Then flew unto me one of the Seraphim;' and in another place it is written, 'But lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to me' (Ibid). A Tanna teaches, Michael (reaches his goal) in one (flight), Gabriel in two, Elijah in four and the Angel of Death in eight.

In B.T. Yoma 37a, Gabriel is even described as the greatest disciple of his teacher Michael:

It is taught: Of three walking along, the teacher should walk in the middle, the greater of his disciples to his right, the smaller one at his left. And thus we find that of the three angels who came to visit Abraham, Michael went in the middle, Gabriel at his right and Raphael at his left.

Both Michael and Gabriel compete for an involved role in the messianic future. One view posits that Michael and Gabriel will share that role; they both will execute God's will in the world to come. Rabbi Judah, the Prince, however, believes that Michael will achieve this alone, because of his title and significance for Israel:

Just as the Holy One, blessed be He, acts through the hands of Michael and Gabriel in this world, He will also act through their power in the messianic future, as it is said in Scripture, 'And saviors shall come up on Mount Zion to judge the Mount of Esau' (Obadiah 1:21). Rabbenu (Rabbi Judah the Patriarch) says: It refers to Michael alone, as it is said, 'And at that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people' (Daniel 12:1). For he claims the needs of Israel and he speaks concerning them, as it is said, 'Then the angel of the Lord spoke and said: O Lord of hosts, how long wilt Thou not have compassion on Jerusalem?' (Zechariah 1:12). (Exodus Rabbah 18:5)

The following midrash from Yalkut Shimoni II:429 espouses the first view presented in the previously cited midrash. Despite Michael's alleged superiority to Gabriel with regard to his rank and role, they equally participate in releasing anguished, repentant souls from Gehinnom. Indeed, although Michael is noted for being a psychomp, both archangels serve in expressing God's mercy for Jews who repent and for righteous Gentiles. This messianic midrash is especially moving, because of the individualized care Michael and Gabriel render

to each soul:

And even the wicked of Israel and the righteous of the idolators who remain in Gehinnom answer and say 'Amen' from the midst of Gehinnom and shake the world until the Holy One, blessed be He, hears the voice of their cries. He asks: What is the sound of the great commotion I heard? The ministering angels reply and say before Him: Master of the Universe, these are the evil-doers of Israel and the righteous of the idolators who remain in Gehinnom and answer 'Amen' and declare God's judgement as right and true. Immediately, the compassion of the Holy One, blessed be He, is greatly moved regarding them, and He says: What shall I do for them more than this justice? Already the evil inclination caused this for them! At that time, the Holy One, blessed be He, takes the key of Gehinnom in His hand and He gives it to Michael and Gabriel, before all the righteous, and He says to them: Go and open the gates of Gehinnom and bring them up. Immediately, they went, carrying the keys, and they open eight thousand doors of Gehinnom...and each and every evil-doer who fell into it (Gehinnom) could not rise again. What did Michael and Gabriel do? At that time, they clutch the hand of each and every one of them and they bring each one up, like a man who makes his friend stand erect and pulls him up from a hole with a rope, as it is said, 'He brought me up also out of the tumultuous pit' (Psalm 40:3). And they stand over (guard) the repentant souls, and at that time they wash and count them and heal them from their wounds of Gehinnom, and they clothe them in lovely garments. Then the archangels bring them before the Holy One, blessed be He, and before all the righteous, as if they are priests and greatly honored, and when they enter the opening of the Garden of Eden, Michael and Gabriel enter first and ask permission from the Holy One, blessed be He, (for them to enter). The Holy One, blessed be He, responds and says to them: Set them at rest and let them enter, so that they will see My Glory. And when they enter, they fall upon their faces and prostrate themselves before Him and bless and praise the name of God.

Therefore, both archangels command greater stature than the mass of ministering angels, although Michael is generally ascribed a higher

status than Gabriel. While Michael receives greater respect, he is far less active than Gabriel, and is often portrayed as incapable of fulfilling his appointed missions. This is probably the result of the efforts to circumscribe the expression of Michael's character trait of mercy. Gabriel, the man clothed in linen, actively represents and executes God's judgement. His destructive role serves to distance God from worldly evil, and to highlight God's all-encompassing mercy without usurping the role of judge. Though some midrashim explicitly discuss the rivalry between Michael and Gabriel, and discuss their relative status, they frequently function as a team; equal partners fulfilling the mission and will of God.

CHAPTER IV

THE FUNCTION AND STATUS OF ANGELS IN BIBLICAL NARRATIVES

The rabbis integrate angelology into the flow of biblical narratives. They use angels in their explanations of textual difficulties and they identify the angels mentioned in the narrative. Angels generally serve as catalysts for human actions; they move the story forward. The angels are usually supportive of the protagonists of an episode, and they intervene when an antagonist plots against Israel.

While angels effect changes in human lives, they are not necessarily superior to righteous mortals. The angels possess supernatural powers and interact directly with God, but some rabbis, like Rabbi Johanan, posit that the righteous are superior to angels even though human beings are subject to the evil inclination.<sup>1</sup> Thus the angels are portrayed as trembling in the presence of such great figures as Abraham and Moses.

A midrash from Exodus Rabbah 25:8 demonstrates that the rabbis do conceive of a hierarchy of holiness. God distributes fruit from the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden. Before "eating", a blessing must be recited, but the responsibility and honor is respectfully deferred to the most appropriate personage. Note that the ministering angels are not included, but only God's "right and left-hand men."

God brings their fruit from the Garden of Eden and He has them eat from the Tree of Life. And who shall bless first, for everyone must pay respect to the Holy One, blessed be He, who commands that one must bless. The Holy One, blessed be He, says to Michael: Bless, and

he says to Gabriel, and Gabriel says this to the Patriarchs of the World, and they defer to (give the honor) Moses and Aaron, and they defer to the Elders, and they pay respects to David and they say: The king who is on earth shall bless the King of the heavens.

Interestingly, God, Michael and Gabriel command others to bless, while the righteous mortals defer and pay their respects to a member in the hierarchy who is of less stature in holiness. It seems as if the degree of holiness in angels and men is commensurate with the degree of their humility. Nonetheless, Michael and Gabriel remain on the top rungs of the holy ladder.

Michael and Gabriel appear in midrashim concerning the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and members of their families, Sarah, Lot, Joseph, Judah and Tamar. They also are portrayed as accompanying Moses at his death, insuring the joyous outcome in the book of Esther, and protecting Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah from the ravages of the fire to which Nebuchadnezzar condemned them.

#### A. The Angels and Abraham

The angels appear throughout Abraham's life, and particularly during his ten trials which are colorfully described in Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer.<sup>2</sup> During Abraham's fifth trial, Abimelech takes Sarah, and Michael prevents Abimelech from impregnating her. Once Sarah is safe, Abraham prays to God to restore fertility and many children to Abimelech and his household:

And everything is foreseen by the Holy One, blessed be He, and Abimelech sent and took Sarah, thinking to raise up children from her, as it is said, 'And Abimelech sent, and took Sarah' (Genesis 20:2). And Abimelech became impotent, and all the women of the house became barren, even to the smallest insect (which also became) barren, as it is said, 'For the Lord had fast closed up all the wombs

of the house of Abimelech' (Ibid.18). And the angel Michael descended and drew his sword against him. Abimelech said to him: Is this a true judgement and a true sentence to slay me as long as I had no knowledge? 'Wilt thou slay even a righteous nation?' (Ibid.4). He said unto him, 'Restore the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee and thou shalt live' (Ibid.7) ...Abraham arose and prayed before the Holy One, blessed be He, and said before Him: Sovereign of all the worlds! Thou has created the whole world to increase and multiply, and let Abimelech and all the females of his household increase and multiply. The Holy One, blessed be He, was entreated of him, as it is said, 'And Abraham prayed unto God, and God healed Abimelech and his wife, and his maid-servants; and they bare children' (Ibid.17). (Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer, Chapter 26)<sup>3</sup>

Michael significantly intervenes in the situation, but he does not serve as an intercessor for Abraham, Sarah or Abimelech. The rabbis make Michael God's vehicle of action in order to explain Abimelech's dream in which God threatens his life. This tendency may reflect the desire to avoid anthropomorphism or the fact that the rabbis felt that God should not directly communicate with a gentile king, and that it is more appropriate that Israel's guardian angel appear to Abimelech. Thus, the midrash stresses Abraham's direct relationship and communication with God, while Abimelech is only permitted to know God's will through the agency of an angel.

The rabbis consider the three strangers who visit Abraham in Genesis 18 to be Michael, Gabriel and Raphael:

Who were the three men (visiting Abraham)? Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. Michael came to bring the tidings to Sarah (of Isaac's birth); Raphael to heal Abraham (from his circumcision); and Gabriel to turn over Sodom. (B.T. Baba Metzia 86b)

In a similar midrash found in Genesis Rabbah 50:2, Raphael is ascribed a different role; note that Michael is to affirm Israel's

future generations, while Gabriel is sent on a mission of destruction. Their respective roles are typical of their nature and function. The midrash tries to reconcile two biblical verses with regard to the number and kinds of beings which appear to Abraham and Lot. In Genesis 18:2, three men stood over against Abraham, while in Genesis 19:1 two angels are reported to have come to Sodom:

'And the two angels came' (Genesis 19:1). 'But He is at one with Himself, and who can turn Him? And what His soul desireth, even that He doeth' (Job 23:13). A Tanna teaches: One angel does not make two missions, and two angels do not share one mission (together). But you say 'two,' rather Michael announced his tidings and left, Gabriel was sent to overturn Sodom and Raphael (was sent) to save Lot. 'And the two angels came'...And thus you say 'angels,' and above you say 'men', however, above, the Shekhina was behind (upon the back of) the men; but when the Shekhina departed from their presence, they dressed as angels. Rabbi Levi says, to Abraham, whose strength was good, they appeared in the image of men. But Lot, because his strength was bad, they appeared to him as angels.

This midrash teaches that God's Shekhina is present among the righteous, as well as amongst circumstances of joyful tidings. Hence, the angels have no need to identify themselves. God's presence departs in the midst of the wicked, and He sends His emissaries to execute His will, Gabriel being the agent of God's justice here. Indirectly, the midrash indicates that God is removed from worldly evil and is active in the goodness of human experience. The degree of Abraham's righteousness is illustrated by the angels' reaction to him. As Michael and Gabriel approach Abraham to announce that a son would be born to him, they are so intimidated by his stature and piety that "Michael trembles and Gabriel trembles," according to Genesis Rabbah 48:14.<sup>4</sup>

With regard to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the 'escapee' who informs Abraham of the annihilation is identified

as Michael by the rabbis. In order to explain why Michael is a *C'ido*, one who escapes, the midrash in Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer, Chapter 37, presents an excellent example of the rivalry between Michael and Sammael in the sixth trial of Abraham:

The sixth trial was (when) all the kings came against him (Abraham) to slay him. They said: Let us first begin with the house of his brother, and afterwards let us turn to him. On account of Lot, they took all (the wealth of) Sodom and Gomorrah, as it is said, 'And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah' (Genesis 14:11). Afterwards, they took Lot captive, and all his wealth, as it is said, 'And they took Lot...and (all) his goods' (Ibid.12). Michael came and told Abraham, as it is said, 'And there came one who had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew' (Ibid.13). He (Michael) is the prince of the world, he was the one who told, as it is said, 'Curse not the king, no, not in thy thought...and he who hath wings shall tell the matter' (Ecclesiastes 10:20). Why was his name called 'Palit' (one who had escaped)? Because in the hour when the Holy One, blessed be He, caused Sammael and the band to descend from heaven from their holy place, he caught hold of the wings of Michael to make him fall with him. But the Holy One, blessed be He, saved him from his power, therefore was his name called 'the one who had escaped'.

Michael's power is inferior to Sammael's strength in the midrash above, and only God is able to save him; he cannot help himself. Similarly, at the scene of his greatest trial, the binding of Isaac, Abraham does not acknowledge the authority of Michael's message which was directed to him. Abraham is only willing to listen to the angel who speaks directly in the name of God when he is performing a duty commanded by God Himself:

'For through Isaac shall generations be called to thee' (Genesis 21:12); and 'My covenant will I establish with Isaac' (Genesis 17:21). And behold, the slaughtering knife was upon his neck and the ministering angels cried, and their tears fell upon the knife until it stood erect and it did not have the power to cut Isaac's neck. Immediately, his soul fled. The Holy One,

blessed be He, said to Michael: Why are you standing around? Are you not going to prevent him from slaughtering him (Isaac)? Immediately, Michael called to Abraham and he said, 'Abraham, Abraham.' Why did he call out two times? Because Abraham our forefather was making haste, and the angel commanded like a man commands, and says, sir, sir, what are you doing? 'Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him' (Genesis 22:12). Abraham said to the angel: The Holy One, blessed be He, told me to sacrifice him. (These are) the words of the Master, and (these are) the words of the pupil. To whose words does one listen? Immediately, an angel of the Lord called out (from the heavens) to Abraham a second time. 'By Myself, have I sworn, saith the Lord'... (Genesis 22:16). Immediately, he (Isaac) was set at rest and his soul returned to him. He stood on his feet and he blessed: Blessed are You, the one who brings life to the dead. Then Abraham lifted his eyes to the heavens and he said, Master of the Universe, in the hour when my children stand in sorrow, you will remind them of this hour when I stand before you. (Midrash VaYosha)<sup>5</sup>

Michael's status is clearly indicated. His message holds no authority, and he speaks to Abraham like a man. His relationship to God is like that of a pupil and his Master, and Abraham was unwilling to take orders from anyone lower than God. Interestingly, Michael is not mentioned again or necessarily identified as the angel of the Lord. While one might assume it is Michael, the rabbis' intention is clear. Michael, as an independent character is unimportant in such a situation; only when he is the spokesman for God, is he significant for Abraham, or any Jew.

#### B. The Angels and Jacob

Michael and Gabriel appear at various junctures in Jacob's life. Jacob is ascribed a lesser status than Abraham with regard to his righteousness. In contrast to Abraham, Jacob approaches his

trials and confrontations with great fear. The angels appear to have greater power than Jacob and they help him to face his experiences with courage and strength.

Michael and Gabriel aid in the transfer of the birthright from Esau to Jacob. The rabbis portray them as setting up the circumstances, and that this event was a result of the angels' creative jesting of which God approved. The midrash is based upon a verse from Isaiah (21:5): "They prepare the table, they light the lamps, they eat, they drink - Rise up, ye princes, annoint the shield." Note this midrash, which is found in Genesis Rabbah 63:14:

'Rise up, ye princes!' These are Michael and Gabriel. 'Anoint the shield' means that they were writing the birthright for Jacob. Bar Kappara teaches: Because they were playing (jesting). And from whence do we know that the Holy One, blessed be He, agreed with them? As it is said, 'Thus saith the Lord: Israel is My son, My first-born' (Exodus 4:22).

Jacob also requires assistance from the archangels when he meets with Isaac to receive the blessing of the firstborn. When Isaac asks to touch Jacob's hand, God and the two angels give full support to frightened Jacob:

Rabbi Joshua says: When he (Isaac) says: 'Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee' (Genesis 27:21), his (Jacob's) body trembled and bent like soft wax. What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He said to two angels, His divine assistants, Michael and Gabriel, that Michael should be a support at (Jacob's) right, and Gabriel at his left, and He, in His glory, may His Name be blessed, supports him from the back. And He said to him: Jacob, why are you afraid and why does your body shake? I, God, and those at My side are (here) to help you and give support to you, yet you are afraid! As it is said, 'Fear thou not, for I am with thee, Be not dismayed, for I

am your God; I strengthen you, yea, I help you; yea, I uphold you with My victorious right hand' (Isaiah 41:10). Do not fear - because I am with you. And do not let your body tremble - for I am with you; and do not be dismayed because I am your God, I strengthen you through Michael and I also help you through Gabriel and I also support you with My victorious right hand. (Midrash Tanhuma Buber, Toledot 15)<sup>6</sup>

In this text, the angels are simply assistants to God, and the midrash focuses upon God's direct concern for Jacob. In the following midrash, Jacob flees from Laban's home, and, similar to the incident with Michael and Abimelech, Michael protects Jacob by threatening Laban in a dream. While God may seek direct interaction with Jacob, Michael relates to lesser men through dreams:

Rabbi Eliezer also says: Jacob fled in order to come to Laban, and he fled to get away from Laban. Why did he flee? Because the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: Jacob! I cannot suffer my Shekhina to dwell with thee outside the land, but 'return unto the land of the fathers, and to thy kindred, and I will be with thee' (Genesis 31:3). Therefore, he fled. And Laban took all the men of his city, mighty men, and he pursued after him, seeking to slay him. The angel Michael descended, and drew his sword behind him, seeking to slay him. He said to him (Laban): Do not speak to Jacob, either good or bad, as it is said, 'And God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream of the night and said unto him, 'Take heed to thyself that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad'' (Genesis 31:24). (Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer, Chapter 36)

Michael also is identified as the one who battles Jacob at the Jabbok:

And when the Holy One, blessed be He, saw that Jacob was afraid, He sent Michael to make strife with him. What did the angel do?

He appeared in the image of a shepherd, as it is said, 'And there wrestled a man with him...and when he saw that he prevailed not against him...and he said, let me go.' (Genesis 32:25-27). (Midrash Tanhuma Buber, Va-Yishlach 7)

Michael seems to be on the staff of God's assertiveness training program for Jacob. His purpose here is to help Jacob recognize the extent of his own strength so he would not fear Esau. Similarly, God, Michael and Gabriel offer the same support to Jacob when Isaac blessed him in the passage in Midrash Tanhuma Buber Va-Yishlach 6. The Holy Spirit warns Jacob that, "If thou faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small indeed" (Proverbs 24:10). While Jacob's strength does not fail him, he must give credit to the heavenly trio who literally, though invisibly, hold him up as he encounters Esau.

In Yalkut Shimoni, I:132, an elaborate midrash explains the origin of Michael's association with Israel. While Michael wants to bolster Jacob's confidence, Michael must attend to his own needs and duties during his meeting with Jacob at the Jabbok:

'There wrestled a man with him.' Some say he was Michael. Michael said to him (Jacob): And who am I? I am one of the chief princes. And you even do this to me, yet you fear Esau! Rabbi Tarphon says, Michael did not have permission to move from his place until Jacob gave him permission, for he said, 'let me go for the day breaketh' (Genesis 32:27). And Jacob said to him: Can it really be that you are a thief or a stealer of souls and that you fear the dawn? And bands of ministering angels came and said to Michael: Come up, for the time to sing praises has arrived, and say, if you do not open (begin) in song, the song will be considered worthless. He began to make explanations to Jacob. He said: Please, I beg of you, let me go so that the ministering angels in heaven will not burn me because of my hindering the song (praising God) from being sung! Jacob said to him, 'I will not let thee go, except thou bless me' (Ibid.). And he said to him: and which of

these is dearer, the sun or the son? I am the sun, and you are the son, and you must bless me? He said to him: Nevertheless, bless me. Immediately, he said to him: 'Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel' (Ibid. 29). He said to him: I shall praise you who is born of a woman, for she enters the palace of heaven and she is saved... Rabbenu says, 'At the time when they were wrestling, one of Michael's bands (of angels) wanted to put him in danger, but the Holy One, blessed be He, saw that his (Michael's) strength failed, as it is said, 'And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh' (Ibid. 26). The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Michael: Very nice, what you did ...that you made My priest blemished. Michael said to Him: Master of the Universe! Am I not Your priest? He said to him: You are My priest in the heavens, and he is My priest on earth. Immediately, Michael called to Raphael, and he said to him: My friend, I beg of you, support me in my trouble, for you are the superintendent of healing, and Raphael descended...The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Michael: Why did you do this to My son, My firstborn? He said before Him: I did it for Your honor! He (God) said to him: From now on, you shall be the guardian (superintendent) for him and for his seed until the end of all generations, as it is written, 'Except Michael, and at that time, Michael, the great prince, shall stand' (Daniel 11:13; 12:1). For who is a great nation, shall become great and shall stand for for greatness. And you are fire, as it is written, 'And the house of Jacob shall be a fire' (Obadiah 1:18), and it will become fire and stand for fire. And you are the chief of the ministering angels and he is the highest, as it is said, 'that the Lord thy God will set thee on high' (Deuteronomy 28:1); and he shall become the highest, and you will seek from the Highest mercy upon them, as it is written, 'For one higher than the high watcheth, and they are higher than they' (Ecclesiastes 5:7). And he (Michael) blessed him there. He said to him: May it be the Lord's will that your children will be as righteous as you.

Michael is similar to Jacob in that both reveal their positive and negative character traits. In this midrash, Jacob reveals his fear as well as his mastery over his wrestling opponent. Michael is portrayed as a very colorful personality here: he must account to

Jacob for his behavior, as well as to the ministering angels, to fellow archangel Raphael, and to God, and he is frequently caught in a double-bind situation. Thus, Michael and Jacob become suitably matched partners in an eternal association.

By law, Jacob must tithe his possessions of cattle and children. He counts Levi as his tenth son. Michael, portrayed as the heavenly priest, presents Jacob's tithing of his son, Levi, to God. Appropriately, the heavenly priest vouches for the priesthood on earth:

Michael, the angel, descended and took Levi and brought him before the Throne of Glory, and he spoke before Him: Sovereign of all the Universe! This is Your lot and the portion of Your works (tithes). And He put forth His right hand and blessed him, that the sons of Levi should minister on earth before Him, like the ministering angels in heaven. Michael spoke before the Holy One, blessed be He: Sovereign of all worlds! Do not such who serve the king have provision of their food given to them? Therefore, He gave to the sons of Levi all holy things which accrue to His Name, as it is said, 'They shall eat the offerings of the Lord made by fire, and his inheritance' (Deuteronomy 18:1). (Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer, Chapter 37)

#### C. The Angels and Joseph

While Michael's presence is predominant in Jacob's life, Gabriel appears most frequently in Joseph's life. Gabriel's actions comprise the reason for the events Joseph experiences.

Gabriel is identified as the man Joseph meets in the fields around Shechem.<sup>7</sup> He is so identified because Gabriel, according to the book of Daniel, is a great and wise advisor:

'And a certain man found him' (Genesis 37:15). Three angels appeared to him. 'And a certain man found him...and the man asked him' (Ibid.).

And the man said: They went to Dothan, (ד'ת'ת), for they are the portions (ל'חלקן) of the Holy One, blessed be He. 'And a certain man found him' -this is Gabriel the angel, as it is said, 'The man Gabriel' (Daniel 8:16) who is full of advice. (Yalkut Shimoni I:141)

Gabriel guards Joseph along his perilous journey down to Egypt. In B.T. Sotah 13b, he protects Joseph from the lascivious Potiphar in a most striking manner:

'And Joseph was brought down to Egypt' (Genesis 39:1). Rabbi Eliezer says: Read not 'was brought down', but 'brought down' because he brought Pharaoh's astrologers down from their eminence. 'And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's bought him' (Ibid.). Rab says, He bought for himself (for an immoral purpose, being inflamed by Joseph's beauty), but Gabriel came and castrated him, (officer=eunuch, semantically), and then Gabriel came and mutilated him (perca'), for originally his name is written Potiphar, but afterwards Potiphra (Genesis 44:45).

Gabriel helps Joseph to win the Pharaoh's favor by teaching Joseph the seventy languages which only Gabriel, among all the angels, knows. In B.T. Sotah 33a, it is written, "For a master has declared, Gabriel came and taught Joseph the seventy languages." Joseph's newly acquired knowledge proves to be important for his service to Pharaoh. The midrash shows how Joseph is superior to Pharaoh due to a little divine assistance and a hint of magic:

Rabbi Hiyya ben Abba says in the name of Rabbi Johanan: At the moment when Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'And without thee shall no man lift up his hand' (Genesis 41:44), Pharaoh's astrologers exclaimed: Wilt thou set in power over us a slave whom his master bought for twenty pieces of silver? He replied to them: I discern in him royal characteristics. They said to him: In that case, he must be acquainted with the seventy languages. Gabriel came and taught (Joseph) the seventy languages, but he could not learn them. Thereupon (Gabriel) added to his name a letter from the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, and he learned (the languages),

as it is said, ' He appointed it in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out over the land of Egypt where (Joseph) heard a language that I knew not' (Psalm 81:6). On the morrow, Joseph could speak in whatever language Pharoah conversed with him, however, Pharoah did not understand Joseph when he spoke in the holy tongue. So he asked him to teach it to him, but he could not learn it. (Pharoah) said to him: Swear to me that thou wilt not reveal this (that he was ignorant of Hebrew) and he swore to him. When Joseph told Pharoah that he swore to his father that he would bury him in Canaan, Pharoah was displeased. But Joseph threatened to divulge the secret of Pharoah's ignorance of Hebrew, and then Pharoah relented. (B.T. Sotah 36b)

Gabriel gives Joseph the tools to survive in his position. Although Pharoah is kind to Joseph, he is not perceived as a highly regarded character here. More importantly, the Hebrew language is illustrated as a safeguard for Jews, and that other nations are not privileged or even intelligent enough to master the holy language.

Joseph marries an Egyptian woman, the daughter of a priest. However, the rabbis, in Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer, Chapter 38, indicate that with Michael's help, Joseph married the illegitimate, albeit Jewish, daughter of Dinah:

Dinah went forth to see those girls who were making merry; and he (Hamor) seized her, and he slept with her and she conceived and bore Asenath. The sons of Israel said that she should be killed, for they said that now people would say in all the land that there was an immoral daughter of Jacob. What did Jacob do? He wrote the Holy Name upon a golden plate, and suspended it about her neck and sent her away. Everything is revealed before the Holy One, blessed be He. And Michael the angel descended and took her, and brought her down to Egypt to the house of Potiphra; because Asenath was destined to become the wife of Joseph. Now the wife of Potiphra was barren, and (Asenath) grew up with her as a daughter. When Joseph came down to Egypt, he married her, as it is said, 'And he gave him to wife Asenath, the daughter of Poti-

phera, priest of On' (Genesis 41:45).

The above midrash is unusual because an illegitimate girl marries above her legal status. Furthermore, her sons inherit great tracts of territory from Jacob, and this is her ultimate victory over the men of Shechem and Joseph's brothers. Certainly, her Jewish identity is the key feature, for it is untenable that Joseph should marry an Egyptian woman. However, Asenath's fortunate fate is nurtured by Jacob's wisdom, Michael's aid and God's approval.

Tamar also is spared great shame, and Michael helps her to insure her reputation and life, as well as the life of her child. She is portrayed as a pious woman, despite her deceptive appearance. Her actions were motivated by a sense of legal justice and a mother's yearning for children:

'When Judah saw her, he thought her to be a harlot, for she covered her face' (Genesis 38:15). However, Rabbi Johanan says that she covered her face until she was inside the house of her father-in-law. The sages say: From this we learn that a man must be able to identify (recognize) his daughter-in-law (or, bride, *יהודה*). Judah said, 'This is a harlot, what do I care about her?' So he walked along his way. When he walked away, she raised her eyes to God, and said before Him: Master of the Universe! Let me bring forth a favor from the body of this righteous man. Immediately, the Holy One, blessed be He, sent Michael and he made him (Judah) turn. And from whence does one know that (he turned)? It is written here, 'And he turned unto her' (Genesis 38:16). And it is written further on, 'And the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way...and the ass turned aside.' (Numbers 22:23). (Midrash Tanhuma Buber, va-Yeshev 13)

Gabriel fights for Tamar's rights against Sammael as she is brought forth to confront the accusations made against her. Note that Gabriel, associated with the house of David, returns to Tamar the symbols of kingship. Thus, Gabriel insures the future of the Davidic house and the messianic line. Unless Tamar is given her "proofs"

of kingship, her potential is prevented from developing:

'When she was brought forth' (Genesis 38:25). Instead of *וּלְבַשְׁתָּ*, the verb should have been *וּלְבַשְׁתָּ (בְּיָדָהּ)*, mitvazeit. Rabbi Eleazar says, The verb in the text implies that after her proofs (the signet, cord and staff) were found, Sammael came and removed them and Gabriel came and restored them. That is what is written, 'For the chief musician, the silent dove of them that afar off of David Michtam' (Psalm 56:1). Rabbi Johanan says, At the time when her proofs were removed, she became like a silent dove. (B.T. Sotah 10b)

#### D. The Angels and Moses

Moses is accompanied by angels from birth to death. They protect him from death when he is a baby, they are present at Mount Sinai, and they lovingly attend him when he dies. Although Michael and Gabriel are the pre-eminent archangels, they are intimidated by Moses' presence and righteousness.

Gabriel guarantees that Pharoah's daughter will follow her instincts to save the baby Moses. He thoroughly prevents her handmaidens from interfering with the divine plan. In this midrash from B.T. Sotah 12b, Pharoah's daughter is assumed to be a proselyte:

'And the daughter of Pharoah came down to bathe at the river' (Exodus 2:5). Rabbi Johanan says in the name of Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai: It teaches that she went down there to cleanse herself of her father's idols, and thus it says, 'When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion' (Isaiah 4:4). 'And her maidens walked along' (Ibid.). Rabbi Johanan says: the word for 'walk' means nothing else than death and thus it says, 'Behold, I am going to die' (Genesis 25:32). 'And she saw the ark among the reeds' (Ibid.). When (the maidens) saw that she wished to rescue Moses, they said to her: Mistress, it is the custom of the world that when a human king makes a decree, though everybody else does not obey it, should

not his children and those serving his household obey it? But thou transgress thy father's decree! Gabriel came and beat them to the ground. 'And sent her handmaid to fetch it' (Ibid.). Rabbi Judah and Rabbi Nehemiah (differ in their interpretation). One says that the word means, 'her hand', and the other says it means her 'her handmaid'. He who said it means her hand did so because it is written, 'וְיָנִיק' (her maid on her arm). He who said that it means her handmaid, did so because the text has not 'וְיָנִיק', (her hand). But according to him who said that it means her handmaid, it has just been stated that Gabriel came and beat them to the ground! He left her one, because it is not customary for a king's daughter to be unattended.

Gabriel even hurts Moses in order to save him. In a tradition found in Exodus Rabbah 1:26, the magicians of Egypt want to devise a plan to kill Moses as a young lad. Jethro suggests a test for Moses, which will mark him for life as a stutterer. Since the magicians fear Moses' abilities and future powers, Jethro tells them his knowledge and common sense. If Moses proved to be dull-witted, he would live, but if he was smart and knowledgeable, he would be killed. They took the lad and brought in a golden dish and a burning coal. He reached for the golden dish, but Gabriel came and pushed Moses' hand away, and he took the burning coal, and placed his (Moses') hand with the burning coal inside his mouth and thus Moses' tongue was injured.

Moses also encounters an angel in his experience with the burning bush. The 'angel of the Lord' appears to Moses in the bush. Although Johanan and Hanina identify the angel by name, Rabbi Jose and Judah the Prince stipulate that Michael's appearance entails the presence of the Shekhina; thus, the specification of the angel becomes less important than the fact that the Divine Presence is there:

'And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him' (Exodus 3:2). Rabbi Johanan says, he is Michael. Rabbi Hanina says, he is Gabriel. Rabbi Jose

says, hereafter, in each place when they see 'angel of the Lord', they should interpret (according to) our Holy Teacher (Judah the Prince). He says that every place in which Michael appears, the glory of the Shekhina also appears. Why does it say 'unto him'? It teaches that men were with him and they did not see (the angel) except for Moses alone, just as it is written in Daniel (9:7), 'And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision.' (Exodus Rabbah 2:5)

Since Moses appears as fearful of God as his people when God gave the ten commandments at Sinai, both Michael and Gabriel are called upon to bring Moses closer to the dark cloud of God:

The voice of the second (commandment) went forth, and they were quickened, and they stood upon their feet and said to Moses: Moses our teacher! We are unable to hear any more of the voice of the Holy One, blessed be He, for we shall die even as we died (just now), as it is said, 'And they said unto Moses, 'Speak, thou, with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die' (Exodus 20:19). And now, why should we die as we died (just now)? The Holy One, blessed be He, heard the voice of Israel, and it was pleasing to Him, and He sent for Michael and Gabriel, and they took hold of the two hands of Moses against his will. and they brought him near unto the thick darkness, as it is said, 'And Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was' (Ibid. 21). (Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer, Chapter 41)

The above midrash implies that Moses was so humble and awed by God that he only approached the dark cloud because Michael and Gabriel led him.

In the following midrash, the two archangels were unable to look Moses in the eyes because of his great righteousness. Yet, Moses' loss of stature was the result of his people's sin and not his individual piety. Only because he was responsible for the guidance of the Israelites, and they failed a test of patience, was

Moses punished.

Rabbi Isaac bar Abin says in the name of Rabbi Hanina: Even God's intermediary suffered from Israel's sin (speaking of the time of the revelation at Sinai, Scripture says): 'Kings of (heavenly) hosts do flee, do flee' (Psalm 68:13). The text, as Rabbi Judan points out in the name of Rabbi Aibu, does not say, 'angels of heavenly hosts', that is to say, at that time, kings of heavenly kings, even Michael, even Gabriel, could not gaze upon the face of Moses. But after Israel sinned, Moses could not gaze even upon the faces of angels of lowly rank. 'For I was in dread of the (angels of) anger and hot displeasure' (Deuteronomy 9:19). (Pesikta Rabbati 15:3)<sup>8</sup>

In order for Moses to direct the building of the Tabernacle, he had to learn from God and Gabriel the methods of design and construction. For example, in B.T. Menahot 29a, Gabriel demonstrates for Moses how to make the candlesticks:

Rabbi Hiyya B. Abba says in the name of Rabbi Johanan: The angel Gabriel had girded himself with a kind of belt and demonstrated unto Moses the work of the candlestick, for it is written, 'And this was the work of the candlestick' (Numbers 8:4).

Both Michael and Gabriel appear in the midrashim concerning Moses' death, "Midrash Petirat Moshe." Ginzberg remarks that "The statement that Gabriel was the first angel called upon to fetch the soul of Moses is perhaps connected with the view that this angel is one of 'the six angels of death.'<sup>9</sup> Sammael is also considered as an angel of death, and mocks Moses' soul. The following selection from Deuteronomy Rabbah 11:10 portrays Michael as deeply saddened by Moses' death in direct contrast to Sammael's contrary and perverse attitude:

And concerning him, David said, 'The wicked watches the righteous and seeks to slay him'

(Psalm 37:32). There is no wicked one among all the hostile beings such as Sammael, and there is no righteous one among all the prophets such as Moses, as it is said in Scripture, 'And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face' (Deuteronomy 34:10). To what is this matter similar? To a man who appears at the feast of the groom and bride and that man looks around and says, 'When their happiness will come to pass, I will be happy because of it'. Thus Sammael the wicked looked upon Moses' soul and he said: When Michael shall weep, my mouth will fill with laughter. Then Michael said to him: How wicked! I am weeping, while you laugh! 'Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, though I am fallen, I shall rise, though I sit in darkness, the Lord is a light unto me' (Micah 7:8).

Moses' righteousness is so extraordinary that the angel of death fears Moses and is unable to fulfill his mission to take Moses' soul. Thus, God Himself must tend to Moses. Gabriel and Michael respectfully attend to Moses' physical needs before God takes his soul away with the "kiss of death."

At that time, Moses stood and sacrificed himself like the Seraphim. And the Holy One, blessed be He, descended from the highest heavens to take Moses' soul, and three ministering angels were with Him: Michael, Gabriel and Zagzagel. Michael prepared Moses' bed, and Gabriel tore his linen gown around his head, and Zagzagel (tore his gown) from around his feet (a sign of mourning of a high priest). Michael was on one side and Gabriel was on the other side, and the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: Moses, shut your eyes, one eyelid upon the other... (Deuteronomy Rabbah 11:10)

#### E. The Angels and Esther

The midrashim concerning Esther employ the services of Michael and Gabriel. They are used to explain the motivation behind the actions of the characters in the book.

The rabbis do not hold great esteem for either King Ahasuerus or Vashti. They do not sympathize with Vashti's plight, for they feel she was immodest, as described in B.T. Megillah 12b. They assign Gabriel the task of punishing her for her improper behavior:

'And the Queen Vashti refused' (Esther 1:12). Let us see. She was immodest, and both she and the king shared an immoral purpose. Why then should she not come? Rabbi Jose ben Hanina says: This teaches that leprosy broke out on her. In a Baraita, it is taught that Gabriel came and fixed a tail on her.

Gabriel makes sure that the king remembers and favors Mordecai. The rabbis suggest that the king suffered from insomnia, because he feared for his life. He believed that Haman and Esther were conspiring against him, and he would meet his death at the banquet. Therefore, he asked that the Book of Chronicles be read in order to comfort him. Gabriel competes with Shamshai, the scribe and the son of Haman, in order to preserve Mordecai's name in the journal.<sup>10</sup>

'And it was found (being) written' (Esther 6:2). It should say, 'a writing was (כתב) was found.' This shows that Shamshai kept on erasing and Gabriel kept on writing. Rabbi Assi says that Rabbi Shila, a man of Kefar Temaita, draws a lesson from this saying: If a writing on earth which is for the benefit of Israel cannot be erased, how much less a writing in heaven. (B.T. Megillah 15b-16a)

Rabbi Shila's comment alludes to the belief that since Gabriel is already in heaven, all positive decrees or writing can be guaranteed. Thus Gabriel is also associated with a heavenly scribal role, but only with reference to matters pertaining to Israel.

Michael appears at the climax of the banquet scene with Esther, Haman and the king. Haman's demise is attributed to Michael's pranks. In Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer, Chapter 50, Michael identifies

himself as the son of Haman. He cuts down the king's plants upon Haman's orders, which is an illusion to Haman's attempt to destroy the Jews of Persia:

In that hour, the pages of Esther came and took Haman to the banquet which she had prepared on the sixteenth of Nisan. When they had eaten and taken (wine), the King said to Esther: 'What is thy petition, Queen Esther, and it shall be granted thee, and what is thy request?' (Esther 7:2). She said to him: My lord, o king! I ask nothing of you except to spare my life and my people. For one man has come and he wants to destroy and slay us and to make us perish; 'But if we had only been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I would have held my peace' (Ibid. 4). The King asked her: Who is this man? She answered him: This one is the wicked Haman, as is said, 'And Esther said, an adversary and an enemy, even this wicked Haman' (Ibid. 6). 'The King arose in his wrath' (Ibid. 7). What did the angel Michael do? He began to cut down the plants in the King's presence. Intense wrath was kindled within him, and the King returned from the palace garden to the place of the banquet of wine. What did the angel Michael do? He pushed Haman upon Esther. The King exclaimed: As for this villain, he is not satisfied with having condemned the people of Esther to destroy, to slay, and to cause them to perish; but he must also desire to come upon her! 'Will he even force the queen before me in the house?' (Ibid. 8). Haman heard this word and his countenance fell, as it is said, 'They covered Haman's face' (Ibid.). And the King commanded that he should be hanged on the gallows. (Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer, Chapter 50)

Michael also serves as Israel's advocate and he argues against Haman, the prosecutor, before God:

All the charges which Haman brings against Israel from below (on earth), Michael defends them from above. He said before Him: Master of the Universe, Your children are denounced (by Haman) not for worshipping idols, not for unchastity nor bloodshed; but they are denounced only because they observe Your laws. He said to him: You have not abandoned Me and I will not abandon you,

as it is written: 'For the Lord will not forsake His people for His name's sake' (I Samuel 12:22); whether they be guilty or whether innocent, it is impossible to forsake them, since the world cannot dispense with Israel. 'If a man would give all the substance of his house' (Song of Songs 8:7). This is Haman the wicked, who gave ten thousand talents of silver to destroy Israel, he shall be utterly despised. (Esther Rabbah 7:12)

#### F. The Rescue Missions: Out of the Fiery Furnace

The theme of the rescue of the righteous from the fiery furnace is a popular one in the midrashim incorporating angelic participation. When Abraham is saved from Nimrod's fiery furnace, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah from Nebuchadnezzar's wrath and Joshua, the son of Jehozadah, the agents of rescue are God, Michael, and Gabriel, or the archangels together. Since the adventure and glory of the rescue mission are coveted, the three compete for the position, although God ultimately decides. These midrashim indicate a struggle for power among them, and the rabbis seek to demonstrate that the most righteous and unique victim is saved by God Himself. Nonetheless, Michael and Gabriel are thankful for their appointments to rescue the three men mentioned in Daniel (1:11). Michael and Gabriel function individually and as partners. No rabbinic consensus exists regarding who saves the three men; although the most logical candidate, from the perspective of the biblical text, should be Gabriel, the angel of fire.

Abraham's experience in the fiery furnace is a purely midrashic creation. The angels ask to be honored by rescuing him, but God decides to take action Himself. This midrash is developed from the verse in Genesis specifying that God actively brought Abraham out from Ur ( אור, also light, or fire) of the Chaldees:

Rabbi Eleazar ben Jacob and the sages. Rabbi Eleazar says: While the King, the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, is on his dining couch in heaven, Michael, the Great Prince, already

descended from the heavens and he saved Abraham, our father, from the fiery furnace. And our rabbis say that the Holy One, blessed be He, descended and saved Abraham, as it is said, 'I am the Lord who brought thee out of Ur of Chaldees' (Genesis 15:7). Then when did Michael descend? In the days of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. (Canticles Rabbah 1:12)<sup>11</sup>

The rabbis are interested in relegating the angels to missions involving lesser personages and less significant times. For example, Joshua, a righteous man amidst the evils of the Babylonian exile, is saved by Michael and delivered to God:

Rabbi Tachanah said: Israel was exiled to Babylon, and did not forsake their evil deeds. Ahab, son of Kolaiah, and Zedekiah, the son of Maaseiah, became lying healers, and they healed the wives of the Chaldeans, and came unto them for coition. The King heard thereof, and commanded that they should be burnt. They both said: Let us say that Joshua, the son of Jehozadah, was with us, and he will save us from the burning fire (on account of his merit). They said to him: O Lord, O King, this man was with us in every matter. The King commanded that the three should be burnt by fire, and the angel Michael descended and saved Joshua from the fiery flames and brought him up before the Throne of Glory, as it is said, 'and he showed me Joshua, the high priest' (Zechariah 3:1); and the other two are burnt by fire, as it is said, 'And of them shall be taken up a curse... The Lord make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the King of Babylon roasted in the fire' (Jeremiah 29:22). (Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer, Chapter 33)

The intent of these midrashim is clear: the righteous, who obey the laws of God, will be saved from the destruction about them. Furthermore, evil is brought on by the wicked, for which the righteous suffer. The following midrash from Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer, Chapter 33, posits that the gentile king will punish Israel for ceasing to believe in God and to observe His commandments. Here, Gabriel is the rescuer, and as an angel symbolizing fire, he is well-suited for

the mission:

Rabbi Jehudah says: When Nebuchadnezzar brought false accusation against Israel to slay them, he set up an idol in the plain of Dura, and caused a herald to proclaim: Any one who does not bow down to this idol shall be burnt by fire. Israel did not trust the shadow of their creator, and came with their wives and sons and bowed down to an idolatrous image, except Daniel, whom they called by the name of their God, And it would have been a disgrace to them to burn him in fire, as it is said, 'But at the last Daniel came in before me' (Daniel 4:8). And they took Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, and put them into the fiery furnace and the angel Gabriel descended and saved them. The king said to them (Israel): Ye know that he had a God who saves and delivers; why have ye forsaken your God and worshipped idols which have no power to deliver? But just as ye did in your own land and destroyed it, so do ye attempt to do in this land, namely, to destroy it. The King commanded, and they slew all of them. Whence do we know that they were all slain by the sword? Because it is said, 'Then said he unto me, prophesy...O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live' (Ezekiel 37:9).

In B.T. Pesahim 118a-b, God insists upon saving Abraham Himself. Why is He not equally as interested in saving the lives of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah? The text suggests that God saves Abraham because of their corresponding statures: a great, unique man and a great, unique God. The three men, while righteous in their own right, do not receive the same acclaim as Abraham.

Several reasons may be suggested to explain why God Himself saved Abraham and no one else. First, in the book of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar saw the three men with a fourth man in the furnace. The image is too corporeal to be associated with God. Since Gabriel is already identified as "the man", his involvement in the mission constitutes a better choice. Also, on the basis of scriptural status, the Torah is of greater importance than the post-exilic writings,

and Daniel did not earn the title of prophet. Thus, while God is active in the Torah, the angels may be active in less distinguished biblical books.

It has been indicated that righteousness is a prerequisite for deserving rescue from the fire. Therefore, since the three men were not always positively perceived, angels might better attend to their plight than God. Jacob Neusner states that Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah are not regarded with great respect by the rabbis.<sup>12</sup> Rav held that had the Babylonians lashed the three men, they would have worshipped the golden image (B.T. Ketubot 33b). He also contended that Daniel was punished for giving advice to Nebuchadnezzar, (B.T. Baba Batra 4a), and that the three men died through an evil eye; or, according to Samuel, they drowned in spittle. Such perceptions of the men undercut any possible association between them and God's saving grace.

Nonetheless, the midrashim concerning the rescue of these three by Michael or Gabriel do not demonstrate these attitudes. Indeed, in Pesikta Rabbati 35:2, the rabbis remark that Gabriel attended to the three men as a disciple to his master because the righteous are greater than angels. The Jerusalem Talmud, Shabbat, chapter 6, 39a, notes that the three men made it possible for the angel to withstand the fire of the furnace and not the reverse. A full account of the fiery furnace theme and the connection between the story of Abraham and that of the three men is found in B.T. Pesachim 118a-b.<sup>13</sup> Note that Gabriel must compete with Yurkami, the Prince of hail, rather than Michael, who also represents snow or hail, and this is probably due to Babylonian influence:

When the wicked Nimrod cast our father Abraham into the fiery furnace, Gabriel said to the Holy One, blessed be He: Sovereign of the Universe! Let me go down, cool (it), and deliver that righteous man from the fiery furnace. Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to him: I am unique in My world, and he is

unique in his world; it is fitting for Him who is unique to deliver him who is unique. But because the Holy One, blessed be He, does not withhold the (merited) reward of any creature, he said to him: Thou shalt be privileged to deliver three of his descendants. Rabbi Simeon the Shilonite lectures: When the wicked Nebuchadnezzar cast Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah into the fiery furnace, Yurkami, Prince of hail, rose before the Holy One, blessed be He, and said to Him: Sovereign of the Universe! Let me go down and cool the furnace and save these righteous men from the fiery furnace. Said Gabriel to him, 'The might of the Holy One, blessed be He, is not thus (manifested), for thou art the Prince of hail, and all know that water extinguishes fire. But I, the Prince of fire, will go down and cool it within and heat it without, and will thus perform a double miracle. Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to him: Go down. It was then that Gabriel commenced (with praise) and said, 'And the truth of the Lord endureth for ever.'

In Pesikta Rabbati 35:2, the story of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah is a precedent for the righteous who enter Jerusalem, which will be surrounded by a wall of fire in the world to come. While Gabriel follows behind the three men, Nebuchadnezzar greatly fears Gabriel because of the destruction he wrought in a battle with Sennacherib. Thus the rabbis indirectly indicate that the righteous will be victorious and make earthly kings tremble. Note the midrash:

Another comment: 'Sing and rejoice'. Come and see what Scripture says directly before these words: 'And I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire around about, and I will be the glory in the midst of her' (Zechariah 2:9). Resh Lakish teaches: What does the apparently unnecessary 'and' in the words 'And I' imply? That the Holy One, blessed be He, said: I and My entire household will make ourselves as a wall in her behalf - in behalf of Jerusalem in the time-to-come - and I shall enjoin angels to watch it on her behalf, as is said, 'I have set watchers upon thy walls, O Jerusalem' (Isaiah 62:6). But if fire is made to encompass it, who will be able to enter within Jerusalem? Righteous men in the time-to-come, who will walk about in

fire as a man who walks in the sun on a cold day, and whom the warmth delights. And if you marvel at this thing, come and consider Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, who, when Nebuchadnezzar put them in the fiery furnace, walked in it, as on a cold day, a man walks in the sun whose warmth is delightful to him, as is said, 'He answered and said: 'Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of God's'' (Daniel 3:25). The text does not speak of the first but of the fourth. This was Gabriel who walked after them as a disciple walks behind a master: thus you are taught that the righteous are greater than the ministering angels. Another comment: 'And the appearance of the fourth.' When Nebuchadnezzar saw Gabriel, he recognized him and said: This is the very one I saw in the war of Sennacherib, the one who consumed in fire the hosts of Assyria. According to the elder Rabbi Eliezer, when Nebuchadnezzar saw Gabriel, all his limbs trembled and he said: This is the very angel I saw in the war of Sennacherib, in which, taking the shape of a nozzle of spouting flame, he consumed Sennacherib's entire camp in fire. Hence it is said, 'A wall of fire round about.'

In Midrash Tanhuma haNidpas , Tizave 8, Michael and Gabriel vie for the opportunity to serve Abraham, but God, acting upon His attribute of mercy, saves him. This midrash shows that God sends both of them to save the three men, but only one actually descends:

'Forever, O Lord, Thy word standeth fast in heaven' (Psalm 119:89). Rabbi Berechia, the Priest, says: From eternity I have treated my people with the quality of mercy. When? In the hour that Abraham, our father, was sent out from the fiery furnace, the angels argued with one another. Michael says: I will descend and save him. And Gabriel says, I will go down and save him. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: I will descend in My Glory, and I will save him, as it is said, 'who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldees' (Genesis 15:7). He said to them: You will save the children of his children. When Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah descended into the

fire, the angel descended and saved them. At that moment the angels said, 'Forever, O Lord, Thy word standeth fast in heaven' (Psalm 119:89). Thy faithfulness is unto all generations; Thou hast established the earth and it standeth. You are the establisher of the world.

Thus, because God fulfills his promises to the angels and to the righteous, His eternal truth is proclaimed by all. All these midrashim constructed around the fiery furnace theme teach that God will save and deliver His chosen people, and that His promise to His covenanted people will be fulfilled. The people need only wait patiently for their redemption. The use of angels indicates that God's promises are kept with all "creatures", and they are a colorful and imaginative addition to the messianic theme. Yet, they do not obscure the fundamental issue in these midrashim, that God's mercy is enduring and His love for His people is eternal.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

You have created man but little lower than  
the angels, and You have crowned him with  
glory and honor. (Psalm 8:6)

In the endeavor to understand the nature of human beings, perhaps one must measure them against those celestial beings elusively set one notch higher in God's plan. Yet, the tendency to project human emotions, traits and problems onto God is similarly reflected in attitudes and approaches to angels. In the Bible, angels are generally a colorless and anonymous crew of the heavenly familia. However, the Book of Daniel provides a hint of the extensive development of angelology with regard to name, function and personality. The Jewish concept of angelology does not remain static; it is responsive to all influences, whether folkloristic, academic, political or religious. An array of human conditions and problems are certainly ascribed to the angelic realm.

The catalyst in the development of Jewish angelology is the influence of Iranian, Babylonian, Egyptian and Greek culture, literature, and mythology upon the Bible, Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha and the Midrash. The functions and traits ascribed to Michael and Gabriel in the Midrash are, to a great extent, an example of the Babylonian influence upon Jewish folklore bearing upon the Bible, since Babylonian ideas and beliefs were then spreading in the Semitic world.<sup>1</sup> These extra-cultural influences are qualitatively significant with regard to angels, and the portrayals of the arch-angels become more elaborate in time. The rabbinic response demonstrates both a positive, embracing attitude as well as rejection. Their

responses may be evaluated upon the basis of historical circumstance; frequently, the rabbis use angels as a polemical tool or a vehicle for theological and mystical speculation.

A discussion of the texts and the rabbis cited in the midrashim concerning Michael and Gabriel illuminates the patterns and nature of rabbinic conceptions of angelology. Those to whom aggadot are attributed which utilize the archangels span from the time of the Palestinian Talmud and the Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan in the third and fourth centuries, c.e., to the compilation of anthologies such as Yalkut Shimoni in approximately the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries. A consistent pattern of limiting and minimizing angelic power is demonstrated throughout this literature. Yet, the richness and vividness of angelic folklore is evidenced in the Babylonian Talmud and the midrashic works which reflect a renewed interest in pseudepigraphic, apocalyptic, and mystical works.

The few midrashim cited from the Palestinian Talmud and The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan reflect the generally negative attitude held by Palestinian rabbis. Their rejection of Michael and Gabriel as intercessors, guardians or intermediaries in prayer is explicitly and strongly stated. Indeed, the restricted number of references to angels in these, as well as many other Palestinian works, is an important indicator of a rather negative rabbinic attitude. This attitude was at variance with the popular and rabbinic belief in angels which was much more extensive in the Babylonian context.

In direct contrast to the Palestinian perspective is that attested to in the Babylonian Talmud, which provides the most references to Michael and Gabriel in all the texts cited in this thesis. No one attitude predominates, and the views of Palestinian rabbis which incorporate angelology in their interpretations are included in the Babylonian Talmud. All aggadot, whether accepting or rejecting angelology, are replete with rich descriptions full of folkloristic vividness.

Louis Ginzberg posits that the inclusion of angelology is not an indication of a difference in theology between the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds. He suggests that it stems from the Babylonian rabbis' openness to the folkloristic interests of the general population. The people, influenced by Zoroastrianism, pressured their scholars to recognize and deal with angelology and demonology. He indicates that the Palestinian rabbis ignore this branch of folklore, and that the Palestinian Talmud is characterized by a certain chastity which "avoids the exaggerated role ascribed to supernatural beings by popular fancy."<sup>2</sup>

Four emphases are discerned in the passages dealing with angels in the Babylonian Talmud. The first emphasis is the limited nature of angels, which is demonstrated within the rabbis' vibrant portrayal of them. It stresses their temporal natures, limited capabilities and beleaguered stature in the eyes of God and the righteous. The second view is demonstrably more negative, and is cited specifically in Abaye's name. It wholly rejects any type of angel worship or acclaiming of Michael and Metatron's powers. Nonetheless, angels are positively regarded, and the third view affirms that angels hear prayers, and that both Michael and Gabriel have the power to successfully execute justice upon Israel and her enemies, and implement God's word. The fourth attitude perceives angels positively, in that they are integral pieces of the mystical puzzles of the Merkavah. Interestingly, the majority of the rabbis cited as mentioning angels are Palestinian, such as Rabbi Jose ben Hanina, Rabbi Johanan, Rabbi Dimi, and Rabbi Isaac the Smith. This is not surprising in light of the travel and consequent intellectual and cultural interchange between the Palestinian and Babylonian Jewish communities.

The earlier midrashic works, such as Genesis Rabbah, Lamentations Rabbah, Pesikta de Rav Kahana and Canticles Rabbah, do make references to the archangels, although they are not numerous; Genesis Rabbah, dealing with cosmogonic speculation, focuses upon anti-Gnostic and anti-Christian polemic. When Christian-Roman rule came

to power in the mid-fourth century, the rabbis had to deal more with Christian attacks upon Jewish theology and institutions. As a result, though the angels are perceived as active participants in the lives of the patriarchs and their families in Genesis Rabbah, they are not, however, ascribed much power; they are seen as emissaries, though distinguished, of God. Lamentations Rabbah vents anger upon the archangels, and Esther Rabbah and Canticles Rabbah illustrate how they function within the life of Israel. They all include interpretations of a common cadre of amoraim who involve Michael and Gabriel in their comments. Rabbis Johanan, Hanina, Isaac, Levi, Eleazar b. Pedat, Phineas and Simon ben Lakish are frequently mentioned. Most of them lived in the third and early fourth centuries, when interest in angelology was apparently high. The aggadot from these works are incorporated in later midrashim without substantial changes or additions.

Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer, written approximately in the mid-eighth century, cites Michael and Gabriel about half as much as does the Babylonian Talmud.<sup>3</sup> It employs angelology in its compilation of narrative and mystical aggadot, and many of the interpretations integrated into the body of the midrash are not ascribed to the rabbis specifically cited in earlier, parallel works. Michael and Gabriel are quite active in the traditions found in the Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer. This work reflects Arabic influence, certainly a result of the conquest of the Moslems in 640 c.e. However, the aggadot regarding the archangels are not significantly different from the earlier midrashic works, such as the Abraham stories of Genesis Rabbah, although the former text is more elaborate and mystical in nature.

Neither Tanhuma ha-Nidpas nor Tanhuma Buber contain traditions which suggest great polemical intentions in their descriptions of the activities of Michael and Gabriel. The angels are just part of the narrative; their actions explain biblical events.

In Pesikta Rabbati, most probably compiled in the early seventh century, the redactor does employ earlier traditions which include angelology and the archangels as vehicles for polemical arguments. The power of angels is severely circumscribed; their presence is regarded as superfluous and used only to highlight God's power. Israel is God's chosen son, and angels do not intervene during the peaks of this sacred relationship, i.e., revelation and redemption. Again, the first to fourth generation amoraim such as Joshua ben Levi, Johanan bar Naphai, Resh Lakish, and Abbahu are cited in these discussions. Abbahu's presence indicates the nature of these midrashim, since he is famous for his anti-Christian disputations. This illustrates, perhaps, that the redactor of Pesikta Rabbati experienced the same polemical motivations and needs to respond as the amoraim of the third and fourth centuries.

Later aggadic works, such as Midrash 'Aseret haDibberot, Midrash Avkir and Midrash VaYosha present highly vivid embellished accounts of early traditions, such as Michael's wrestling with Jacob, and the reasons why he becomes the guardian of Israel. These minor midrashim give more credence to angelic power and intervention, and tend to be more imaginative. Midrashim found in the anthology, Yalkut Shimoni, also demonstrate the same interest of the compiler to incorporate vivid accounts of Michael and Gabriel, especially in narrative accounts.

Certain generations of tannaim and amoraim mention the archangels more frequently than others. Among the seven tannaim cited, Rabbi Akiba, Simeon ben Yoḥai and Judah the Prince most often comment on Michael and Gabriel, and tend to associate their presence with the Shekhina. Their comments are not particularly positive. Akiba believes that Gabriel is Israel's guardian archangel, but Judah the Prince favors the Shekhina as a symbol of God's presence in Israel's midst instead of the archangels.

The first through fourth generations of Palestinian amoraim utilize angelology most freely. Two disciples of Judah the Prince, Rabbi Joshua ben Levi and Rabbi Hanina ben Hama, often comment about the archangels, the latter frequently arguing with Rabbi Johanan regarding the identities of Michael and Gabriel as the archangels involved in particular situations as well as over when the angels were created. It is in Johanan's academy and among his pupils that angelology is liberally used; both ascribing and limiting angelic powers and traits. Urbach remarks that a readiness existed among some amoraim, and especially in the case of Rabbi Johanan, to transfer certain tasks to angels, in order to avoid corporeal expressions.<sup>4</sup> This is borne out in the investigation of Michael and Gabriel's activities in the midrash. Rabbis Simon ben Lakish, Hiyya bar Abba, Rav Dimi and Abbahu, all colleagues and pupils of Johanan, address the issue of angels, without a uniform attitude or concept. Rabbi Samuel ben Nachman, a third generation amora, and his disciple, Rabbi Helbo the Priest, have a well-attested preoccupation with mystical lore.<sup>5</sup>

Angelology, as filtered through the midrashim about the archangels Michael and Gabriel, is perceived as a tool which both shapes and is shaped. As previously mentioned, angelology is shaped by diverse cultural exchanges, indigenous and foreign folklore, historical circumstances and the emergence of rival cults and religion. Yet, angelology is a vehicle by which the rabbis shape their own theology; it is utilized as a point and counterpoint to God's omnipresence and omnipotence.

Monotheism is the primary focus of the rabbis. By illustrating Michael and Gabriel's inadequacy, they highlight God's omnipotence. By portraying God as the King of hosts, Michael and Gabriel, his 'right and left hand men,' merely execute God's orders as devoted servants. Yet, the unity of God must be associated with the experience of the people of Israel, whether in suffering or victory. Thus, the archangels provide another "set" of services. While they

may or may not be intermediaries in daily prayer, they do not serve as intermediaries in the events of revelation and redemption. Furthermore, they are part of the creation, and do not help God create the universe. They intercede in Israel's behalf in the heavenly court of law and in the world, although sometimes. God Himself fulfills these roles because of their lack of strength or ability. While the righteous of Israel are considered to be of a higher status than the angels, according to some rabbis, the two archangels are seen to rescue and save them through their supernatural powers which are not available to mortals. The approach toward the angels, as a whole, is equivocal.

The ambivalence in approach and attitude toward the angels is based upon the very nature of life and theological concerns. The reconciliation of opposing forces in the universe is the miraculous work of God which the rabbis endeavor to articulate and describe. Although scholars may not approve of the liberal use of angelology, maintaining public interest with popular folklore is a necessity. Similarly, in order to preserve a sense of a personal, caring God and still posit His transcendence over a vast universe, the angels are portrayed as the connection between His two opposing natures. Furthermore, the bridge of consolation, used both to reconcile the polar aspects of good and evil in the world and to explain Israel's experience, is paved with the destructiveness of Gabriel or the wicked plots of Samael. Angels remove the stigma of evil from a beneficent God, and yet He remains the final arbiter of justice.

Thus, Michael the Prince and the Man Gabriel are examples of angels loved for their protective guardianship and usefulness, and scorned for their potential to divert the masses from the one God. They serve as channels of communication and action between God and Israel, and they are utilized by the rabbis to reconcile the paradoxical nature of God's immanence and transcendence, and the problem of good and evil. Michael and Gabriel are the con-

cretizations of the eternal polar conceptualizations of God and life: the awesome might of destruction and evil, and the profound goodness of compassion and freedom. Thus the rabbis accomodate angelology in general, and Michael and Gabriel in particular, in the Midrash. The archangels are a focus which serves the rabbis' various agendas, no matter how substantial a challenge they present in the areas of polemics and popular belief.

God, say the rabbis, makes peace with these eternal paradoxes in heaven. The divine precedent gives humankind the hope to attain such reconciliation and peace on earth, even with a little help from our guardian angels.

# NOTES

## Chapter I

1. Samuel S. Cohon, "The Unity of God," (HUCA, vol. 26, 1955), p. 469.
2. Ibid., p. 467.
3. Mark D. Shapiro, "The Philosophy Implicit in Rabbinic Angelology," Unpublished Rabbinic Thesis (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1977), p. 35.
4. Cohon, "The Unity of God," p. 468.
5. Ephraim Urbach, The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs, (English translation by Israel Abrahams, Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975) vol. 1, p. 135-136. Also regarding the attitude of the tannaim, see Cohon, "The Unity of God," p. 468.
6. Cf. Exodus Rabbah 2:5.
7. Urbach, The Sages, vol. 1, p. 154.
8. Ibid., p. 162.
9. Urbach indicates that a parallel is drawn by the rabbis between the earthly law court and academy and the angelic one. This humanization of angelic functions undermines angelic power or superiority.
10. Cohon, "The Unity of God," p. 467.
11. Ibid., Cf. Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1; also Deuteronomy 4:19; Psalm 58:2; Genesis 32:25; Psalm 91; Daniel 3:28; 6:23; and the Book of Tobit 3:17.
12. Bernard Bamberger, Fallen Angels, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1952), p. 12.
13. Urbach, The Sages, vol. 1, p. 138.
14. Erwin R. Goodenough, Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953), vol. II, p. 290.
15. Cohon, "The Unity of God," p. 467. Regarding God portrayed as a monarchical figure, cf. Urbach, The Sages, vol. 1, p. 162.
16. See in this regard the Prologue of Job and Zechariah 5:1-2.
17. Urbach, The Sages, vol. 1, pp. 136, 154; and cf. Shapiro, "The Philosophy Implicit in Rabbinic Angelology," p. 28.
18. James Adam, The Religious Teachers of Greece, (New Jersey: Reference Book Publishers, Inc., 1965), pp. 361, 374. He writes:  
In the Timaeus, Plato furnishes us with an account  
of the creation of the world and the creation of man

Chapter I (cont.)

(p. 361). But the important point to notice is that in the Timaeus there are, if the expression may be allowed, two persons in the Godhead...The Platonic Creator is transcendent...the Platonic World-Soul is immanent, and recalls not only the Heraclitean Logos, but also the Socratic conception of God as the Wisdom residing in the universe... At the same time Plato recognizes a unity in difference, as well as a difference in unity, for the world itself is divine, and possessed of a soul that proceeds from the supreme God (p. 374).

19. Ibid., p. 372. He quotes a scholar by the name of Dr. Caird who, regarding the importance of the World-Soul, states that it contributes "a kind of bridge to connect two terms which it is impossible really to unite."
20. Ibid., p. 371.
21. Ibid., pp. 373-374. Grote is quoted by Adams on page 374. Grote further indicates:  
 Though the idea of a pre-cosmic Demiurgus found little favor among the Grecian schools of philosophy before the Christian era, it was greatly welcomed among Hellenizing Jews at Alexandria, from Aristobolus (about 150 b.c.e.) down to Philo. It formed the suitable point of conjunction between Hellenic and Judaic speculation. The marked distinction drawn by Plato between the Demiurgus, and the constructed Kosmos, with its in-dwelling gods, provided a suitable place for the Supreme God of the Jews, degrading the Pagan gods in comparison.
22. Cohon, "The Unity of God," pp. 468-469.
23. Jacob Neusner, A History of the Jews in Babylonia, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965), vol. 2, p. 157.
24. Cohon, "The Unity of God," p. 450. Cf. Chapter II of this thesis under Middat haDin and Middat Raḥamim.
25. Ibid.
26. George F. Moore, Judaism, The First Centuries of the Christian Era and the Age of the Tannaim, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), vol. 1, p. 410.
27. Ibid.
28. Urbach, The Sages, vol. 1, p. 182.
29. Neusner, A History of the Jews in Babylonia, vol. 3, p. 158. Cf. B.T. Shabbat 12b.

### Chapter I (cont.)

30. Cohon, "The Unity of God," p. 475.
31. Goodenough, Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period, vol. 2, p. 210.
32. Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 278, 290.
33. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 210.
34. Goodenough, in vol. 2, pp. 161-162, quotes Marcel Simon's book, Verus Israel.
35. Kerygma Petri (Clem. Alex. Strom. VI, II 41), as quoted by Goodenough in Jewish Symbols, vol. 2, pp. 161-162.
36. Max Kadushin, The Rabbinic Mind, (New York: Blaisdell Publishing Co., 1965) p. 186.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., p. 187.

### Chapter II

1. Michael and Gabriel are referred to as "kings among kings." Translation by Judah Goldin, The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), p. 24.
2. Cf. Genesis Rabbah 8:3. There are no significant changes in the text other than the introduction by Rabbi Judan, in which the question is explicitly stated, "When were the angels created?" Also, in Midrash Tanhuma Buber, Genesis 1, the rabbis say that the angels were not created on the first day in order that the minim (heretics) would not have a valid argument.
3. B.T. Sanhedrin 38b and Genesis Rabbah 8:5.
4. Cf. Chapter III concerning Michael's roles. Also see Cohon, "The Unity of God," p. 470.
5. See Numbers Rabbah 10:5, based on Judges 13:18.
6. Cohon, "The Unity of God," p. 469.
7. Based upon Isaiah 6:2, 6; Daniel 9:21; 10:11.
8. See also Pesikta de Rav Kahana 12:22.
9. The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan; Chapter 12 of the first version and Chapter 24 of the second version.
10. Cf. Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer, Chapter 4.
11. Note that regarding the relation between God's right hand and the South, /'N' (right) is a cognate of /N'N (south).

Chapter II (cont.)

12. Regarding hellenistic influences, see Gershom Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition, (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1960); regarding Babylonian influences, see Cohon, "The Unity of God," p. 469.
13. Cohon, "The Unity of God", p. 469.
14. Adolph Jellinek, Beit haMidrash, (Leipzig-Friedrich Wies, 1853-1877), vol. 1, pp. 52-53.
15. Cf. Louis Ginzberg, The Legends of the Jews, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1947), vol. 5, p. 43, regarding the Alphabetot, 98.
16. B.T. Baba Batra 74b-75a.
17. Regarding these primeval monsters see Robert Graves and Raphael Patai, Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis, (New York: McGraw-Hill Co., 1964), and Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews, vol. 5, pp. 41ff, 311.
18. Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews, vol. 1, p. 27; and vol. 5, p. 311.
19. Epstein, I., ed., The Babylonian Talmud, (London: The Soncino Press, 1952), Sanhedrin, p. 290. See reference of Kohut's Aruch Completum, vol. 1, p. 63, cited there.
20. Gustav Davidson, A Dictionary of Angels, (New York: The Free Press, 1967), see entries for "Pisqon, Itmon and Sigron."
21. Soncino translation of B.T. Shabbat 12b, p. 48.
22. Cf. Urbach, The Sages, vol. 1, p. 182; also B.T. Yoma 52a.
23. Kadushin, The Rabbinic Mind, p. 217.
24. Ibid., p. 216. Cf. Shabbat 55a, Yalkut Shimoni I:243, Genesis Rabbati, Theodor-Albeck, editors, p. 177-178.
25. Kadushin, The Rabbinic Mind, pp. 216-217.
26. Gerald Friedlander, translation of Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer, (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner and Company Ltd., 1916), p. 22. Cf. Zohar, Genesis 186a and Ethiopic Enoch 14:20.
27. Cf. The Chapters of the Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan, second version, Chapter 24.
28. Cf. Numbers Rabbah 12:8. However, in Genesis Rabbah 12:8, Rabbi Simon ben Lakish reverses the associations: Michael is identified with fear, and Gabriel is correlated with merciful dominion.
29. Cf. Genesis Rabbah 51:2: "Every place where it says, 'and Yahweh,' it is He and His court of justice."

### Chapter III

1. Bamberger, Fallen Angels, p. 110.
2. Origen (De Princ. I, 8:1) considers Michael as the angel of prayer who brings man's prayers before God and Gabriel as the angel of war. The latter is also the view of the Rabbis... Gabriel is called the severe angel, in contrast to Michael, the angel of mercy. Cf. Lamentations Rabbah 2:98 in this regard. Origen frequently concurs with interpretations of the amoraim of the second through fourth generations. Regarding the comparison between Judeo-Christian interpretations of the Song of Songs, see Ephraim Urbach, "The Homiletical Interpretations of Canticles," Scripta Hierosolymitana, vol. 22 (1971), pp. 250-257.
3. See Ozar haMidrashim 259ab-492a for numerous examples.
4. Lamentations Rabbah 1:27.
5. Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews, vol. 5, p. 71. Note the competition between the angels as described further on in this chapter.
6. Cohon, "The Unity of God," p. 470.
7. Gershom Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition, p. 46. Scholem further remarks, "It seems, therefore, that the later traditions about Metatron, developed after the time when Jahoel concepts flourished, comprised elements of the teaching concerning both archangels. They (Michael and Metatron) were identical as late as the fourth century, c.e." Cf. Cohon, "The Unity of God," pp. 470-471.
8. Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews, vol. 5, p. 170.
9. See, for example, Pesikta Rabbati, 46:3. Deuteronomy 33:26 reads: "There is none like unto God, O Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven as thy help and in His excellency on the skies... and He thrust out the enemy before thee..."
10. See B.T. Sanhedrin 38b in Soncino translation, note #21, p. 245.
11. Cf. further on in Chapter III, midrashim regarding Michael's impotence in defending Israel, in addition to Gabriel's destructive role which offsets God's overwhelming mercy.
12. Yalkut Shimon I:132. See also Genesis Rabbah 78:2, cited in Bamberger, Fallen Angels, p. 141.
13. Urbach, The Sages, vol. 1, p. 141.
14. Cf. Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer, Chapter 33, with regard to Michael's intervention.
15. Urbach, The Sages, p. 522.
16. See the Soncino translation, p. 211, for additional notes.
17. See Chapter I above, p. 14 regarding popular religion and folklore.

### Chapter III (cont.)

18. Goodenough, Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period, vol. 2, p. 245.
19. Ibid., p. 278.
20. Although the entire biblical quote is not found in the talmudic text, it clearly foreshadows Aher's fate, or anyone who would deny the supremacy and unity of God, and therefore has been quoted. Also see the Soncino translation and notes to B.T. Hagigah 15a, p. 93.
21. Cohon, "The Unity of God, " p. 474.
22. Midrash 'Aseret haDibberot in Jellinek, Beit haMidrash, vol. 1, p. 64. Cf. B.T. Zevahim 62a.
23. B.T. Menaḥot 110a.
24. Cohon, "The Unity of God, " p.454.
25. Ibid.
26. For instance, cf. Deuteronomy Rabbah 5:12, which is one example of the tradition of interpreting Job 25:2, "God makes peace in His high places," in this manner.
27. Cf. B.T. Sanhedrin 19a-b.
28. Cf. Yalkut Shimoni I:243. Gabriel is also responsible for the drowning of Egyptians because he incited God's fury by showing Him plaster bricks from Egyptian buildings in which Israelite fetuses or babies were stuck.
29. See also B.T. Megillah 6b and Sanhedrin 21b.
30. Cf. Midrash Tanḥuma Buber, Mishpatim 6. Not all versions include the detail of the "נ" of blood marked upon the foreheads of the wicked.
31. Cf. Lamentations Rabbah 1:41; Midrash Tanḥuma Buber, Emor 5; Leviticus Rabbah 26:10; and Midrash Tanḥuma haNidpas, Tazriah 12.
32. See the Soncino translation and notes to B.T. Yoma 77a, pp. 374-375; Bamberger, Fallen Angels, p. 109; and Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews, vol. 6, p. 434.
33. Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews, vol. 5, p. 71; cf. B.T. Ḥullin 40a.

### Chapter IV

1. See B.T. Ḥullin 91b and Midrash Psalms 103:18 in this regard.
2. Cf. Chapters of the Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan, Chapter 33 of the first version and Chapter 36 of the second version.

#### Chapter IV (cont.)

See also Yalkut Shimoni I:68.

3. See also the translation by Gerald Friedlander, pp. 191-192. Furthermore, an episode in which Gabriel intervenes in Abraham's battles with Nimrod is found in The Deeds of Abraham, Adolph Jellinek, Beit haMidrash, vol. 1, pp. 28-29.
4. Cf. "D: The Angels and Moses" further on.
5. Midrash VaYosha, in Jellinek, Beit haMidrash, vol. 1, p.38.
6. Cf. Yalkut Shimoni I:115.
7. Midrash Tanhuma Buber, VaYeshev 13.
8. Cf. Canticles Rabbah 3:6; Ecclesiastes Rabbah 9:11; and Pesikta de Rav Kahana 5:3. In the latter text, Rabbi Phineas bar Abun cites the midrash in the name of Rabbi Hanina.
9. Ginzberg, Legends of the Jews, vol. 6, p. 160.
10. Regarding the identity of Shamshai, see Ezra 4:8.
11. Cf. Genesis Rabbah 44:7 (Theodor-Albeck) and 44:13 in the Vilna edition of Midrash Rabbah.
12. Neusner, The History of the Jews in Babylonia, vol. 2, p.221.
13. Cf. Midrash Psalms 117:3.

#### Chapter V

1. Louis Ginzberg, On Jewish Law and Lore, (New York: Atheneum, 1977), p. 65.
2. Ibid., p. 23.
3. The dating of all texts cited in Chapter V are derived from the article, "Midrash," by Moses Herr, Encyclopedia Judaica, vol. 11.
4. Urbach, The Sages, vol. 1, p. 152.
5. Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism..., p. 50.

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