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THE PHILOSOPHY IMPLICIT IN RABBINIC ANGELOLOGY

MARK DOV SHAPIRO

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

1977

Referee: Prof. Edward Goldman

To Marsha, my wife and closest companion.

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Digest

This paper takes up the significance of angels in rabbinic thought. In order to do this, it begins with an overview of the angelology in Jewish literature preceding the Tannaitic and Amoraic periods. On this basis the paper establishes that the rabbis inherited a substantial angelology from the Bible and apocryphal/pseudepigraphic literatures. The rabbis also retained much of what they inherited, although such motifs as that of the fallen angels were by and large rejected.

Most importantly, the central point of the thesis is that as much as the rabbis did retain many of the literal aspects of earlier angelology, they also developed a less literal approach to the angels. This involved employing the angels as literary devices in the various "angelic" *midrashim*. In such *midrashim*, the concrete identity of the angels became less important than the homiletic point that could be made when the angels were most often used as foils.

Specifically, the four major chapters of this thesis demonstrate how the non-literal approach to the angels was used by the rabbis to express many of their beliefs about four key categories of rabbinic theology.

Regarding humanity, a series of angelic *midrashim* is presented in which the angels in various ways oppose the creation of humanity, leading God to react in defence of humanity's legitimate claim to existence with dignity. Chapter Four suggests that this defence of humanity may have been particularly relevant in the rabbis' context, given the existential uncertainties prevalent at the time.

A further complex of midrashim cast the angels in roles that highlight the rabbis' understanding of Israel. Noting certain of the theological difficulties faced by Jews after the losses of 70 and 135 C.E., plus the polemic advantage Christians were taking of Israel's reduced status, Chapter Five contends that the angelic midrashim on Israel can in part be seen as a rabbinic defence of Israel and its chosenness.

Similarly, with regard to the concepts of God and Torah, the final two chapters of the thesis assemble angelic midrashim that elucidate the meaning of these terms. In the case of God, the theme of divine compassion as opposed to justice is developed by the various passages. In the case of Torah, a unique emphasis is placed on the degree to which the Torah is designed to be fulfilled by human beings who are by nature fallible.

On the basis of the themes stressed by the rabbis in discussing humanity, Israel, God, and Torah, the thesis concludes that the rabbis sought to express a basic orientation towards life via their midrashim. This orientation involved the affirmation that life could have worth and purpose because God had an abiding commitment to each Jew as human being and as member of Israel.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DIGEST	i
INTRODUCTION	1
PART ONE: A DEVELOPMENTAL OVERVIEW	
Chapter 1: Angels in the Bible	4
Chapter 2: Angels in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha	14
Chapter 3: Angels in Rabbinic Literature	25
PART TWO: THE PHILOSOPHY IMPLICIT IN RABBINIC ANGELOLOGY	
Chapter 4: Concerning Humanity	38
Chapter 5: Concerning Israel	61
Chapter 6: Concerning God	85
Chapter 7: Concerning Torah	102
CONCLUSION	119
NOTES	122
BIBLIOGRAPHY	140

INTRODUCTION

For most contemporary Jews, the word "angel" conjures up images of white-winged creatures and puffy-cheeked cherubim floating among clouds and the golden rays of a setting sun. The whole scene seems quite foreign to the modern Jewish consciousness, or so it must have seemed to Abraham Geiger, who commented in 1869 that within the synagogue: "The enumeration of the various angelic orders and the depiction of their activity cannot be admitted."[1] And yet the fact of the matter is that within traditional Jewish liturgy and other Jewish literatures, angels have played a prominent role. Although different generations of Jews past have placed differing emphases on the angels, from the Bible on, angels have certainly been allocated a place within Jewish thought.

The aim of this thesis is to understand how the rabbis in particular dealt with the angels. Setting aside the modern predisposition to dismiss as fantastic so "mythological" a concept as that of the angel, the question to be asked is how the rabbis, who generally describe the cosmic drama in terms of God and humanity alone,

were able to incorporate a third player into their world. One wonders whether the angels seriously affected the relationship between God and humanity or whether the rabbis assigned the angels roles which had little effect on that relationship. Granted that the rabbis "believed" in angels, the concern of this thesis is to establish what such belief meant and how it related to the larger context of rabbinic theology.

In order to respond fully to the issues raised by the question of rabbinic angelology, this thesis is divided into two sections. The first sets the stage for the second and primary section by providing an overview of the development of Jewish angelology. Its purpose is to present the context out of which rabbinic angelology emerges and to clarify where continuity or discontinuity exists between rabbinic literature and the biblical, apocryphal, and pseudepigraphic literature on angels. Specifically in Chapter Three, the introductory part of the thesis concludes with a hypothesis as to how the angels are used in rabbinic _midrashim_.

The second section of the thesis follows up this formulation in Chapter Three and demonstrates the special manner in which the rabbis approach the angels. By rabbis, the scholars of the Tannaitic and Amoraic periods are meant, although some material from later periods of study is also included.

The actual passages on angels to be presented were collected

through the use of indices found in the Soncino Press Babylonian Talmud and Midrash Rabbah plus the available English translations of Pesikta de Rav Kahana, Midrash Tehillim, Pesikta Rabbati, and Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer. Ginzberg's Legends of the Jews and Kosovsky's guides to Tannaitic literature and the Babylonian Talmud were also helpful in locating primary texts. Finally, the very complete listing of primary sources in Peter Schäfer's Rivalität Zwischen Engeln und Menschen pointed the way to many more sources.

In the body of the thesis, published English translations of texts are used, after having been compared to the original Hebrew or Aramaic editions. On occasion, changes are made in these translations for the sake of clarity. In those instances where no previous translations are available, original translations of the passages are used. Throughout the thesis, the translation of biblical passages is taken from the 1917 Jewish Publication Society edition of The Holy Scriptures, except where quotations from the Pentateuch are involved, in which case the 1962 Jewish Publication Society edition of The Torah is employed.

Chapter 1

ANGELS IN THE BIBLE

Although the single word "angel" is most often used in English as the primary designation for that group of beings superior to man yet subordinate to God, within the Bible there are actually many different types of angelic beings. There are, in fact, two major classifications into which the various angelic beings of the Bible can be placed. First, there are those spiritual beings who inhabit heaven alone. Secondly, there are those who, though similar to the first grouping insofar as they are also spiritual beings, also enter into the world of human beings.

Those angels who are solely celestial denizens have two primary functions. They are responsible for praising God and they are also members of the celestial court. Thus one reads the classic account of Isaiah 6 where the seraphim surrounding God's throne attest to God's holiness, while in Psalm 103:20-21 one reads: "Bless the Lord you angels of His... Bless the Lord all His hosts." Elsewhere the angels appear as members of a heavenly assembly in which dialogue between God and His angels can occur. The prologue to the

Book of Job and the vision of Micaiah described in Ahab's presence both assume the existence of this forum and describe the way in which the angels assemble before God to share at least partially in His deliberations.[1] Nevertheless the two texts' descriptions of the court are sparse and consequently the court's overall structure and purpose remain undefined in the biblical stratum.[2]

As for those angels who have actual contact with the human world, several different functions for their actions can be distinguished. Taking mal'ach, the most frequently used appellation for angelic beings in the Bible, literally, one learns that the angel who dealt with humans did so frequently as a messenger. Based on the Ugaritic root l'ak, meaning "to send," the angelic mal'ach is an emissary of God to man. There are many instances where mal'ach is used in reference to a human agent,[3] but so too it is a term used to describe an essential function of angels. It is an angel as emissary from God to man, for example, who appears to Manoah and his wife informing them of Samson's birth,[4] and similarly an angel who brings news from God of Ahaziah's fate appears before Elijah.[5]

In several instances the angel as envoy of God does not bring a message per se. Instead he is sent to perform a certain act on God's behalf. Abraham is aware of this function of angels when he assures Eleazar that he need not worry about the success of his mission to Aram-naharaim. Recalling God's promise to him, Abraham says

to Eleazar:

> The Lord, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, who promised me under oath, saying: "I will give this land to your offspring" - He will send His angel before you, and you will get a wife for my son there (Gen. 24:7).

In this role as personal helper of individuals an angel appears to Elijah when he is in flight to Horeb. There at the point where the prophet is exhausted and famished, an angel provides him with food and encouragement so that he can complete the lonely journey.[6]

Characteristic of this angel and the one acting as messenger too is the fact that neither type has any real personal identity. The angel is not a character to whom desires, fears, or motives are attributed. On the contrary, the angel appears solely to carry out a specific task and having done that and no more immediately disappears. As strictly messengers and as helpers of individuals, then, biblical angels by and large act at God's orders on what could be called an ad hoc basis. The idea, which becomes quite prominent in postbiblical literature, that there is sustained angelic protection for single persons is only partially developed. Indeed it only occurs in three post-exilic psalms at all, one of which, Psalm 91:11-12, promises the believer:

> For He will give His angels charge over thee,
> To keep thee in all thy ways.
> They shall bear thee upon their hands,
> Lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.[7]

In terms of the angel as helper or guardian, still one more idea which becomes important in later literature is only nascent in the Bible. This is the idea that various nations as well as individuals are watched over by angels assigned specifically to them. To be sure the Book of Exodus portrays an angel's being involved in the liberation of the Hebrew slaves from Egypt.[8] However, the idea of an identifiable angel's being responsible for Israel on a permanent basis and of that angel's co-existing with other national guardian angels does not emerge explicitly until the Book of Daniel. There, when for the first and only times in the Bible angels with personal names appear,[9] Daniel learns during Gabriel's encounters with him that certain specific angels do represent the interests of the various nations. At the beginning of his third appearance to Daniel,[10] Gabriel explains that he has been delayed in his mission to Daniel because of the opposition of the "שר מלכות פרס [the prince of the kingdom of Persia]" (Dan. 10:13). He also relates that he has been aided in his struggle with this opposing spirit by Michael, "אחד השרים הראשונים [one of the chief princes]" (Dan. 10:13). Finally, as he leaves Daniel, he indicates that he expects shortly to find himself in contest with the "שר יון [the prince of Greece]" (Dan. 10:20). He also tells Daniel that Michael will again help him and he specifically identifies Michael in this context as the figure responsible for Daniel's people.

In the ultimate battle leading to redemption, Gabriel promises: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people..." (Dan. 12:1).

Nevertheless not all angels carry out such benevolent functions, and so alongside the various protecting angels there are also the chastising angels. Such an angel acts for God in routing Sennacherib's army as it besieges Jerusalem, in which case its chastisement of the non-Israelite group happens also to redound to the favor of Israel.[11] The writer of Psalm 78 is apparently aware of this same punitive function of angels insofar as he imagines the involvement of angels in the harrassment of the Egyptians: "He sent forth upon them the fierceness of His anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble,

משלחת מלאכי רעים [a deputation of angels of evil]" (v. 49).

On the other hand, angelic chastisement can also be directed squarely at Israel as occurs when David takes the census of his kingdom.[12] At that time the pestilence which strikes the people is attributed to an angel who begins and ends his destructive work at God's command. On still another occasion the chastising angel's focus even changes from the group to the individual. Although in later literature this idea of punishment being meted out to individuals by angels becomes more prevalent,[13] Proverbs 17:11 only mentions it in passing: "A rebellious man seeketh only evil; Therefore מלאך אכזרי [a cruel angel] shall be sent against him."

Most significantly for the Bible's overall image of angels, neither the angel sent to chastise the individual nor the angel sent to chastise a group possesses much personality.[14] Even the cruel angel of Proverbs 17:11 is not so much malevolent in personal motive as he is cruel by virtue of the fact that his mission leads to unhappy consequences for the sinner. As was the case with the guardian angel, the chastising angel has a task which he carries out without expressing feelings, be they of sympathy or antipathy towards the people involved. He accomplishes his task as required by his divine orders, but while doing so he remains morally neutral regarding the situation he affects.

If any angel in the Bible does act at all partially and, it appears, even on its own initiative, it is the angel who carries out the function of mediation between God and man. As the root meaning of mal'ach indicated, the primary stance of the biblical angel is a passive one insofar as the angel only acts when sent by God for a specific purpose. Nonetheless the basis for much more independent and animated angelic functioning is laid in two separate passages. One reads, for example, the very difficult text in which the mal'ach melitz is mentioned by Elihu in response to Job's protestations of innocence:

> If there be an angel over him, a mediator, one among a thousand, to declare to man what is right for him; And he is gracious to him and says: "Deliver him from going down into the Pit; I have found a ransom" (Job 33:23-24).

Elihu's general point is that God does give human beings indication of what He expects from them and that specifically there are angels who can help ease this process of communication between God and humans. Acting as middleman, the angel Elihu describes is able to tell a person what course of action he should follow in order to please God, and he is also able to plead before God on behalf of the person if he falls short of God's expectations.

Elsewhere the only other setting in which an angel represents the interests of humans before God is a sort of mirror opposite of the accuser's appearance in the Book of Job. In the latter ha-satan attacks the easy success of Job, while in the Book of Zechariah, the angel of the Lord pleads for an end to the severity of Israel's punishments. He petitions God by saying: "Oh Lord, how long wilt Thou not have compassion on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which Thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years" (Zech. 1:12)?

Within the full corpus of the Bible perhaps the most dramatic shift in angelic functioning surrounds the role of the angel in the revelations of God to man. That is to say, down to the time of Elijah there are many instances in which angels are said to bring divine information of one sort or another to biblical personalities. During the era of the classical prophets, however, the texts describing revelation make no mention of angelic involvement. Revela-

tion is carried on directly between God and humans with no intermediaries at all. Instead, only in certain post-exilic texts do the angels resume a role in revelation.[15] And in this case the role is a very special one: not that of the simple messenger, rather that of the explicator of the actual vision the prophet sees.

In the Book of Ezekiel an angel acts in this manner only once since for the most part God Himself deals directly with Ezekiel. Nevertheless an angel does conduct Ezekiel through a significant part of his vision of the reconstructed Temple before the prophet actually encounters God,[16] and it is this type of angelic activity which becomes much more prominent in the Book of Zechariah. There even in the first part of the book where eight visions constitute the main mode of revelation, God does speak to Zechariah. However for the understanding of the visions themselves Zechariah is totally reliant on what he refers to as " המלאך הדבר בי [the angel that spoke to me]." Zechariah sees, for example, the vision of the golden candlestick and the two olive trees but the crucial and henceforth famous exegesis of the vision must be provided by this angel.[17] In the Book of Daniel, the process goes one step further in that Daniel has no direct communication with God. The angel as exegete becomes vital for Daniel so that angelic aid is quite naturally expected after any given vision. Thus after the vision of the ram and the goat, the texts reads:

> And it came to pass, when I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, that I sought to understand it; and, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man. And I heard the voice of a man between the banks of Ulai, who called, and said: "Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision" (Dan. 8:15-16).

At this point having developed a sense of what it is that the angels of the Bible do, one can still ask exactly who these many angels are. From what has already been said above it is clear that the Bible does not offer much detail with which to form an answer to this question. In fact, despite the abundance of angelic activity in the Bible, an overall lack of definition exists concerning the angels. The very fact that the same word, "mal'ach," can be used interchangeably (sometimes within the space of one verse) for both heavenly and human figures indicates this lack of clarity.[18] In addition, although many angels with important functions are seen, such very important angels as the one involved in taking Israel out of Egypt and the one who destroys the Assyrian army are never seen. Other angels are described with the emphasis being on what they do as opposed to who they are.[19] And even a named angel, such as Gabriel, is not much more concrete than other angels since he, like most of them, only acts because he has been sent by God to do so.

A further illustration of this lack of definition regarding the identity of the biblical angel arises in connection with the term "ha-satan." Here one must be careful not to read into the biblical

texts associations that only suit the Satan of post-biblical literature, for in his main biblical appearances, ha-satan is not at all the tempter or seducer of later times.[20] Instead the term is used in both Job 1 and Zechariah 3 to designate a position in the heavenly court, the position being that of the prosecution. Indeed since the term does not refer to a specific angel as much as it does to one angelic function, essentially nothing is learned about the identity of the angel who does the heavenly accusing. From Zechariah 3:2, in fact, one only learns that the accuser does his job well enough for God to insist that he relent. As is the case with most other angels, the emphasis is on the task the angel carries out rather than on the angel himself.

In short, the angelology of the Bible is not a developed system. It lacks the detail that emerges in later Jewish literature even though it certainly sets the stage for these later developments. As von Rad comments:

> The Old Testament certainly speaks openly here and there of heavenly beings. But it is remarkable that in the majority of the references, the way in which the beings are thought of never rises above a certain colorlessness and indistinctness.[21]

Chapter 2

ANGELS IN THE APOCRYPHA AND PSEUDEPIGRAPHA

Reading the apocryphal and pseudepigraphic literature, one encounters a more elaborate image of angels than that presented in the Bible. At the simplest level this means that the angels of this literature are more numerous[1] and often have personal names.[2] They are also arranged in a hierarchical manner that was absent in the Bible.[3] In addition, the angels of these texts become symbols of moral and intellectual fitness so that comments begin to appear in the literature regarding the relative status of humans vis a vis angels. Thus Syriac Baruch promises that following the final day of judgment, the righteous will dwell alongside the angels in the heights of the world and as a reward for their merit be made equal, if not superior, to the angels in moral stature.[4] Elsewhere both Ethiopic and Slavonic Enoch indicate that the deserving human can be made privy to secrets which even the angels, despite their proximity to God and consequent privileges, do not know.[5]

In particular at this point in the development of Jewish angelology, the figure of an actually malevolent angel becomes more distinct. The biblical roots of this figure are indicated by the fact that at least one of

the functions his followers fulfill under the name of "satans" is that of accusing human beings in the heavenly court.[6] At the same time an angel bearing the personal name Satan is also understood to have influence beyond the courtroom so that Manasseh's evil actions are explained by saying: "Manasseh forsook the service of the God of his fathers and he served Satan and his angels and his powers" (Martyrdom of Isaiah 2:2).

Since the angelology in this stratum is not particularly consistent or systematic, however, the name Satan is not always found in descriptions of the evil angel. Instead such names as Mastema, Azazel, Semjaza, and Belial are used to refer to an angelic being whose actions span the gamut from accusation to seduction to pure malice.[7]

The Book of Jubilees, for example, portrays Mastema as a relentless accuser who has to be bound by the other angels during Israel's exodus from Egypt lest he impugn Israel before God and prevent their liberation (48:18). Elsewhere Jubilees presents a more active and even more sinister Mastema who, in a reworking of the biblical text, becomes the one who attacks Moses on his return from Midian in order to prevent him from aiding enslaved Israel (48:3). Even after the Hebrew slaves have left Egypt Mastema remains undaunted, and it is at his suggestion that the Egyptians decide to pursue and recapture their former slaves (48:12).

A certain ambiguity is also involved in the image of the evil angel

insofar as while he does act as a very forceful negative power in the universe, he nevertheless remains an angel of God. Thus on the one hand, the angel clearly has his limits. For this reason, when Noah's children are led astray by Mastema and his followers, Noah can pray to God for His assistance.[8] Noah can do this because he knows that Mastema only acts within the boundaries that are ultimately set for him by God. As was the case in the Bible, the fractious angel here can only frustrate human plans because such frustrations are part of God's overall plan. On the other hand, Levi's blessing to his children bespeaks a recognition of some significant and real independence on the part of the evil angel. Levi reminds his children of an important choice they must make: "And now, my children, ye have heard all; choose, therefore, for yourselves either the light or the darkness, either the law of the Lord or the works of Belial" (Testament of Levi 19:1). Although the fractious angel may not be a fully independent cosmic adversary for God here, he is potentially so. The implications of Levi's words are that the angel's ways have the potential of being at odds with God's. And as will be shown later, the implications for dualism in the development of the evil angel and legends surrounding him did not go unnoticed by the rabbis.[9]

Bearing this potential for dualism in mind, one particular series of legends first developed in the pseudepigraphic literature becomes important. These are the legends telling the story of the fallen angels in

which one and sometimes many angels create substantial and irreversible havoc within creation.[10] In some versions of the myth the single angel known as Satan rebels against God at the time of creation in order to set himself up as ruler of the universe. As punishment for this attempt, he is cast down from heaven, whereupon out of his anger against God and jealousy of man, he proceeds to lead Adam to sin.[11] Other versions of the myth relate that a whole group of angels became enamored of human women and that in the process of pursuing these women, the angels corrupted humanity.[12]

What unites these various accounts is that each of them is basically an attempt at a theodicy. Writing about the variations within Ethiopic Enoch alone, Bernard Bamberger says: "Despite variations in detail, all these stories have a single outlook. They seek to account for evil, specifically for moral evil, through the fall of the angels."[13] In this regard, Ethiopic Enoch describes quite clearly what ensued as a consequence of the fall of the angels. In the words of the four angels closest to God:

> ...the whole earth has thereby been filled with blood and unrighteousness. And now, behold, the souls of those who have died are crying and making their suit to the gates of heaven, and their lamentations have ascended and cannot cease because of the lawless deeds which are wrought on the earth (Ethiopic Enoch 9:10).

According to the myth here, evil is the result of an unfortunate incursion by angels into the human world. Similarly elsewhere in the

pseudepigrapha where this fallen angel motif appears, it can be understood as one route taken by certain Jews of the intertestamental period to explain the origins of evil.

Turning to the overall functions performed by angels in the apocryphal and pseudepigraphic literature, one finds several new ones beyond those carried out by angels in the Bible. For the first time angels are said to be involved in the very functioning of the cosmos. They have responsibility for the full range of natural phenomena from the ordering of the heavenly bodies to the passage of seasons, the flowing of rivers and seas, and the growth of fruits and grains.[14] Angels teach as well. Thus even as the fallen angels corrupted humankind, they also imparted practical knowledge such as methods for the making of swords and knives plus general knowledge of metallurgy and astronomy.[15] Adam is said to have learned agriculture from Michael later in time[16] while Abraham in his time learned Hebrew from another angel.[17]

In addition, the angels of this literature become involved in heavenly bookkeeping. As Moses learns from the angel of the presence speaking to him in Jubilees, angels observe and record the deeds of all people on heavenly tablets so that what they do is remembered and so that each person ultimately receives the reward or punishment that is his due.[18] The departure here in comparison to the Bible is actually not the idea of their being heavenly records of each person's actions.

This idea is, in fact, already assumed in a text such as Malachi 3:16 where the prophet says "a book of remembrance" is used by God to catalogue the deeds of the righteous. (Isaiah 65:6 indicates that God follows the same procedure for the evil.) The new development in this later literature then involves specifying exactly who supervises the books. This, one learns, is the responsibility of the angels.

Indeed it follows quite logically that the angels should be the bookkeepers for humanity since the angels presented in these texts are already very much in touch with the actions of individual people. As indicated previously, the Bible primarily envisages angels aiding or chastising individual humans in specific, ad hoc circumstances. By and large the biblical angels are present with individuals because they are sent on a particular mission by God and only cursory reference is made to the possibility of an angel's having an on-going responsibility for a given individual.[19] Precisely this idea, however, is developed in the literature following the Bible, the result being that angels take on the function of being constant companions for individuals. In some instances this seems to mean that angels are assigned to both righteous and wicked persons and that they fulfill their function merely by reporting on their assigned human's deeds.[20] Elsewhere the angel given charge of a human not only observes but also guards and actively helps him. Working within this framework, the author of Jubilees has

Isaac calm Rebekah's fear for Jacob by saying: "Fear thou not on account of Jacob; for the guardian of Jacob is great and powerful and honored, and praised more than the guardian of Esau" (Jubilees 35:17).[21] Clearly, therefore, the angels do watch and even help individual humans, and for this reason they are well-suited among other things for preparing the heavenly tablets.

There are also texts in the apocryphal/pseudepigraphic stratum which describe further partisan activities of the angels. That is, alongside those instances where angels are said to assist their individual charges down upon the earth, other texts describe angels functioning in the role of heavenly intercessors. As such the angels of this period carry fewer messages from God to humans than did their counterparts in the Bible. Instead they assume the more active role of interceding for humans before God by conveying messages or prayers from humans back to God. The angel Raphael tells Tobit and his son that this is one of his duties,[22] and in Ethiopic Enoch the angels are pictured as actually initiating prayers of their own urging the acceptance of human petitions.[23]

In line with the developments foreshadowed above in Job and Zechariah,[24] the angels also act as general advocates for humans. The Apocalypse of Moses, for example, offers a dramatic account of angelic intercession on behalf of Adam in which, prayers aside, the angels attempt to win leniency for Adam. This means that while he

is still alive they urge God to deal with Adam generously, and when Adam dies they precede his chariot into heaven reminding God that Adam for all his faults was at least made in the divine image.[25]

Advocacy by the angels carries over from the defence of the individual to the defence of groups as well. This is the case since the kind of angelic guardianship extended to individuals in this literature is also extended to groups. Thus at least some attention is given to the idea expressed in Daniel that the various nations have their own angelic patrons,[26] and still more attention is focused on the angels' particular concern for Israel. In a passage which actually predates Daniel, one learns that Michael is specifically responsible for Israel's welfare,[27] and elsewhere in a later passage, Israel is again assumed to merit special attention insofar as an angel tells Levi:

> I am the angel who intercedeth for the nation of Israel that they may not be smitten utterly for every evil spirit attacketh it (Testament of Levi 5:6).[28]

A further function performed by angels of the post-biblical literature involves chastisement. In contrast to the Bible, where the myth of the fallen angels is not even found, the task of chastisement is first undertaken by angels in this literature when they are sent to carry out the provisional punishment of the fallen angels at the beginning of history.[29] In addition, the chastisement carried out by angels in the post-biblical literature is different from the Bible's angelic chastise-

ment because it tends to be a chastisement that occurs in the after-life or at the eschaton. It is also chastisement directed more towards the individual sinner as opposed to the collectivity. Consequently the Enoch of Slavonic Enoch discovers in the third heaven a place of "cruel darkness and unillumined gloom" (10:2) where angels ceaselessly punish the unrighteous. The Enoch of Ethiopic Enoch is made privy to an equally sobering vision as he sees the various instruments being prepared by the angels for the last judgment of all unrighteous persons plus the fallen angels when history comes to an end.[30]

The last function attributed to the angels at this point in the development of angelology is the two fold one of exegete and bearer of knowledge. However inasmuch as this function is outlined in the pseudepigrapha in terms similar to those found in Zechariah and Daniel, a simple distinction between biblical and post-biblical literature becomes misleading here. Especially since parts of Ethiopic Enoch were written even before the canonical Book of Daniel, one might more appropriately discuss this last angelic function using the general term, "post-exilic." One therefore sees the pseudepigraphic works under consideration as post-exilic works which develop certain themes common to other post-exilic works such as Zechariah and Daniel.

In these terms the post-exilic literature is quite consistent insofar as within it angels do continue to interpret visions for humans. For example, just as Daniel relies on an angel for the exegesis of his

mysterious visions, Baruch makes use of the angel Ramiel in probing the meaning of the cloud vision he receives.[31] At the same time the non-canonical post-exilic works present increasingly complex visions which often involve the hero's being transported on a journey through the heavens. The task of guiding the hero on such a journey and then explaining to him what he sees on the way is one that also falls to angels.[32] In addition, the angels do not only interpret visions or phenomena that humans encounter. Rather, on occasion they simply reveal new knowledge to the chosen human without the use of any intervening symbols. Enoch describes just such functioning of an angel which leads to his learning the very deepest secrets of the world:

> And the angel Michael seized me by the right hand,
> And lifted me up and led me forth into all the secrets
> And he showed me all the secrets of righteousness
> (Ethiopic Enoch 71:3).[33]

In this final function as bearer of knowledge, then, the angel of the post-exilic literature is quite different from his pre-exilic ancestor. Indeed returning to the overall categories of biblical as opposed to apocryphal/pseudepigraphic literature, it can be seen that significant developments occur in the entire field of angelology. In a word, the texts of this later material present more angels undertaking more activities and often doing so without the sense of having been sent on a "mission" by God Himself. Although most angels do not have what could actually be called their own initiative and although any one angel

seems to perform only one of the many functions attributed to angels in general, the post-biblical angel has on the whole become less of the original biblical mal'ach. No longer emissary, he has become to at least some extent an independent figure in God's world.

Chapter 3

ANGELS IN RABBINIC LITERATURE

In the context of a rather substantial post-biblical angelology, the rabbinic texts of the early common era emerge. In many respects these texts describe angels in a fashion similar to those described above. Consequently there are angels in rabbinic literature who oversee the natural phenomena of the universe[1] and who to some extent act as teachers[2] and heavenly bookkeepers.[3] Other angels are responsible for guarding both individuals and groups; while as part of their functioning as guardians, some angels also act as intercessors on behalf of deserving individuals in general and Israel in particular. To round out the picture, a final group of angels is even responsible for the chastisement of the unrighteous.[4]

One particular area which receives a good deal of attention in rabbinic literature is the heavenly court. This motif is an old one with roots extending back to the Bible and with prominence in the apocryphal/pseudepigraphic literature as well.[5] One variation on this motif, however, which becomes quite prevalent only in the rabbinic literature is foreshadowed in just a few biblical passages.[6] This is the idea that

God takes council with the angels when he makes His decisions. That is to say, up until the rabbinic texts there are many references to God's celestial assembly and to the presence of angels there as advocates and sometimes accusers, but only passing attention is paid to an actual give-and-take between God and the angels. It is, then, rabbinic literature which develops this theme of consultation.[7] In doing this the literature also employs two unique terms, pamalya shel ma'la and bet din shel ma'la. The terms refer to the heavenly council, which itself becomes the setting for many of the most significant passages concerning angels to be presented in the course of these pages.

Before discussing such passages, however, it should be noted that in at least some areas the rabbis do reduce the scope of angelic activity. This occurs quite clearly in the case of the angel as exegete and bearer of revelation, the result being that for the most part the rabbis no longer attribute this function to the angels. One explanation for this change in the image of the angel derives from the simple fact that the rabbis did not use the apocalyptic genre. Since this was the format in which the angels had been called upon to make known the "secrets of the universe," it stands to reason that as the genre receded in use, the exegetical function of the angels was also bound to wane.

In addition, several rabbinic texts which deal with instances of

revelation are characterized by polemic tendencies that suggest further reasons for the angels' being phased out of revelation. One such text allows for an angelic presence at Sinai, but by its cautionary note regarding the angels indicates that certain tensions may have arisen over the proper role of the angels:

> R. Levi said that from the time at Mount Sinai when the Holy One, blessed be He, descended, they /Israel/ merited saying the Shma. R. Ami of Jaffa said 22,000 ministering angels descended with Him, as it is said: "The chariots of God are myriads [אלפי שנאן] " (Ps. 68:18). How is שנאן to be understood except as "the most beautiful [הנאין] and most splendid of the angels;" that is, Michael with his band and Gabriel with his band. When Israel caught sight of them, seeing them so splendid and beautiful, Israel was overawed. However as soon as the Holy One, blessed by He, noticed Israel, He said to them: "Do not go astray after any of these angels who have descended with me. All of them are only my servants. 'I the Lord am your God' (Ex. 6:7). 'I the Lord am your God' (Ex. 20:2)." At that point Israel affirmed the unity of the Holy One, blessed be He's kingdom. They said to each other: "Hear, O Israel..." (Deut. 6:4).[8]

God's pointed admonition to biblical Israel may very well be the rabbis' way of admonishing some of their own contemporaries who were inclined to overestimate the power and significance of angels. That this may have been a problem in Jewish circles is further suggested by the fact that on several occasions the rabbis censure those who would actually pray to the angels.[9]

More specifically in terms of the actual communication between

God and Israel, other texts are at pains to stress the insignificance of angelic involvement at key instances of revelation. One Tannaitic comment, for example, reads as follows: "Moses received the Torah from Sinai, not through an angel and not through a seraph, but from the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He."[10] Although it is impossible to know exactly what cultural patterns this passage's authors may have encountered, the fact that Philo, Josephus, and the New Testament all believe the Sinaitic revelation was carried out by angels suggests one reason for the passage's explicit insistence that angels played no part at Sinai.[11] In reaction to the Greek authors, the rabbis are apparently defending their belief in the immanence of God and His immediate concern for Israel. With this in mind, they deny a role to the angels in revelation.

Still another and more direct instance of polemical intent on the part of the rabbis occurs in a later discussion of Sinai.[12] There R. Yochanan b. Nappaha's position that at Sinai the angels carried each commandment from God's mouth to each individual Israelite is countered by several opinions that allow the angels no role whatsoever in the transmission of the commandments. What could account for the different approaches in this case? According to Ephraim Urbach,[13] the rabbis who offer opinions counter to Yochanan's may have done so in reaction to a specific Christian interpretation of the Sinai event which used Yochanan's approach as its springboard. In particular,

Urbach cites a homily by Origen which incorporates almost word for word Yochanan's formulation of the idea that the angels mediated at Sinai. The homily then goes on to conclude that if Judaism's basic revelation was mediated by angels, it must be inferior to Christian revelation which occurs through the unmediated and direct contact of a Christian with God's very son. Through this homiletical interpretation of Yochanan's ideas regarding the angels at Sinai, Origen secures authentic revelation only for Christianity.

Nevertheless, Urbach suggests, Yochanan's successors were not to be outdone. Consequently they fashioned their homilies in which the Sinai revelation is made a direct one through the elimination of the angels as bearers of revelation. As Judaism's basic revelation therefore emerges as having been an unmediated one, Christianity's claim of superiority is negated. The reworking of the angels' involvement at Sinai proves that Judaism began with an authentic revelation and that Origen's argument for the unique quality of Christianity is unfounded.

Another motif which is not found in rabbinic literature until rather late works such as Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer[14] is that of the fallen angels. Thus R. Simeon b. Yochai of the second century takes the phrase "b'nei elohim" (Genesis 6:2), which was key to the development of the fallen angel story in the pseudepigrapha, and curses those who translate it as "sons of God." Instead he insists that it refers to

the "sons of judges."[15] In the Tanchuma Buber, Rabbis Judah and Nehemiah also reveal how negligible the myth of the fallen angels was for them through their exegeses of the word "vayinachem" in Genesis 6:6.[16] According to each rabbi, God was very much aware of both the fact that sin had emerged in His creation only because of human nature and the fact that the angels were distinguished from humanity precisely because of their sinlessness. Nehemiah notes that God was even "comforted" by the realization that by not placing humans in the realm of the angels, He had made it impossible for them to rouse the angels to rebellion! In other words, humans and not the angels were the original rebels.

In point of fact, it will become apparent later that the innocence of the angels is an important motif in rabbinic angelology. Bamberger even suggests that the rabbis who developed the motif may have had polemical intent in mind.[17] By minimizing the possibility of angelic rebellion, they sought to suppress the myth of the fallen angels and they sought this because the theodicy involved in this myth was unacceptable to them. The myth did, of course, explain how evil could exist in a universe created by the good God, but the myth's implications also created potential problems for the rabbis. As Bamberger puts it:

> ...no matter how subtly one may elaborate this theory, it still leaves some Satan or Azazel in active opposition to God...Maybe God can destroy

> him at any time, and will do so some day. But for the moment he remains an active and determined enemy of God and man.[18]

Thus the rabbis were concerned with the dualistic implications of the fallen angel story. In addition, they were sensitive to the fact that:

> The average person looks on the Prince of Evil with a fear that amounts almost to reverence. To escape the Devil may become a more pressing concern than to serve God.[19]

Lest this negative concern become too prominent in the minds of Jews and thereby take their minds off the larger task of building God's kingdom, Bamberger here again suggests that the rabbis stepped away from the myth at hand.

These last considerations also play a role in the rabbis' presentation of Satan, the result being that with the exception of a late text such as Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer,[20] the rabbis eliminate the image of Satan as the rebel. In contrast to the pseudepigraphic literature, they make no mention of his having fallen from God's good graces or of an ultimate punishment for him in the future. In fact, the very reason for rebellion in the pseudepigraphic literature is turned around in the rabbinic literature, and instead of being asked by God to make obeisance before Adam, the angels in the rabbinic literature are faulted for coming up with the very idea of worshipping Adam.[21]

Despite this particular reworking of Satan's image, he does remain quite real for the rabbis. In two prayers attributed to Judah

Ha-Nasi, for example, Judah includes a request that Satan not gain influence over his life.[22] R. Yosi's instruction that "one should not open his mouth to Satan" indicates too that he and those who quoted him were sensitive to the ever-present threat of Satan, who in their estimation was ready and willing to pounce on any incautious utterance.[23] Mar Samuel must also have had this sensitivity to the powers of Satan, for he took pains never to ride on a ferry unless there was also a non-Jewish passenger with him. As he explained it: "Satan does not have power over two nations at the same time."[24]

In particular, the two functions of accusation and seduction were understood by the rabbis to be the most characteristic of Satan's activities. They felt that Satan carried out these functions in their own lives[25] and they also imagined that he had done the same in their ancestors' lives. To cite only two examples, the rabbis develop a theme previously encountered in the Book of Jubilees and portray Satan seizing the opportunity presented by the imminent deliverance of Israel from Egypt to accuse Israel of the many sins they have committed.[26] Secondly, as the seducer, the rabbis picture Satan at the time of King David taking on the guise of a bird and purposely flying in front of the lattic concealing Bathsheba as she bathed. Seeing "the bird," David shot an arrow at him which broke the screen protecting Bathsheba and revealed her as someone whom David decided he ought to get to know better.[27]

Most important in each of these illustrations is the fact that Satan does not act against God. In the one case he merely presents the strict and true reality of Israel's past doings before God as Judge of the world, and in the other he only tempts David because God has given him instructions to do so.

One finds on the whole that the Satan of the rabbis is, in fact, cast along lines quite similar to those of his biblical namesake. As the rabbis present him, he, like the biblical Satan, is basically an agent of God. What he does is often unsavory. He is certainly not a popular figure, but he is as necessary a component of the universe as is the evil inclination. Indeed Resh Lakish even comments that Satan can be equated with the evil inclination.[28] Working externally, Satan acts as the evil inclination does internally to challenge unreflective morality and thereby force the individual to make his moral choices under the strictest scrutiny and with fully conscious intention.

Taken as a whole, the direction of development in Jewish angelology from the biblical stratum down to the rabbinic seems to be one of general expansion. The rabbis do, of course, modify and even reject certain developments in the pseudepigraphic literature which concern the exegetical angel, the fallen angels, and Satan, but they nonetheless retain a rich and varied image of the angel. This involves them in embellishing many biblical tales with accounts of angelic involvement,[29] and it also means that they encounter angels in their own lives.[30] For that matter, even though Satan has his definite limits, the rabbinic

literature reflects a belief in a vast world of demons. This is particularly true for the Babylonian world where R. Huna remarks: "Every one among us has a thousand [demons] on his left hand and ten thousand on his right hand."[31] To a lesser extent, it also holds true for the Palestinian environment where even the Mishnah, which makes no mention of angels, assumes the reality of some sort of demons.[32]

One therefore has a very rich spirit world in rabbinic literature composed of demons and angels, the latter of which are the particular focus of this study. Moreover the intriguing question which follows on this statement has to do with the way in which the rabbis' belief in a spirit world can be integrated into what are considered to be the basic rubrics of rabbinic theology. In other words, apart from the details of rabbinic theology, the general categories of that multifaceted theology are usually thought to be God, Torah, and Israel. Put schematically, one could say that rabbinic theology attempts to describe the story of God and Israel's interactions and the role of Torah in furthering the God-Israel relationship. The problem, however, is how the angels who control natural phenomena, guard humans, and do so much more fit into this standard triad structure. Perhaps the angels' role in the universe is significant enough for them to be introduced alongside God and Israel as major actors in the cosmos? In that case there would be four major constituents to rabbinic theology: God, Torah,

Israel, and the angels.

In the final analysis such a change proves unnecessary. This is so because the belief in the angels always has a context. It is not independent of other beliefs. In fact, it only makes sense where the specific beliefs surrounding God, Torah, and Israel are first presupposed. For this reason, although angels may, for example, control the natural phenomena, it is important to note that they do not create them. God is responsible for this, and the rabbis pointedly stress that He is also responsible for the very creation of the angels.[33] Only after God has created, therefore, are there natural phenomena and angels to oversee them. Similarly, the image of the angel as a guardian only has meaning if there are standards by which to decide who deserves protection and who does not. Since standards are what the Torah contains, one sees that the angel as guardian can only emerge where there is Torah to obey and beyond that where there is a God to judge the quality of obedience. 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. For even if an angel hinders Esau's hunting so that Jacob can receive Isaac's blessing first, it is clear that the angel only acts in fulfillment of God's overall plan.

The point is that as plentiful and active as they are, the angels

do not form what amounts to an a priori constituent of rabbinic thought as do God, Torah, and Israel. Instead what they do gains meaning because it is done within this triadic framework. In fact, given the subordination of the angels to the three fundamental building blocks, Max Kadushin goes so far as to say that the rabbis are basically not concerned with the concrete existence of the angels.[35] In saying this Kadushin points to an important aspect of rabbinic angelology, but he also oversimplifies a more complex reality. For the fact of the matter is that the rabbis undoubtedly believe sincerely in a concrete spirit world that affected their ancestors and affects them as well on a daily basis. Alongside this literal belief in angels, however, the rabbis also take a less literal approach toward the angels. As the body of this thesis will attempt to demonstrate, this latter approach is the one that informs almost all of the developed sermons in the rabbinic literature.

The meaning of all this is that the rabbis develop a previously unrecognized potential in angelology. They do this by tailoring the appearance of angels in their sermons to suit homiletic ends. That is, the angels function in these sermons as foils or literary means of highlighting the larger point being made. In this regard, the sermons in which the angels appear are sermons that concern the basic touchstones of rabbinic thought referred to above. The angels are used by the rabbis to shed light on the meaning and implications of

these concepts. Specifically, the midrashim are constructed so that as the angels time and again challenge, query, or complain in different situations, the various facets of the basic rabbinic terms are elucidated.

As mentioned before, the subtlety underlying rabbinic angelology is that the rabbis do manage to embrace both the non-literal and literal approaches to the angels. To this point in the discussion, the focus has primarily been on the literal belief of the rabbis. Henceforth the analysis will deal with the way in which from a literary and theological viewpoint the rabbis transcend straightforward angelology. When they do this, they cast the angels in situations that point beyond the angels themselves to, as Slonimsky would have it,[36] a larger philosophy implicit in the midrash.

Chapter 4

CONCERNING HUMANITY

Commenting on the creation of the first human being, the Mishnah raises a fascinating issue: Why did God begin the world with only one person as opposed to beginning it with many? The response is as follows:

> For this reason was man created alone...for the sake of peace among men, that one might not say to his fellow: "My father was greater than thine."[1]

Notwithstanding the centrality of Israel elsewhere in rabbinic thinking, the focus of the passage quoted here is towards the common heritage of all human beings. The text embodies the notion that humanity has a shared beginning. It points too towards a helpful distinction that can be made in approaching the first of the three rabbinic categories mentioned above. For in discussing Israel and its situation, one cannot help but come across matters which affect the life of the individual Jew less because he is specifically a Jew than because he is a human being. There are life situations that pertain to him simply because, as the Mishnah relates, he like all his fellows descends from Adam and therefore shares Adam's strengths as well as his weaknesses.

Certainly rabbinic theology concentrates a great deal on the particular people Israel, but its discussions of Israel also presuppose certain beliefs about the individual person per se. Many of the rabbis in fact create homilies that are directed towards these universal aspects of the human condition, and in many of these sermons the rabbis make use of angels. How the angels are employed so as to deepen the rabbis' discussion of the human situation is the subject of this chapter.

An exposition based on Genesis 1:2 sets the tone for the rabbinic appreciation of the issue at hand.

> Now the earth was תהו ובהו . R. Abbahu and R. Judah b. R. Simon [gave the following illustrations]. R. Abbahu said: This may be compared to the case of a king who bought two slaves on the same bill of sale and at the same price. One he ordered to be supported at the public expense, while the other he ordered to toil for his bread. The latter sat bewildered and astonished [תהו ובהו]. "Both of us were bought at the same price," exclaimed he, "yet he is supported from the treasury whilst I have to gain my bread by my toil!" Thus the earth sat bewildered and astonished, saying: "The celestial beings and the terrestial ones were created at the same time: yet the celestial beings are fed by the radiance of the Shechinah, whereas the terrestial beings, if they do not toil, do not eat. Strange it is indeed!" R. Judah b. R. Simon said: Compare this case to a king who bought two bondmaids, both on the same bill of sale and at the same price. One he commanded not to stir out from the palace, while for the other he decreed banishment. The latter sat bewildered and astonished. Both of us were bought on the same bill of sale, and at the same price," she exclaimed, "yet she does not stir

> from the palace while against me he has decreed banishment. How amazing!" Thus the earth sat bewildered and astonished, saying: "The celestial and the terrestial beings were created at the same time: why do the former live [eternally], whereas the latter are mortal?" Therefore, Now the earth was bewildered and astonished [תהו ובהו].[2]

In this passage the angels themselves are not active. They are nevertheless important for the development of the passage since the earth is only prompted to question the status of humanity when that status is brought into comparison with the angels' status. Just as the less fortunate slave and bondmaid recognize the deprivation involved in their situations by comparing them to their favored partners' situations, the reality of the human situation is brought into sharp relief through comparison to the angelic situation. The point which the text then makes is that from the beginning human life has not been convenient. On the contrary, it has been characerized by difficulties which have emerged out of the fact of human finitude. As appealing as it might be for humans to live without limits and without demands, the text acknowledges the harsh truth that life must involve work and death, frustration and loss. The "angelic" mode of existence is simply not an option for flesh and blood human beings.

Such a sobering assessment of the human condition is not restricted to this last passage alone. It finds further expression, for example, in a famous passage which makes its point without the use

of angels. In the selection, the schools of Hillel and Shammai debate whether humanity should have been created at all, and after two and a half years they reach the decision that creation was an error.[3] In other words, they come to the conclusion that the condition of humanity is fundamentally flawed. In their estimation, something seems to be wrong or askew at the very root of the human situation which gives that situation the characeristics of an ongoing problem.

As will be seen, these two texts do not represent the final rabbinic assessment of the human condition. Nevertheless they are still significant because they point to certain issues which must have concerned the rabbis and the people to whom they preached. For even if as Jews the rabbis and their followers saw purpose and direction in the overall pattern of history, they must also have been prey to the kind of doubts created by life in the massive empires of their age. As described by Ellis Rivkin, the forces which would have led in part to the posing of what are basically existential questions in the texts above came into play after the time of Alexander the Great. At that time, the spread of urbanization plus other rapid and massive political and cultural changes in the Mediterranean world presented individual persons with an array of previously unknown human problems.

> ...The expansion of trade and commerce, the growth of industry, the ebb and flow of prosperity bound merchants, artisans, craftsmen, peasants

> into novel relationships and unanticipated interconnections. The *polis* revolution uprooted the people, intermixed the cultures, blended the religions and stripped the individual of his former identity. It confronted the merchant, the artisan, the craftsman, the peasant, the sage, and the priest with a question never before posed on so cosmic a scale: What is the individual, the separate person, the one severed from the many, the isolated, lonely soul? Who is to be mindful of him, and take him into account?... And the Jews wherever they might be had to ask themselves the searing question: Who are we, and why are we, and what are we? Thrown on our individual resources, what kind of identity will save us?[4]

The problems described by Rivkin could only have been compounded in the common era as a viewpoint like that of Gnosticism began to gain popularity in and around Palestine. For people living out the consequences of the polis revolution and perhaps already feeling alienated from sources of meaning in their lives, the message of Gnosticism was that creation as a whole constituted a conspiracy against the true God. Human beings, by virtue of their having been created through the actions of the demiurge, were unable themselves to bridge the gap to the hidden and real God, and as a result their lives were bound to be characterized by futility. According to Gnosticism, their actions could not redeem the world because their domain, the terrestial and material domain, was by definition a flawed and evil level of existence.[5]

Couple these tremendous problems with the uprooting and disloca-

tion that affected the Jews of the early common era and one can sense the mindset out of which the two texts above emerge. They both reflect the kind of insecurity and perplexity that the rabbis could have felt in a world which seemed quite inhospitable to humanity in general and to Jewish humans in particular. The truth of the matter is that under such circumstances it would have been easy to despair altogether regarding existence; however the rabbis did not follow that route. Specifically, the ultimate decision in the debate between the houses of Hillel and Shammai is that despite the unfortunate fact of creation, one must persevere and make the very best of whatever possibilities existence may afford.

More than that, the rabbis develop a significant number of other midrashim in which they quite graphically articulate their existential concerns. These midrashim are set in the heavenly assembly and in the passages the angels of the court are made to assume the role of prosecutor en masse.[6] The agonizing existential questions which may have been in the back of the people's minds are then brought out into the open by being placed in the mouths of the angels as accusations centering around the fact of human fallibility. As the angels mount their arguments, however, they soon discover that they are in disagreement with God. Their opposition to humanity leads God to react by taking sides with humanity. He actively embraces humanity and as He does this He effectively quiets the fears of those

who might believe that the human situation is not worthy of divine attention.

One classic example of what could be called this genre of midrashim occurs early in Genesis Rabbah where the issue of sin is confronted. In terms of the dilemmas created by their contemporary situation, one can imagine the rabbis posing a series of problems for themselves and on behalf of their followers regarding sin. Given the unmistakeable moral limitations of human beings, for example, it could be supposed that God has no real reason for continuing to tolerate His blemished creations. According to those thinking along Gnostic lines, the whole notion of creation may have been foreign to God. In addition, from the perspective of the single person, the problem could be put even more personally. Given my inability to avoid falling short of the highest moral ideals, why or how should God continue to care for me? Furthermore, if I am actually alienated from God (as I believe I very well may be), then what ultimate and purposeful goals can I ever achieve on my own?

These several concerns seem to find representation in the selections which follow. R. Chanina begins:

> When He /God/ came to create Adam He took counsel with the ministering angels, saying to them: "Let us make man" (Gen. 1:26). "What shall his character be?" asked they. "Righteous men shall spring from him," He answered, as it is written: "For the Lord knoweth / יודע / the way of the righteous" (Ps. 1:16), which means

> that the Lord made known [הודיע] the way of the righteous to the ministering angels; "But the way of the wicked shall perish" (Ps. 1:6): He destroyed [hid] it from them. He revealed to them that the righteous would arise from him, but He did not reveal to them that the wicked would spring from him, for had He revealed to them that the wicked would spring from him; the quality of Justice would not have permitted him to be created.
> R. Simon said: When the Holy One, blessed be He, came to create Adam, the ministering angels formed themselves into groups and parties, some of them saying: "Let him be created," whilst others urged: "Let him not be created." Thus it is written: "Love and truth fought together, Righteousness and peace combated each other" (Ps. 85:11). Love said: "Let him be created because he will dispense acts of love." Truth said: "Let him not be created because he is compounded of falsehood." Righteousness said: "Let him be created because he will perform righteous deeds." Peace said: "Let him not be created because he is full of strife." What did the Lord do? He took truth and cast it to the ground. Said the ministering angels before the Holy One, blessed be He: "Sovereign of the Universe! Why dost Thou despise Thy seal? Let truth arise from the earth!" Hence it is written: "Let truth spring up from the earth" (Ps. 85:12).[7]

Behind the words of these passages by Chanina and Simon the anxieties mentioned above are quite apparent. The actual wickedness, falsehood, and strife among humans of their day must have been reason enough to make the rabbis and the people wonder whether God could care at all for His creatures, and what the *midrashim* do is to project this very question up to heaven and back to the beginning of time. In that setting, a response to the problem

is formulated. The angels articulate the fears of an insecure humanity as actual accusations against that humanity, and by outmaneuvering the angels God indicates how He relates to His imperfect human creations. His actions demonstrate to the angels and obviously to the audience for the midrashim that He is well aware of the fact that human beings are not models of heavenly ideals. At the same time God's actions also demonstrate that He does not expect His creatures to be what they are not. In other words, He recognizes that because they are not angels, humans cannot and need not live by "angelic" standards. Different standards are in order, and when they are applied, God is able to defend humanity's rightful place in creation.

The texts' lesson is that even though He is fully aware of humanity's limitations, God still considers humanity essential to His world. Wanting humanity as much as He does, then, God is willing to make allowances so that creation can be completed. Whether this involves temporarily ignoring the weaknesses of humanity or inclining towards less stringent criteria in judging humanity, God is clearly intent on embracing His final creation. As a response to the fears that may have been in the minds of the rabbis' audiences, the present two midrashim are certainly very effective. In these terms, what they amount to is the denial of a despairing evaluation of the human condition and the endorsement of a positive sense of worth and purpose

on the part of individual persons.

In the two midrashim at hand, then, one sees a clear illustration of the way in which at least two rabbis use angels to make their larger homiletic point. A further question is whether one can also say that the angels in these passages have been used in what was referred to above as a non-literal manner. Especially in the text by R. Chanina, this seems to be the case. For if one reads the passage immediately before Chanina's, one sees how the same point can be made via the same motif except that one text inserts angels while the other does not. The "non-angelic" midrash develops as follows:

> R. Berekiah said: When the Holy One, blessed be He, came to create Adam, He saw righteous and wicked arising from him. Said He: "If I create him, wicked men will spring from him; if I do not create him, how are the righteous to spring from him?" What then did the Lord do? He removed the way of the wicked out of His sight and associated the quality of mercy with Himself and created him, as it is written: For the Lord regardeth the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked shall perish /_ תאבד _/" (Ps. 1:6). What does תאבד mean? He destroyed it /_ איבדה _/ from before His sight and associated the quality of mercy with Himself and created him.[8]

The points of contact between the two midrashim are striking. Thus in Berekiah's offering God expresses concern over the moral stature of Adam while in Chanina's offering, that concern is attributed to the angels. Again in the first passage God handles the problem by concealing the wicked offspring of Adam while in the second He follows

the same procedure and only reveals part of the full scenario. After this, Berekiah explains that God acted as He did so as to neutralize the quality of justice and this again is precisely how Chanina explains God's actions.

In essence, both _midrashim_ center around the conflict between the demands of justice as opposed to those of mercy. Berekiah takes the standard rabbinic approach of imagining this to be an internal conflict of God's, while Chanina simply separates the attribute of justice from God and portrays the passage's conflict as a difference of opinion between two separate parties. As the angels come to symbolize the attribute of justice in Chanina's creation, all that essentially changes is the dramatic effect of the text. It is no longer just God working out His own ambivalences. Rather it is God in actual conflict with the angels working out what now becomes a much more concrete and hence compelling problem. The angels are therefore important to the _midrash_ primarily as a literary device, which means that their actual concrete selves become only incidental.

This figurative use of the angels extends into several other _midrashim_ where the worth of humanity again becomes the focus for discussion. In these _midrashim_ the angels acting as prosecutors are the personification of the attribute of justice, and each time they challenge God, they give Him (and the rabbi creating the _midrash_) an opportunity to defend humanity in still another way. For example, in Pseudo-Seder

Eliahu Zuta the angels align themselves against God's saving Abraham from Nimrod's furnace and attempt to buttress their position by launching a general attack on humanity.

> The ministering angels spoke before the Holy One, blessed be He: "Master of the Universe, what did you find in the first man so that you [were willing to] humble yourself before him by making him a wedding canopy in the Garden of Eden and by descending there to sit with him - especially when he ultimately transgressed Your commandments?" He answered them: "The answer should come from you. For what shall I do with human beings, who dwell in a place of impurity and are ruled over by the evil inclination, if even you, who dwell in a place of purity where the evil inclination has no sway, [are not innocent]? What did Azza, Uzza, and Azzael do?[9] They descended to the earth, became enamored of human women, caused them to sin, and taught them magic... !"[10]

In this presentation of the argument against humanity, mortal sinfulness is once again the angels' central concern. The divine response differs significantly from that of the Genesis Rabbah texts, however, so that God no longer only defends humanity in spite of its weaknesses. On the contrary, the very moral weakness of humanity is shown to be a potential means of meriting God's recognition and respect. God demonstrates this to the angels (and, of course, to the audience for the <u>midrash</u>) when He reacts to their ridicule of Adam by reminding them how much more difficult it is for any human to resist evil since a human is constantly beset by the evil inclination. For those like the angels who live in a holy realm without temptation,

resisting sin is strictly undistinguished (although even with their advantages, some of the angels did succumb). However when a human being struggles to overcome the plethora of temptations presented in his earthly realm, something grand is achieved. The struggle itself represents the human's determination to be great in spite of himself, and though victory in the struggle is of course most praiseworthy, even the unsuccessful struggle seems to earn God's recognition.

The message of a passage in the Tanchuma elaborates on this last orientation towards human merit. The setting for the lesson this time is the angels' challenge to God at the actual creation of Adam.

> When the Holy One, blessed be He, sought to create the world, the ministering angels said to Him: "What is man that Thou art mindful of him" (Ps. 8:5)? The Holy One, blessed be He, answered them: "You say: 'What is man [enosh] that Thou art mindful of him' only because of what you have seen of the generation of Enosh. But behold I shall show you the glory of Abraham. Indeed I shall be mindful of him, as it is said: 'God was mindful of Abraham' (Gen. 19:29). You also say: 'What is man... that You take note of him?' but it is also said: 'The Lord took note of Sarah' (Gen. 21:1)." He said to them: "You are destined to see this father slaughter his son and the son [allowing himself to be] slaughtered for the sake of My name."[11]

Through God's answer to the angels here, one sees a further dimension to the defence of humanity. For if the passage from

Pseudo-Seder Eliahu Zuta showed how individuals could distinguish themselves even by their struggle to overcome human weakness, this passage establishes that the actual successes of great individuals redound to the favor of all humanity. There is the undeniable sin of any given generation, but according to the midrash, God tolerates such sin because He can always refer to the triumphs of other generations. In the fashion of זכות אבות , these victories of human faith and righteousness at one time are sufficient to convince God to continue countenancing humanity's existence when at other times it succumbs to its worst inclinations.

On occasion, God can become especially partisan regarding humanity. That is not to say that in the selections above He does not sympathize with humanity and do his best to advocate its cause. Nevertheless in the previous selections the rabbis always supply God with a reason for defending humanity - be it the insistence that humans be judged only by human criteria or the appreciation of the battle fought by humans to be decent. There are times, however, when God's commitment to humanity is simply affirmed as a fact regardless of other considerations. In one text from Seder Eliahu Rabbah, for example, the angels take their usual tack of pointing to human immorality as a reason for not creating Adam. God listens to what they say and then retorts by saying that whether or not Adam and his offspring are moral failures, He has already

decided to guarantee their existence.[12] The intent here is not to indicate that God condones the shortcomings of Adam, but that the relationship of God with humanity is so strong that it simply cannot be abrogated. As Hosea never severed his relationship with Gomer, apparently God is unconditionally committed to humanity.

Elsewhere, before ultimately giving the same kind of unconditional guarantee for human existence, God acts even more dramatically to demonstrate His commitments:

> Rab Judah said in Rab's name: When the Holy One, blessed be He, wished to create man, He [first] created a company of ministering angels and said to them: "Is it your desire that we make a man in our image?" They answered: "Sovereign of the Universe, what will be his deeds?" "Such and such will be his deeds," He replied. Thereupon they exclaimed: "Sovereign of the Universe, 'What is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou thinkest of him' (Ps. 8:5)?" Thereupon He stretched out His little finger among them and consumed them with fire. The same thing happened with a second company. The third company said to Him: "Sovereign of the Universe, what did it avail the former angels that they spoke to Thee [as they did]? The whole world is Thine, and whatsoever that Thou wishest to do therein, do it." When He came to the men of the Age of the flood and of the division of tongues whose deeds were corrupt, they said to Him: "Lord of the Universe, did not the first [company of angels] speak aright?" "Even to old age I am the same, and even to hoary hairs will I carry" (Isa. 46:4), He retorted.[13]

Recalling the anxieties which may have plagued the audiences for such _midrashim_, one can appreciate the impact of God's actually destroying the angels who oppose Adam's creation. The person who

wondered what sort of relationship, if any, he could possibly maintain with God, would certainly find himself reassured by learning of the extent to which God does care for humanity. The person who feared that for all his desire he could not manage even the struggle with his evil inclination could also take heart by hearing that, whether worthy or not, humans are dear to God. The point of this passage is that, because of God's absolute commitment to humanity, no person need ultimately be cut off from Him.

To this point the midrashim presented have been structured around the objective complaints of the angels regarding the morality of humanity. The texts have dealt with the problems which human finitude creates and in each case a defence of humanity has been created. The rabbis do not limit themselves to this one perspective, however. Rather, in several instances, they dwell upon the actual strengths of humanity, and they do this in part by changing the stance of the angels vis à vis creation in their midrashim. To serve this new end, the angels begin to manifest some jealousy and even enmity towards humanity. Their complaints now become more subjective, but they still serve as a literary means of highlighting something special about humanity.

Along these lines one can read a midrash such as the following:

> "He was wiser than he who contained within himself all mankind" (I Kings 5:11), that is to say, wiser than Adam, the first man. Wherein

> was the wisdom of Adam? You find that when the Holy One, blessed be He, was about to create the first man, He consulted the ministering angels and asked: "Shall we make man" (Gen. 1:26)? They spoke right up to Him: "Master of the Universe, 'What is man that Thou art mindful of Him' (Ps. 8:5)?" The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: "This being whom I desire to create in My world - his wisdom will be greater than yours." Then what did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He assembled all domestic animals, all wild beasts and fowl, and had them pass before the angels. He asked: "What are the names of these creatures?" The angels did not know.
> When He created the first man, again He assembled all domestic animals, all wild beasts and fowl, and had them pass before him. He asked Adam: "What are the names of these creatures?" Adam replied: "This one - the name 'horse' fits him. This one - the name 'lion' fits him. And this one - 'camel.' And this one - 'ox.' And this one - 'eagle.' And this one - 'ass.'" Thus it is written: "And the man gave names to all cattle" (Gen. 2:20). God asked him: "And thou, what is thy name?" He replied: "Adam." God asked: "Why?" "Because I was fashioned out of the earth [אדמה]." God asked: "And I, what is My name?" Adam replied: "Lord." God asked: "Why?" Adam replied: "Because Thou art Lord over all Thy works."[14]

Here is a selection without apologies. It is constructed so that Genesis 2:20 becomes a commentary on Genesis 1:26[15] and so that the angels who pride themselves on being uniquely endowed are taught otherwise. They learn that Adam (and by implication his descendants) are pre-eminently gifted insofar as only Adam is able to give the animals their names. In fact, given the rabbinic belief

that naming things properly means knowing their true essence and identity, one can appreciate that a greater accomplishment than naming could hardly be attributed to human ability.[16] For when the angels fail to name the animals and Adam succeeds, he demonstrates the unparalleled human capacities of being able to reason and of being able to acquire knowledge. More than that, when Adam goes on to name himself and God, he demonstrates the human capacity of actually structuring the components of reality. According to this midrash, therefore, human feelings of insignificance or impotence are quite clearly unwarranted. Under God's watchful eye, even the angels are unable to match human beings who, the reader is told by means of the symbolic naming, can create their own patterns of meaning and can control their own destiny.

Apart from the specific message of this last passage, more can also be said about its structure. For example, as opposed to the other passages referred to above, this one certainly attributes different motives to the angels and also emphasizes the native strengths of human beings. Most importantly, it makes its point on the basis of a change in the status of the angels. In other words, elsewhere the midrashim have come to their conclusions about humanity only after recognizing a dichotomy between the angels and humanity in which the angels were accorded superior status. Structurally this characterization of the angels furthered the midrash since it pro-

vided a party which could point out the fact of human finitude and also criticize its consequences. Once this was done, God could respond on behalf of humanity and in some way vindicate it.

In the *midrash* here, however, the angels have deliberately been made inferior to humanity. In terms of structure, this has aided the passage greatly because it has made the accomplishments of Adam appear that much more significant. That is, one has not merely been informed of the obvious fact that human beings can reason. Rather one has learned that this human capacity, which can so easily be taken for granted, is the envy of the very denizens of heaven because it is the absolutely distinctive power of humanity. The contrast between Adam and the angels has helped to reinforce the text's message that humanity is worthy in its own right.

The ease with which the status of the angels has been modified in this last *midrash* also illustrates one more general point. It indicates that the rabbis depend on angels in their homilies more for their worth as literary devices than out of a concern for their concrete reality. The comparison of the two passages in Genesis Rabbah 8:4 was one way of illustrating this aspect of rabbinic angelology,[17] but one sees it again here by virtue of the fact that the rabbis seem to have no qualms about making the angels superior to humanity in one text and then reversing their status in another. If the angels were being dealt with on a literal level, they would have to possess

certain specific characteristics which would make them definitively either superior or inferior to human beings. However the rabbis are not at all that restrictive with the angels. Rather from what has been seen above, the angels' characteristics seem to change and they seem to do so primarily in order to suit the purposes of particular midrashim. Thus if need be the angels are made superiors of humanity, but then again if need be they can also be made inferiors.

In the following passage from Genesis Rabbah the latter tack is taken. Although the inferiority of the angels is not made explicit, the angels do still learn that their role in creation is less central than humanity's.

> R. Huna said in R. Aibu's name: He created him with due deliberation: He first created his food requirements, and only then did He create him. Said the ministering angels to the Lord: "Sovereign of the Universe! 'What is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou thinkest of him' (Ps. 8:5)? This trouble, for what has it been created?" "If so," said He to them, "'Sheep and oxen, all of them' (Ps. 8:8), why were they created; why were 'The fowl of the air and the fish of the sea' (Ps. 8:9) created? A tower full of good things and no guests - what pleasure has its owner in having filled it?" Said they to Him: "Sovereign of the Universe! 'O Lord, our Lord, how glorious is Thy name in all the earth' (Ps. 8:10). Do what pleaseth Thee."[18]

As was the case with the other midrashim presented above, the basic worth of humanity is also established in this last text. In

psychological terms, the text works as have all the others by taking what one senses were the doubts of individual persons in the rabbinic era and projecting them onto the angels. At this level regardless of the solutions provided by the passage at least something "therapeutic" is accomplished insofar as airing and discussing the problems affecting people has to relieve some of their anxiety. In theological terms, this text is like its predecessors too in affirming the same beliefs. All these texts are written so as to establish the reality of God's commitment to humanity. According to the theology which emerges in them, God cares for His creations while they themselves also have the potential of contributing positively to His world.

Notwithstanding the positive theological orientation of these _midrashim_, the human situation would still be somewhat dismal were it not for one further dimension of reality. For even if God loves humanity and judges it with compassion, the _midrash_ does not suggest that sin is simply excused. Indeed the very fact that God can be proud of humans when they live up to their full potential suggests that He must become angry with them when they fail to do so. And if He becomes angry, there is always the possibility that He will stay that way. Unless there is a way for humans to make amends, then, human beings must always be in danger of alienating themselves permanently from God. To offset this terrible possibility, the rabbis

maintain that תשובה was made one of the necessary components of creation. One text, for example, relates that repentance actually existed before the world's creation, the point being that without repentance, human existence is not possible.[19]

A very dramatic passage brings this perspective on the human condition alive in the following manner:

> According to R. Levi a copper cauldron was fashioned for him [Manasseh] and they placed him in it as they applied heat beneath it. When he saw that he was in dire trouble, he did not fail to call upon every idol in the world. When he then saw that this availed him nothing at all, he said: "I remember that my father used to read a particular verse in synagogue, 'In thy distress, when all these things are come upon thee, in the end of days, return to the Lord, thy God, and hearken unto His voice; for the Lord thy God is a merciful God; He will not fail thee, neither destroy thee; He will not forget the covenant which He made under oath with your fathers' (Deut. 4:30, 31). All right, then, I will call upon my father's God: if He answers me, well and good, but if not, then all deities are alike worthless." At this point the ministering angels began shutting heaven's windows so that Manasseh's prayer could not come up before the Holy One, blessed be He. They put the question to the Holy One, blessed be He: "Master of the Universe, if a person is an idolator and sets up an image in the Temple, can you accept his repentance?" He replied to them: "If I do not receive him in his repentance, I shall be barring the door to all who would repent." What did the Holy One, blessed be He, proceed to do for Manasseh? He contrived an opening for his sake under His very own throne of glory and listened to his supplication. As it is said: "He prayed, He received his entreaty and heard his supplication and accepted his repentance: (I Chron. 33:13).[20]

Although this midrash reveals much about God and His abiding mercy,[21] for purposes of this discussion it also makes clear a basic fact about human reality. From God's response to the angels, one learns that even if the angels should be correct in all their accusations regarding human insufficiency, no human being still need fear utter abandonment. Even if Truth and Peace, for example were perfectly prescient regarding the sadness human beings could create,[22] the midrash teaches that all sincere persons have permanent recourse to repentance and hence to God.

As was the case with the texts preceding this one, one senses here a basic orientation on the part of the rabbis towards the human situation. That is, by placing the angels in an adversary role in each of the texts, the rabbis have always managed to develop a presentation in which they could defend humanity and thereby give their audiences reassurance of value and direction in their lives. In Slonimsky's words, the purpose of these midrashim has been one of "consolation." They have been attempts at a "feeding of the life-impulse when [it was] harassed and threatened..."[23] They have been intended to guard against the kind of despair which the purely existential realities of the rabbinic era could have created.

Chapter 5

CONCERNING ISRAEL

Just as the first eleven chapters of Genesis are often said to form a prelude to the Pentateuch's central concern with Abraham and his descendants, a discussion of rabbinic attitudes towards humanity finds its natural conclusion in a discussion of the people Israel. This people, which sprang from Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, entered into a group covenant with God at Sinai and from that time on felt itself to be "distinguished...from every people on the face of the earth" (Ex. 33:16). Unlike other peoples, Israel understood itself to be "chosen" and much of the Bible deals with the nature and consequences of this unique factor in Jewish history.

The rabbis too share an interest in the story of Israel. Accordingly their writings are characterized by constant discussion of their people's past plus its present and future situation. In particular, one way in which the rabbis express their attitudes towards Israel is through the use of _midrashim_ featuring angels. As these heavenly beings could be used homiletically to teach about humanity, they are also used by the rabbis in an exploration of Israel's reality.

The structure of some of these midrashim pertaining to Israel is similar to the structure of the sermons referred to above in discussing humanity. Thus the angels once again take positions in which for one reason or another they oppose the human beings whom God nevertheless chooses to favor. Other midrashim which deal with Israel modify some of this angelic opposition so that one sees the angels merely asking questions of God or not clearly understanding His intent regarding Israel. Responding to this stance on the part of the angels, God is given the opportunity to express His feelings toward Israel. As one might expect from the rabbis who were themselves part of Israel and strongly believed in the biblical vision of Israel, these feelings are most often positive. Then again, the angels in this group of sermons are also used in a less active way. At times they become symbols of high achievement or perfection against which Israel can be compared as even more outstanding.

Considering only the format of these homilies, one is struck by the way in which so many of them appear to reach their conclusions favoring Israel only after the possibility has been raised that Israel is not worthy. That is to say, the final declaration of Israel's importance in these texts comes in reaction to the angels' challenge or doubt that Israel is actually so important. When the angels register incredulity that Israel should be helped through the Sea of Reeds, for example, one senses the basic question on their part to be: Isn't

Israel undeserving of God's love and protection? To this the midrash replies that Israel is still deserving.[1] Even when several texts present the angels less actively and merely comment that the angels must not praise God before Israel does, one hears a possibly prior and implicit question: Isn't Israel altogether unworthy of relating to and praising God? To this the text responds with its own explicit assurance that Israel is wanted by God.[2]

As was the case with the texts concerning humanity then, it seems as if many of the texts about Israel were written partly as responses to certain problems. Their structure suggests that when the texts were assembled certain questions were being asked about the nature of Israel for which these texts were meant to be the appropriate answers. In point of fact, two constellations of circumstances in the rabbis' world might have led them to be particularly concerned that the concept of Israel be properly understood.

The first such set of circumstances which might make the story of Israel an urgent homiletic concern is embodied in the words of R. Eleazar: "Since the day of the destruction of the Temple a wall of iron separates Israel from her Father in heaven."[3] As indicated briefly above, life for Jews in the years following the destruction of the Temple and the subsequent failure of the Bar Kochba revolt was a very difficult matter.[4] Thus in strictly objective terms, the very real and inescapable physical turmoil that the defeated must always suffer

constituted one aspect of the dilemma faced by Jews of the era.

On a more subjective level, Jews also found themselves reacting to their concrete difficulties in a manner conditioned by their preconceptions about Israel. This meant that for those nurtured on the belief that Israel was God's select people, the devastation in Jewish life had to lead to various kinds of theological questions. In other words, what Eleazar had to say about the severing of Israel's relationship with God must have gone through the minds of many other Jews who faced the same havoc he did. They must have taken their straightened circumstances into account and wondered what meaning the covenant could have if such destruction could occur at all. Was there or had there ever been any special role and reward reserved for Israel? In Slonimsky's words:

> Israel [was] in the unique position of regarding itself as the chosen people, the beloved of God, and at the same time knowing itself as the most afflicted people - how resolve that awesome paradox?[5]

Perhaps one resolution of the paradox involved developing the kind of _midrashim_ which will be referred to in this chapter. Such _midrashim_ specifically enunciated the truth of Israel's claim to chosenness.

Granting a concern on the part of the rabbis to explain Israel's situation to their own people, one more element in the contemporary scene must also have had its effect on the _midrashim_ to be discussed here. This additional factor would be the response of non-Jews to the

upheavals in Jewish life. To their eyes, the lamentable situation of the Jews in the early common era meant that Jewish claims to a special relationship with heaven had to be false. As Cicero comments:

> How beloved of the immortal gods that nation was, is proved by the fact that it has been defeated, that its revenues have been farmed out, and that it is reduced to a state of subjection.[6]

Most importantly, if this conclusion occurred to pagans, it also occurred to Christians who were already claiming to form a new Israel. For them, the misfortunes of Israel were "a weapon in their propaganda that Israel is rejected by God and His love and grace transferred to the New People."[7] As Mihaly and Marmorstein have shown,[8] such claims by Christians to have succeeded Jewry as the new elect of God were very disconcerting to the rabbis. In fact, because these views threatened to undermine the future of Jewish life, the rabbis responded with polemics of their own defending the election of Israel. Indeed many of the *midrashim* to be discussed in this chapter seem to be written in this context of controversy between Jew and non-Jew. Even though very few of the texts are explicitly polemic in design, echoes of polemic concerns can be felt in many of the others.

Of course, one cannot explain the angelic passages on Israel solely in terms of polemics. To ascribe to all the various texts an apologetic intention is to deny to the rabbis any faith in the validity of their tradition for its own sake. Especially since Israel is a central

category of the Bible and other pre-destruction literature, it stands to reason that the Tannaim and Amoraim would have been interested in further elucidating the character of Israel in and of itself. How they went about doing this, however, was bound to be affected by their particular life circumstances, and to appreciate their efforts more fully, mention of these contemporary problems has been made.

Turning to the actual texts, one first sees a series of passages in which God's feelings for Israel are demonstrated. R. Abbahu relates one such passage in the name of R. Yochanan:

> 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 by He. When He gave the commandments on Mount Sinai, at first He uttered them loudly all at once, as is said: "And God spoke all these words [at once], saying" (Ex. 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" (Ex. 20:1), they said: "In giving His children the Torah, He is committing His commandments, fully explained, directly to Israel His son."[9]

Structurally this sermon makes its point on the basis of the angels' error at Sinai. Serving as foils to God, Michael and Gabriel expect one outcome of the event and consequently, when quite the opposite occurs,

the impact of God's decision is underlined that much more.

According to Braude, what Michael and Gabriel anticipated reflects what Christians may very well have said occurred at Sinai.[10] As was mentioned in Chapter Three, one aspect of Christian polemic against Israel involved denigrating the nature of the key revelation at Sinai. In this case, proving that Israel's determinative historic event was carried out by a mediating angel would mean that the claims Israel might make about its special relationship with God had to be specious. Responding to this kind of attack on the intimacy of God and Israel, the sermon at hand therefore establishes that God was in direct contact with Israel at Sinai. Moreover, once God proceeds to talk with His people, Michael and Gabriel realize that they have been bypassed because Israel is God's very offspring and the parent always deals directly with the child. The Jew and non-Jew hearing this analysis of Sinai would certainly conclude that despite the hardships contemporary Jews might be undergoing, the claim of Israel to an authentic relationship with God remains valid.

Focusing on a different historical incident, another passage also establishes the importance of Israel. Thus when Pharoah decrees that all male Hebrew children shall be drowned in the Nile, God becomes irate and dispatches the ministering angels to save His beloved children. The angels promptly descend to the river to rescue the babies. They place the infants on dry land and God then nurtures the children

Himself.[11]

All of this again makes clear how strongly God feels for Israel. Moreover this brief selection also illustrates how angels can be used effectively to make a homiletic point. For when God gives the angels their orders, He does so by reminding them quite sharply: "For just this very emergency have I created you."[12] Literally this is, of course, not true to rabbinic angelology as a whole, but as a statement of hyperbole taken together with the angels' subsequent rescue of the babies, the emphatic lesson taught by the passage is that Israel is the overriding concern of God. That is to say, by having the angels' raison d'etre narrowed down to the single rescue of Jewish babies, the passage does more than simply state that God cares for Israel. Rather it says that God cares for Israel to the point where the existence of His own ministering angels becomes secondary. This extra refinement leaves no doubt about Israel's centrality.

Several midrashic sources choose the establishment of the Tabernacle in the wilderness as the point for describing a fascinating dialogue in heaven. The familiar sort of angelic opposition to a divine action favoring human beings reappears here with a very interesting "exegetical" defeat for the angels resulting.

> When the Holy One, blessed be He, desired His presence to dwell in the Tabernacle, the angels said to the Holy One, blessed be He: "Master of the Universe! 'What is man that Thou are mindful of him!' (Ps. 8:5)?" R. Judah - in the name

> of R. Aibu - and R. Judah bar Simon both deduced this remonstrance of the angels from the verse: "Kings of heavenly hosts cast [ידדון], they cast" (Ps. 68:13), taking it to mean figuratively that the angels cast stones in remonstrance, ידדון having the same sense as ידו in the verse: "Against My people they cast [ידו] lots" (Joel 4:3). The Holy One, blessed by He, then said to the angels: "By your lives, I will do as you say," and "His glory covered the heavens only" (Hab. 3:3). But David said to the ministering angels: "By your lives, the glory shall be with me, for the verse concludes: 'The earth shall be full of His praise' (Hab. 3:3)." The angels replied: "Only His praise, not His glory, will be on earth." David said: "Nevertheless, His glory will be on earth, as you can see from the psalm which begins with: 'Praise ye the Lord from the heavens' (Ps. 148:1), and goes on: 'His glory shall be upon earth and heaven' (Ps. 148:13): thus the glory will be first upon the earth, and then will be in heaven."[13]

A parallel text from Tanchuma Trumah concludes the duel between David and the angels with God's own final explanation of His choice to descend to the Tabernacle. He says to the angels: "Why are you so surprised about this? Just consider how much I love those below..."[14]

Although the Tanchuma selection ends more emphatically, in both texts the lesson is the same. The angels' opposition leads them to the unsettling realization that they are not as dear to God as they had thought. Schäfer points out that the midrashim can also be seen as a discussion of the Shechina's proper domain, but he also adds that the essential point of the texts has to do with the relative status of the angels and Israel.[15] In these terms, one learns that when the angels

and terrestial Israel are compared, Israel is preferred.

As an illustration of the non-literal use of angels, these sermons are also significant. In this regard, the Tanchuma Trumah passage is of particular interest since there are three other passages in the Tanchuma itself making the exact same point about Israel without the use of active angels.[16] For example, one passage begins with an exegesis of Deuteronomy 32:10 and Hosea 9:10 which establishes that Israel was a marvelously fortunate find for God. The passage continues by saying that God was so pleased with His find that He gave Israel the Torah and that He ultimately told Moses to have Israel build the Tabernacle. Israel was so precious in God's eyes that He could tell Moses: "As it were I am leaving the celestial beings and descending [אני מניח את העליונים ויורד] to be present among Israel."[17]

Most importantly, these last words are almost the same words used by the angels in the Tanchuma Trumah passage. There they enter into their controversy with God by saying: "Why are you leaving the celestial beings and descending [אתה מניח לעליונים ויורד] to the terrestial?"[18] What has happened is that in an effort to heighten the impact of God's choosing to place His presence with Israel, the angels have simply been introduced as a foil. Thus instead of having God merely state His preference for Israel, the angels are used to challenge His plans and thereby lead Him to demonstrate exactly how

resolute He is in His commitment to Israel. To the extent that they oppose Israel's selection then, they fulfill the literary function of highlighting God's relationship with Israel.

Notwithstanding the importance of Pentateuchal history, the Jews of the rabbinic era were also greatly interested in probing the implications of Jewish defeat at the hands of Babylonia and Rome. A selection which takes the destruction of the First Temple as its historic focus presents the relationship of God and Israel in this manner:

> In that hour all Israel moaned loudly until their cry reached heaven. Then, so taught R. Acha bar Abba, the Holy One, blessed be He, yearned to return the world, all of it, to chaos and desolation, for the Holy One, blessed be He, said: "All that I created, I created only for the sake of Israel." . . . At this moment, so taught R. Tachalifa bar Cheruyah, all the ministering angels came into the presence of the Holy One, blessed be He, and standing before the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Him: "Master of the Universe, it is true the universe and all that is in it is Thine. Is it not sad enough for Thee that Thou hast already destroyed the Temple, Thy dwelling place on earth? Wilt Thou also destroy Thy dwelling place in heaven?" God replied: "Do I need comforting? Am I perhaps flesh and blood that I need comforting? . . . The words of comfort wherewith you would console Me are as blasphemies to Me. Go down out of My presence and lift the burden from My children, [the kings of Judah]." Instantly the ministering angels went down and lifted the burden from the kings of Judah. And not only the ministering angels, but the Holy One, Himself, blessed be He, lifted the burden from the kings of Judah. Were it not expressly written in Scripture it would be impossible to say such a thing as: "For your sake I had Myself go to Babylon" (Isa. 43:14).[19]

Here is an ultimate expression of God's feelings toward Israel. He begins by establishing that His whole creation can only have meaning when a vital Israel is part of it. He is then goaded on, as it were, by the angels who once more attempt to gain special privileges. They do this by minimizing the cosmic repercussions of Israel's pain which causes God to react with the grandest gesture of all. First, He insists that the angels give up their posturing and tend to what is of supreme importance; that is, easing Israel's burden.[20] Then He Himself follows through on His love of Israel by joining the angels in the concrete act of relieving Israel's misery.

Bearing in mind the physical and spiritual hardships experienced by Jews after the year 70 C. E. plus the conclusions non-Jews were drawing from such setbacks, one can appreciate the impact of a passage like this. Indeed it matters little that the passage's point of departure is the Babylonian experience, because that series of events can be taken as paradigmatic. In this case, therefore, one learns that the ruin of God's sanctuary and the displacement of His elect people do not constitute divine rejection of Israel whenever they occur. According to the midrash, neither the angels nor (one understands) humans should conclude that Israel's defeats are final. As other texts have demonstrated Israel's primacy in ages past, this text establishes that despite Israel's difficult circumstances in the very era of the rabbis, no substitute people has been chosen.

In texts that refer more literally to Jerusalem's second destruction, much the same message is communicated regarding Israel's continued viability. In one passage, for example, God severely castigates the angels for not having protested sufficiently the disasters His "children" underwent. He demands to know why the angels did not request mercy on behalf of Israel.[21] Elsewhere the verse "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem" (Ps. 137:5) becomes God's vow to Israel that He will not forsake them even under the most difficult circumstances. Consequently one reads: "When Israel went into exile, the Presence went into exile with them."[22] The same midrash goes on to say that the angels were horrified at this image of God's following Israel into exile and that they implored God not to continue what they considered altogether demeaning behavior. In response, God speaks to the angels in words which clearly indicate for both them and people on earth the nature of God's original covenant with Israel:

> Were not certain things stipulated between Me and Israel? I stipulated with their fathers that at the time they were well off I would be with them, and if they were not well off My glory would be with them, as is said: "I will be with him in trouble" (Ps. 91:15).[23]

In other words, from the beginning of His relationship with Israel, God promised to be present through both good and bad times. The lowly status of Israel after the destruction of 70 C. E. does not therefore preclude Israel's still being God's chosen people.

Alongside the series of midrashim culminating in this last affirmation of Israel's covenant with God, another approach towards Israel can also be taken. In this case, the focus switches from what has largely been an interest in God's feelings for Israel to a concentration on the special nature of Israel. Now, instead of assessing Israel in terms of how much God will do for her, the question is what specific qualities or distinctions belong to Israel alone.

The first text which follows up this orientation establishes something very positive about Israel through its description of an important action taken by the people at Sinai.

> R. Isaac opened his discourse with the text: "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him" (Lam. 3:24). R. Isaac said this may be compared to a king who entered a province with his generals, rulers, and governors. Some of the citizens of the province chose a general as their Patron, others a ruler and others a governor. One of them who was cleverer than the rest said: "I will choose the king." Why? All others are liable to be changed, but the king is never changed. Likewise, when God came down on Sinai, there also came down with Him many companies of angels, Michael and his company, Gabriel and his company. Some of the nations of the world chose for themselves as their Patron Michael, others Gabriel, but Israel chose for themselves God, exclaiming: "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul" (Lam. 3:24); this is the force of: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deut. 6:4).[24]

So then Israel was more perceptive than the other nations, and the proof for this statement lies in the fact that when given the choice among patrons, only Israel chose the true Sovereign. This is, of course, not

the only instance where national guardian angels are discussed by the rabbis. On the contrary, they are quite prominent in many <u>midrashim</u>[25] and, for that matter, either Michael or Gabriel is almost always said to be the guardian of Israel.[26] What this implies about the last passage, then, is that at least R. Isaac was not tied literally to the notion of guardian angels. Instead he treats these angels with a great deal of flexibility. He structures his homily so that, as in many of the texts seen before, the angels become symbols. In this case, Michael and Gabriel represent different theological avenues and the choice that Israel then makes against them becomes an affirmation of God.

Remaining at Sinai, one can learn more about Israel's distinctiveness from a text which is based on the exegesis of Exodus 32:16. R. Nehemiah reads the final phrase of the verse "the writing was the writing of God, graven [חָרוּת] upon the tablets" by means of a change in the vocalization. Thus he reads חֵרוּת , meaning freedom, and his conclusion is that with the acceptance of the Torah, Israel was "freed" from the Angel of Death. At that time, God told the Angel of Death:

> The whole world is within your power except for this nation which I have chosen...I have created you to deal with all the idolators but not this nation."[27]

Unfortunately, Israel does ultimately forfeit its special exemption by building the Golden Calf. Nevertheless the essential point of the <u>midrash</u> still stands. That is, Israel has had a unique history. She

has been at the center of God's concerns in history to the point where once her people were chosen from among all other peoples to regain the immortality that no humans since Adam had possessed. Israel may have failed, but at least she was worthy of the opportunity.

This worthiness of Israel is also demonstrated in rabbinic literature by drawing comparisons between the relative status of Israel and the angels. One text in Exodus Rabbah, for example, suggests that Israel and the angels are equals. Using the angels as symbols of heavenly mastery, the midrash elevates Israel to a similar status on earth. Thus as the angels are the banners of heaven, Israel is the banner of earth. So too as the heavenly bodies stand in awe of God and the angels, the nations of the world are said to stand in awe of Israel.[28] Given the abject state of Israel after its loss of sovereignty early in the common era, one can appreciate the purpose of this last comparison. In essence, it speaks to those in Israel who might lose faith in their people's future and it reassures them that in the long run the universe is constituted so that Israel can achieve a regeneration.

Such a message of consolation is magnified in the series of midrashim which center around the value of Israel's praise of God. On the basis of the texts already cited, one would expect that such praise would be very important and this does, in fact, prove to be the case. At the same time, this point is made in a special manner in the texts about to be

presented by going one step further in the comparison of the angels with Israel. Instead of saying that the two are equal, these texts say that Israel is superior to the angels.

Along these lines, the successful crossing of the Sea of Reeds is the particular historic incident which these midrashim mention. One reads that at this great moment the angels had to defer to Israel in praising God. Specifically, the men, then the women, and finally the children within Israel all had to finish their prayer before the angels could commence theirs.[29] For that matter, several texts relate that the angels' praise of God is dependent on Israel to this day. In one of the levels of heaven, for example, where the ministering angels apparently sing praises to God all night, there is silence all day long when Israel is awake and able itself to sing.[30] Elsewhere an exegesis of Isaac's words, "The voice is the voice of Jacob" (Gen. 27:22), establishes that Isaac is referring to the voice of Israel, the people who can silence the angels whenever they proclaim the Shma.[31]

A difference even exists in the quality of what is said by the two parties. One sees this in terms of the use of God's name insofar as the angels can only reach the name after reciting the three words, "holy, holy, holy" (Isa. 6:3), while Israel is able to proclaim the name after only the two words, "hear" and "Israel" (Deut. 6:4).[32] Israel is even more honored insofar as one of its prayers is a prayer that was originally only said by angels. When Moses ascended to heaven

to receive the Torah, however, he proved more clever than the angels and brought back down to Israel this special declaration: "Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom for ever and ever."[33] He did, of course, leave the angels with their other prayers and, ironically, in one of those prayers, the angels are only able to praise God using Israel's name! So they say: "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting even to everlasting" (I Chron. 16:36).[34] It seems that even if Israel is not directly present, the heavens are still full of its mention.

Leaving aside the relative status of the prayers said by Israel and the nations momentarily, the motif of comparing Israel to the angels yields one other fascinating variant. This is the idea that in the future Israel willliterally be closer to God than the angels. The midrash supports this conclusion by reading Numbers 23:23 as a description of how the angels will relate to God and Israel in the future. "In time to come it will be asked of Jacob and of Israel: 'What has God done?'"[35] The angels will ask this last question because they will be unable to enter into the area next to God. Inside that domain God will be instructing Israel in Torah and so the excluded angels will be totally dependent on Israel for learning God's teachings.

The lesson of this last midrash is similar to the one taught in the other selections where Israel has been compared to the angels. In each case, the comparison is meant to reinforce the notion that Israel is a

central category of the universe. In fact, by using the angels as a point of comparison, the texts do more than just clarify this fact about Israel's importance. Instead, they basically seem to embrace the doubts that people in the era may have had about Israel and pointedly demonstrate that no group, not even the angels, can outdo Israel.

The classic expression of this viewpoint is an extension of the idea that heavenly praise of God is dependent on Israel's praises. Indeed assuming that Israel's recital of the Shma has cosmic repercussions, one might easily conclude that Israel can affect the heavenly court as follows:

> [In keeping with the interpretation that God turned the reckoning of time over to Israel], R. Hoshaia taught: When a court on earth decrees and says: "New Year's Day is today," the Holy One, blessed be He, tells the ministering angels: "Raise up the dais. Summon the advocates. Summon the clerks. For the court on earth has decreed and said: 'New Year's Day is today.'" But if the witnesses are delayed in coming, or if, for any reason, the court decides to put off the beginning of the year by one day, the Holy One, blessed be He, tells the ministering angels: "Remove the dais, dismiss the advocates, dismiss the clerks, since the court on earth has decreed that the New Year will not begin till tomorrow." And the proof from Scripture? "When it is a decree of Israel it is an ordinance for the God of Jacob" (Ps. 81:5). Therefore what is not a statute for Israel is not, if one can be permitted to speak thus, an ordinance for the God of Jacob.[36]

This last sermon presents a powerful image of the Jewish people. Taken together with the other midrashim that have illustrated God's

abiding commitment to Israel plus the nature of Israel in and of itself, one can sense the pride and love that the rabbis must have felt for their people. One can also imagine that, under the best of circumstances, the rabbis would have devoted much time towards discussion of Israel anyway. However, as it was, certain pressures referred to above lent even more urgency to the elucidation of the role of Israel. Thus the rabbis may have wished and also felt compelled to demonstrate to their own people, and sometimes non-Jews as well, that Israel was still related to a God who wanted it to be a special people. The angelic *midrashim* used above have indicated some of the ways in which the rabbis accomplished this goal. A final series of *midrashim* now indicates in part how the rabbis dealt with the question of why God chose Israel at all.

For example, although no answer is actually suggested, the question of Israel's merit can be heard behind the several *midrashim* that suggest Satan appeared at Sinai while Moses was on the mountain.[37] At that time Satan is said to have deceived the people by convincing them that Moses was dead. Then when he had frightened them, he was able to watch them go ahead and commit the sin of the Golden Calf.

By presenting Satan at Sinai, this particular *midrash* adds to the Pentateuchal narrative a mitigating circumstance for the sin of Israel. For if Satan was initially responsible for tempting Israel, the people's ultimate actions are less reprehensible. At least *ab initio* they are not

at fault and this means that in terms of merit, the building of the statue is made to seem less a reason for concluding that Israel is sinful and totally without merit.

On a more positive note, the occasion of Israel's crossing the Sea of Reeds also offers the rabbis an opportunity to confront the question of Israel's merit. As has become a pattern in many of these midrashim, the issue is handled by setting the angels in opposition to Israel.

> "But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea" (Ex. 14:22). And the ministering angels were wondering at them, saying: "Sons of men, worshippers of idols, walk upon dry land in the midst of the sea!" And whence do we know that the sea also was filled with anger at them? It is said: "And the waters were חומה against them" (Ex. 14:22). Do not read חומה , wall, but חימה , anger. And what helped them to escape? "On their right hand and on their left" (Ex. 14:22). "On their right hand" suggest the merit of the Torah which they were destined to receive, as it is said: "At His right hand was a fiery law unto them" (Deut. 33:2). "And on their left" suggests prayer. Another interpretation: "On their right hand" suggests the mezuzah, "And on their left" suggests the phylacteries.[38]

Interestingly enough, the response to the angels' critique is a modest one. Speaking humbly, perhaps realistically, the anonymous author explains that Israel at the Sea only deserved to be saved on the basis of what subsequent generations of Israel would do. These descendants would apparently prove themselves meritorious because they would accept the Torah and cloak themselves in mitzvot. In fact, in

another selection, precisely such observance of God's laws is what God adduces as His reason for maintaining a relationship with Israel. He says to the angels:

> ... And shall I not lift up My countenance for Israel, seeing that I wrote for them in the Torah: "And thou shalt eat and be satisfied and bless the Lord thy God" (Deut. 8:10), and they are particular to say the grace if the quantity is but an olive or an egg.[39]

In the context of the midrashim employing angels, two other explanations for Israel's selection are referred to briefly. The first is based on a rabbinic reading of the fight that Jacob had with the mysterious figure in Genesis 32. In the passage, R. Chanina b. Isaac assumes, as do several other rabbis, that Jacob was actually fighting with Esau's guardian angel. Chanina goes on to explain that Jacob was able to be victorious because he came against Esau's guardian wearing "five amulets...his own merit, and the merit of his father, of his mother, of his grandfather, and of his grandmother."[40] Chanina then concludes by commenting that just as Jacob's cumulative merit allowed him to prevail over Esau's guardian, Israel can always be sure of prevailing against the nations of the world. In other words, Israel's continued prominence is based on the merit each generation accrues combined with the merit of previous outstanding generations.

The second explanation for Israel's selection suggests that the sufferings undergone by the various generations of Israel bring the people to the attention of God. Through their demonstration of loyalty in the

furnace, for example, Chananiah, Mishael, and Azariah greatly impress God. He indicates His approval of them by sending angels to kiss them and their ancestors. "For just as they [the ancestors] braved the fire for My sake, so their sons braved the fire for My sake."[41]

Beyond these few positive suggestions as to why God cares for Israel, the angelic midrashim make no comment. Their silence is interesting, however, because on a minor scale it reflects the truth of Schechter's comment about rabbinic literature in general: "The great majority of the rabbis are silent about merits, and attribute the election to a mere act of grace (or love) on the part of God."[42] That is to say, the rabbis apparently find it difficult to account for Israel's good fortune strictly on the basis of its own achieved merit. Moreover, since the Pentateuch itself supports the idea that Israel was not chosen because of an innate superiority, the rabbis concur with Deuteronomy 7:7 that Israel must have been chosen on the basis of love. As Slonimsky renders it, this love was "an aboriginal arbitrary choice, an opaque attraction."[43]

Given this overall rabbinic viewpoint, it is not surprising to find the particular subgrouping of angelic midrashim arriving at the same conclusions regarding Israel's merit. In fact, one text echoes the rabbis' general feelings by casting the guardian angels of the various nations as those who raise the troublesome question of why Israel should be favored.

> "We have a little sister" (Song 8:8): this is Israel. R. Azariah said in the name of R. Judah b. R. Simon: In the time to come all the celestial princes of the nations of the world will come and accuse Israel before the Holy One, blessed be He, saying: "Sovereign of the Universe, these worshipped idols and these worshipped idols, these acted lewdly and these acted lewdly, these shed blood and these shed blood. Why do these go down to Gehinnom while these do not go down?" The Holy One, blessed be He, will say to them: "We have a little sister" (Song 8:8): just as a child, whatever he does, is not reproved, because he is but a child, so however much Israel may be defiled by their iniquities throughout the year, the Day of Atonement comes and atones for them, as it says: "For on this day shall atonement be made for you" (Lev. 16:30).[44]

God's response to the angels reflects the final rabbinic assessment of Israel's selection. He says essentially that the bond between Israel and Himself transcends the normal categories of right and wrong and of reward and punishment. Israel and He are related as child and parent, which means that for all the expectations each can have of the other and for all the hurt each can do to the other, the basic relationship is indestructible. As the other texts in this chapter have shown, Israel's claim to continuing chosenness was a cardinal principle for the rabbis, and as this text shows, the rabbis' assurance that their covenant with God could not be broken rested on their belief in God's gracious love for Israel.

Chapter 6

CONCERNING GOD

In the preceding chapters' discussions, the figure of God has played an essential role. Each *midrash* has, in fact, included God, and what the various *midrashim* have taught about humanity and Israel has to a large extent been based on how God has acted in relation to earth's inhabitants. For example, God's concealing the wickedness of humanity from the angels has indicated that the existence of humanity is of overriding significance in the divine ordering of reality.[1] Similarly, God's insistence in face of angelic opposition that Manasseh be allowed to repent has shown that human beings can always be assured of the opportunity to make amends and start anew.[2] So, too, God's readiness to destroy the world after the Temple's destruction,[3] or at least to follow Israel into exile,[4] has taught that even a defeated Israel is vitally important to the world.

As much as such texts have graphically expressed viewpoints on humanity and Israel, however, they have also revealed much about God. That is to say, the very fact that God opposes the angels in defense of humanity or Israel teaches much about God's own abilities and commitments. Indeed the angelic *midrashim* do not only contain a philosophy

regarding the human creations of God. They also convey a distinctive perspective on God Himself, and this perspective is the concern of the present chapter.

Taking the instances of God's actions just mentioned as broadly representative of the midrashim in the last two chapters, one sees one particular aspect of God being portrayed in the angelic midrashim. This is the divine inclination to care for and be absolutely committed to humanity in general and Israel in particular. In Abraham Heschel's terms, this God who could deceive His own courtiers for the sake of Adam and even disregard His own honor by joining the particular grouping Israel in its sufferings is the God of pathos. According to Heschel, such a God:

> ...does not simply command and expect obedience; He is also moved and affected by what happens in the world, and reacts accordingly. Events and human actions arouse in Him joy or sorrow, pleasure or wrath. He is not conceived as judging the world in detachment. He reacts in an intimate and subjective manner...The predicament of man is a predicament of God who has a stake in the human situation...The divine pathos, the fact of God's participating in the predicament of man, is the elemental fact. [5]

To put it in Robert Katz's words, the God represented in the angelic midrashim as caring so much for His creations is the God of empathy. [6]

Although this God of pathos and empathy is revealed through the actions He takes in so many of the midrashim referring to humanity and Israel, there are also midrashim which concentrate more specifically on God alone. Thus, twice in describing the life of Abraham, the

rabbis use angelic midrashim that deal more exclusively with the caring facet of God's nature. As has been the case in many previous selections, in each incident here the angels assume the role of foil to God.

The angels first come into play in discussing the patriarch when he is cast into the great furnace by Nimrod. At this time, they act out of the best of intentions and vie with each other for the honor of saving Abraham. Their eagerness, therefore, highlights the final choice of Abraham's savior, who turns out to be none other than God Himself.[7] The rabbis' belief in the pathos of God is confirmed here by God's actually participating in the predicament confronting Abraham.

The same holds true too when God fulfills the mitzvah of בקור חולים. after Abraham's circumcision. This time the angels play the foil to God by claiming that such a visit is beneath God's dignity. As God nevertheless persists in His plans and even brings three angels along with Himself, the passage underscores the intimacy which God wishes to share with human beings.[8]

Later in biblical history, two other events provide occasions for the rabbis to portray how strongly God identifies with the plight of His creatures. For example, one passage suggests, as did others in Chapter Five,[9] that when Israel crossed the Sea of Reeds, the ministering angels were not allowed to chant their hymns before God.[10] In the midrashim previously cited, the explanation for this delaying of the angels was that Israel's own hymns had to precede any other hymns meant for God. Here,

however, the motif has been transformed so that the passage focuses more on God's personal reactions to the event. In this case, God's refusal to allow the angels to sing throws into prominence His grief over the fact that Israel's absolute triumph means utter defeat for other members of creation. The empathy God feels leads Him to chide the angels by saying: "The work of My hands is being drowned in the sea and shall you chant hymns?"[11] Apparently God even shares in the sorrows of those such as the Egyptians who may not recognize Him.

This being the case, it is understandable that God is particularly grieved when the only people who do know Him as God are in distress. In this regard, one text notes that Israel's impending sin at Sinai unsettled God to the extent that "when He gave the Torah to Israel, all the hosts on high rejoiced, but the Holy One, blessed be He, cried and wept."[12] Knowing that the Hebrews are soon going to transgress the very first of the commandments demanding exclusive allegiance to Himself, God is deeply hurt. In contrast to the angels, He cannot be satisfied with the joy of the moment. This is so because He, unlike the angels, is involved in an immediate way with the events on earth. As Heschel comments: "God reacts in an intimate and subjective manner to what happens in the world."[13]

Indeed, caring as strongly as He does for His creatures, it is not surprising to find that the God portrayed in several other angelic *midrashim* inclines towards mercy in judgment. A text attributed to R.

Eliezer b. Yosi Ha-galili establishes this fact through an imaginative account of procedures in the heavenly court. Job 33:23 is applied to the angels' celestial presentation of reports on human beings, and one learns then that God reacts to these reports so that:

> ... even if 999 angels give a bad account [of a person] and only one gives a favorable account, the Holy One, blessed be He, inclines the balance to the side of acquittal. This is not the end of the matter either for even if 999 parts of this one angel give a bad account and only one part gives a favorable account, the Holy One, blessed be He, still inclines the balance to the side of acquittal.[14]

The point of this selection is that as final arbiter of reward and punishment, God favors human beings whenever possible. Structurally the selection makes this point about God by positing the most extreme situation which hypothetically could arise in the heavenly assembly. This occurs when virtually the entire mass of angels speaks against an individual and demands that justice be done in the person's case through a conviction. When God then goes against the angels' will and hence against the unequivocal demands of strict justice, the passage emphatically demonstrates God's predilection for a particular mode of action. This is the avenue of mercy. In other words, one has here less a description of the actual workings of the heavenly assembly than the creation of a literary construct designed to teach how thoroughgoing God is in His love. The lesson is that even when, by all rights, a person is deserving of punishment, the divine Judge attempts to follow the ways of mercy.

This same viewpoint lies behind another picturesque rendition of the heavenly court's apparatus. In place of the many angels representing justice, one has the solitary figure of Satan attempting to present evidence that will establish the human defendants' culpability.

> You find that Satan comes on the Day of Atonement to accuse Israel and he specifies the iniquities of Israel, saying: "Master of the Universe, there are adulterers among the nations of the earth; so too, among Israel. There are thieves among the nations of the earth; so too, among Israel. But the Holy One, blessed be He, specifies the just deeds of Israel. Then what does He do? He suspends the beam of the scales and looks to see what the balance or imbalance is between the iniquities and the just deeds. And as they are weighed - the iniquities against the just deeds, these against those - the two pans of the scale balance exactly. Thereupon Satan goes out to fetch more iniquities to put in the pan of iniquities and bring it down. What does the Holy One, blessed be He, do? Even while Satan is going about seeking iniquities, the Holy One, blessed be He, takes the iniquities out of the pan and hides them under his royal purple [mantle]. Then Satan comes and finds no iniquity on the scales, as is said: "The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none" (Jer. 50:20). When Satan sees there is no iniquity, he cries out before the Holy One, blessed be He: "Master of the Universe, 'Thou hast carried away the iniquity of Thy people' (Ps. 32:1)!"[15]

In this selection, a classic conflict between the demands of justice and mercy arises. For his part, Satan is not cast as the dastardly tempter or seducer. On the contrary, he merely tries to carry out his proper responsibilities as heavenly prosecutor, which means that by presenting the concrete evidence of Israel's sins, he establishes a case

against the people. For His part, God does not even challenge Satan's case. In fact, God's decision not to wait for Satan's return with additional evidence indicates His realization that justice is on Satan's side. Basically, God's concealing Israel's sins in this instance is equivalent to what other midrashim have said He did in creating Adam.[16] At that time, He also knew that the demands of justice would not permit Him to carry on as He wished to, and so He "removed the way of the wicked... and associated the quality of mercy with Himself."[17] This allowed Him to create Adam just as in the present midrashim the same kind of action based on mercy allows God to vindicate Israel.

As was also the case in the texts on Adam's creation, the angel of this midrash serves primarily as a device for concretizing God's own internal conflict. That is to say, the justice which Satan represents is not really something external to God. Rather the standards and norms which Satan invokes are derived from God. Consequently, the divine Judge is Himself just, while also being merciful, and His ongoing challenge is to balance the demands of these two attributes of His. In an effort to dramatize the solution God reaches, this midrash personifies the attribute of justice in the figure of Satan. God then symbolizes only mercy and His triumph over Satan indicates the rabbis' belief that the divine resolution of such conflicts between justice and mercy is made in favor of mercy.

Still another way in which the rabbis point out God's inclination for

mercy involves an elaboration of the basic idea found in the Mechilta:

> When God issues decrees concerning Israel, if they be beneficent, their execution is reported back to Him; but if they be for evil it is not reported back to Him.[18]

From this non-angelic selection one can conclude that God is somewhat uncomfortable when He executes justice in the sense of punishment. Moreover an echo of this very same idea can be found in the Tanchuma Buber, where the exegesis of Psalm 5:5 leads to the condusion "that the Holy One, blessed be He, does not like to find a person guilty."[19] Most importantly, in the same paragraph of the Tanchuma Buber, this notion is restated with the use of angels. Thus one learns:

> Only the angels of peace and the angels of mercy stand before God. But the angels of indignation are far away from Him, as it is written: "They come from a far country, from the end of heaven, even the Lord, and the weapons of His indignation to destroy the whole earth" (Isa. 13:5).[20]

In terms of the contention that the rabbis often use angels as literary devices, one sees here how the angels are clearly used to supplement the simple idea of God's being reticent over exacting justice. The two kinds of angels are created to be the equivalents of God's attributes of justice and mercy, and the lesson of the text is that just as God keeps only the angels of peace and mercy near Himself, He also tries to act on the basis of mercy rather than justice. One final text in the Tanchuma Buber goes even further by suggesting that God refrains altogether from participating in punishment. Instead, the attribute of mercy has God

delegate punishment to an angel, while God waits for the end of time when He will dispense the messianic rewards all by Himself.[21]

Notwithstanding the tenor of this last passage and similar ones that have preceded it, one should not conclude that God's attribute of mercy totally overshadows the attribute of justice. In fact, the rabbis of the post-70 C. E. period knew very well that the God who could conceal Israel's sins under His cloak on Yom Kippur had also taken note of these sins when He decided to allow Jerusalem and the Temple to be destroyed. Such works as Lamentations Rabbah, for example, contain mention of sins committed by Israel before the destruction which caused God to decide to punish His people.[22] Two individual midrashim using angels also portray a God acting very much by means of His attribute of justice when Jerusalem is conquered.[23] Nevertheless, it is important to note that only two of the many angelic texts actually present God in this way. Indeed when the angelic texts deal with the fact that God does judge and exact punishment from people, many of them still manage to retain the image of a God acting out of mercy. God's impulse for pathos is muted in these texts, but even as He participates in the execution of justice, this impulse remains intact.

A text from Leviticus Rabbah demonstrates how the angelic midrashim can mingle ethos with pathos:

> R. Judan son of R. Pilya observed: This is precisely as Job says: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the

> Lord" (Job 1:21); both when He gave He gave with mercy and when He took away He took away with mercy. Nay, more; when He gave He consulted no one, but when He took away He consulted the heavenly court. R. Eleazar remarked: In every instance where you find the expression "and the Lord," it signifies, He and His court. The text which establishes the general rule for all cases is: "And the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee" (I Kings 22:23).[24]

Behind this passage one can hear the question: If God is loving and compassionate, how can He condemn human beings to punishment of various sorts? The text answers that although God's pathos is always in force, He nevertheless reaches verdicts against human beings because at times He consults with the angels regarding decisions. In other words, the compassionate God invokes justice against His creatures only when the angels are given a say in the matter.

So then this last midrash adds a new dimension to the image of God presented thus far in the angelic midrashim by indicating that God does definitely take punitive actions. At the same time, the midrash retains the image of a God predominantly merciful by setting the angels up as the ones who are basically responsible for convincing God to act on the basis of justice. This explanation for the loving God's ability to punish earth's inhabitants occurs in the specific case of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. There the rabbis conclude on the basis of their reading of Genesis 19:24 that God only destroyed the two cities after consulting with the heavenly court.[25] The rabbis also explain God's testing of Abraham in Genesis 22 by saying that it was the angels who goaded God

on to command that Abraham sacrifice Isaac.[26]

In the case of the plagues brought against Egypt, some texts also maintain that the angels played a significant role. Specifically, although God is said to have been the first to raise the issue of punishing the Egyptians with darkness, the midrash relates that the angels were only too eager to agree to the idea. In fact, the angels were so zealous for justice that in carrying out the plague they made it excessively severe.[27] Thus even though God may have initially been the one wishing to punish the Egyptians, His role in the actual punishment pales in comparison to that of the overeager angels.

This singular concern of the angels for justice as they see it is also used by the rabbis to do more than simply mitigate God's role in the execution of justice. For example, in some midrashim the angels' zeal becomes a foil to God's restraint. In this way, one not only learns that God is reticent about invoking punishments, but that He also bases Himself on a higher vision of right and wrong than do the angels. This becomes apparent in one passage which describes the dialogue in heaven just after Ishmael has collapsed in the desert because of hunger and thirst.

> The ministering angels said to the Holy One, blessed be He: "Master of the Universe, a person who will one day bring death to Thy children by pretending to relieve their thirst, wilt Thou raise up a well for him?" It was to Ishmael's children that Isaiah referred when he said: "The burden is upon Arabia. In the forest in Arabia shall ye lodge, O ye caravans of Dedanites. Unto him that was thirsty, they brought

> water; the inhabitants of the land of Tema did meet the fugitives with their bread" (Isa. 21:13-14). But the Holy One, blessed be He, asked the ministering angels: "At this moment, what sort of person is Ishmael? Righteous or wicked?" And they answered: "Righteous." God said: "I do not judge a man except for what he is at the time I am judging him!" Hence it is said: "God hath heard the voice of the lad according to what he was then" (Gen. 21:17), and not according to what he was going to be afterwards.[28]

One cannot help but be sympathetic to the angels' complaint in the passage at hand. From one perspective justice, even common sense, would seem to demand that God do what He can to spare the future generations of Israel from unnecessary suffering. Then again, the angels' presentation of this one viewpoint allows God to express His concern for an ethic that goes beyond that of the angels. His position is that if good and bad are to continue being meaningful terms, He Himself must act consistently and fairly. Undercutting the accepted system of reward and punishment even once in Ishmael's case would mean throwing the legitimacy of the system into question for all time. Even Israel, for whose sake God would have circumvented the system to begin with, would not be sure that God might not shift ground again. For there to be true and dependable justice, then, God tells the angels that He cannot accede to their wishes.

In other midrashim, the angels also come to God with requests He does not fulfill. In these passages, the angels' zeal for justice equals a zeal for observance of the letter of the law. In addition, the passages

are constructed like the one above so that the angels come to God with their demands and thereby create a situation in which God is able to explain how He operates. An instance of this occurs when Israel fails to repent after being told to do so. At this time, Gabriel comes to God and requests permission to destroy Israel with hot coals as just recompense for their refusal to repent. Although "justice" is on Gabriel's side, God stops him from acting by saying that among the large number of people there are certainly some decent persons. For their sake, God holds Gabriel back.[29]

In the case of Micah the Ephraimite, the ministering angels as a whole also feel that justice necessitates a proper punishment. So one reads:

> It has been taught: R. Nathan said: From Gareb to Shiloah is a distance of three mils and the smoke of the alter and that of Micah's image intermingled. The ministering angels wished to thrust Micah away, but the Holy One, blessed be He, said to them: "Let him alone, because his bread is available for wayfarers."[30]

What has happened in each of the last two passages is that God has indicated how an overly mechanical interpretation of the law falls short of the mark. His search for some extenuating circumstance whereby He can save human life illustrates how the law is not an end in itself for Him. According to Moore:

> God's rectoral justice does not mean that, having given laws and attached general or specific penalties to the violation of them, He inflexibly exacts the

> whole penalty of every infraction by transgression or neglect. It is not the justice of inexorable law...[31]

Rather, the current midrashim are designed to demonstrate what Schechter calls God's חסידות or saintliness[32]- this being His commitment not to limit Himself to the letter of His own law. Such חסידות is clearly embodied in God's striving to temper His justice with mercy and in God's over-arching desire to capitalize on any opportunity for maintaining life in the hopes of enriching it.

The fact of the matter is that in some instances the angels actually seem to take God's example to heart. Along these lines, some midrashim portray the angels speaking to God in terms one knows He would appreciate. Instead of asking God to act justly by punishing human beings, the angels in these texts ask God to be just by acting favorably toward human beings! Once God has healed the wombs of Abimelech's household, for example, the angels claim that in all fairness God must now grant Sarah the ability to bear a child.[33] Elsewhere at the moment when Abraham is about to slaughter Isaac, the angels ask for mercy the way God Himself might. They comment that if Abraham does not have sufficient merit to avert the death of his son, then no other person can ever hope to acquire merit of any value.[34] Apparently the angels share the concern God has manifested previously in this chapter that the divine system of reward and punishment remain consistent and hence comprehensible for human beings.

In sum, the angelic midrashim dealing with God have one basic

tendenz. They present the Lord of Exodus 34:6 who is "compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, [and] rich in steadfast kindness." Moreover they present this single theme even though the many different passages here dealing with God did not originate with one rabbi or one group of rabbis. One can almost be sure too that the creators of the individual passages did not feel constrained to use the angelic midrash in a preconceived manner. What seems to have happened instead is that the structure of this genre of midrash in which the angels oppose or complain to God lent itself ideally to the development of the theme of God's mercy. That is to say that since by using the angels as foils to God it was easy to teach about this aspect of God dramatically, this is precisely what the rabbis did.

But ultimately, why should the rabbis have been interested in dwelling on this aspect of God? On the one hand, one could answer that this interest in God's mercy is a continuation of the biblical tradition. The second chapter of Hosea among other passages certainly presents a God of compassion whom the rabbis as devotes of the Bible would not have overlooked. On the other hand, their own historical situation may have also encouraged the rabbis to stress God's attribute of mercy. Bearing in mind the descriptions of this historic situation in the last two chapters, one can see how contemporary concerns may have led to the particular tendenz of the angelic midrashim.

Take, for example, the individual human dealt with in Chapter Four

whose concern is that he has no rightful place in creation. The image of God doing His best to save the solitary individual Micah from punishment by the angels would probably speak to this person's fears. For if God cared enough to preserve Micah after he had built an idol, it was reasonable to hope that God could care for other persons just as much. Similarly, the Jew who might doubt the future of His people could find solace in the image of a God who cares sufficiently for Israel to weep at the thought that they are destined to sin at Sinai. Such a God of compassion would not seem to be one who would desert His people in their greatest time of need after 70 C. E.

Finally, scholars such as Samuel Cohon and Arthur Marmorstein have noted that one aspect of anti-Jewish polemic in the rabbinic era involved laying accusations against the Jewish God.[35] According to these two scholars, rabbinic literature reflects the fact that both pagans and Gnostics assailed the Jewish God for, among other things, being untruthful, inconsistent, and even cruel. Marcion, for one, is said to have distinguished between the God of Israel and Christ by calling the former "judicial, harsh, mighty in war; the other mild, placid, and simply good and excellent."[36] Given this kind of argumentation from outside the Jewish world, then, one can appreciate another reason why the rabbis may have chosen to portray God as they do in the angelic <u>midrashim.</u> In short, by having God claim the privilege of saving Abraham from the furnace or having God keep the angels of destruction far from His throne,

the rabbis presented a highly empathic God whose actions put the lie to the misrepresentations of Israel's detractors.

Thus as a result of this newest polemic concern on the part of the rabbis plus the other concerns mentioned above, the _midrashim_ of this chapter portray a God very much characterized by pathos and empathy. The _midrashim_ teach that the God of the Bible has maintained His loving relationship with the world down to the present, and in this way they manage to establish that the Jew as human being or member of Israel is part of an ongoing concern. God's compassion is in essence a guarantee to those who might read or hear these _midrashim_ that God's interest in the world is primary and abiding.

Chapter 7

CONCERNING TORAH

> Said R. Abbahu in the name of R. Jochanan: When God gave the Torah no bird twittered, no fowl flew, no ox lowed, none of the *ophanim* stirred a wing, the *seraphim* did not say: "Holy, holy, holy," the sea did not roar, the creatures spoke not, the whole world was hushed into breathless silence and the voice went forth: "I am the Lord thy God" (Ex. 20:2).[1]

The very idea that the world might come to a standstill at the giving of Torah reflects the larger rabbinic belief in Torah as the most precious possession of Israel. Indeed, for the rabbis, the study and observance of this gift from God constitute the most praiseworthy pursuits in which a Jew can engage. With this in mind, the rabbis consequently make constant reference to Torah and its fulfillment in their *midrashic* writings. In particular, one of the ways in which they do this involves the creation of *midrashim* in which angels take part. As has been the case in previous chapters, however, the angels in such *midrashim* are used primarily as literary devices. They are cast in particular roles such that, through the use of the angels, the rabbis are able to elucidate further several aspects of Torah.

To begin with, two of the functions attributed to angels in pre-rabbinic literature become important in presenting the rabbinic attitude

towards Torah. These angelic functions are those of guardianship and heavenly "bookkeeping,"[2] both of which are handled quite literally in many rabbinic texts. Witness one passage in the Tanchuma where Jacob's dream of angels ascending and descending the ladder is taken to mean that at this point in his flight from home, the angels who guarded him within Canaan exchanged places with those assigned to him outside the land.[3] So too a passage in Pesikta Rabbati straightforwardly comments: "Angels are assigned to every human being. And every day they record his deeds so that everything he does is known to the Holy One, blessed be He."[4] In both cases the rabbis have done little more than elaborate on what the Bible has already suggested about angels. In fact, in the Tanchuma passage, one of the prooftexts used is Psalm 91:11, which says quite plainly: "For He will give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." In other words, eisegesis is at a minimum in these preliminary texts.

This does not long remain the case, however, for in many instances, the notion of the angel as guardian and bookkeeper is linked to the larger context of Torah as a value. This means that it becomes of secondary importance simply to establish that there are angels perfoming the functions of protecting and recording. Rather, the primary task of the _midrashim_ is to demonstrate that the way in which angels do such things depends on how meritorious or not a person is. The rabbis use the idea of there being angels who guard or keep records, therefore, to teach

something about Torah and its observance. A text from Exodus Rabbah, which follows up the role of the guardian angel, can illustrate how this occurs:

> Another explanation of "Behold, I send an angel before thee" (Ex. 33:2). Thus it says: "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them" (Ps. 34:8). When a man performs one mitzvah, the Holy One, blessed be He, gives him one angel to guard him, as it says: "The angel of the Lord encampeth" (Ps. 34:8). When he performs two mitzvot God gives him two angels to guard him, as it says: "For He will give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all the ways" (Ps. 91:11). When he performs many mitzvot, God gives him half His camp, for it says: "A thousand may fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; it shall not come nigh unto thee" (Ps. 91:7). That ten thousand is half of His camp we know because it says: "The chariots of God are two myriads, even thousands upon thousand" (Ps. 68:18).[5]

Although one might have inferred from the Bible itself that God sends angels to guard a person only if that person is a good person, here this theme becomes explicit and prominent. According to the selection, there is a direct relationship between how observant of God's ways one is and whether one is given angelic guardians. In fact, one could say that in this passage the angels are "ethicized." That is, their presence is made a function of a person's deeds. In discussing the rabbinic understanding of guardian angels, then, one need not dwell on the specifics of the angels' size, appearance, or personality. Such primary characteristics of the angels themselves become altogether

secondary to the evaluation of peoples' loyalty or lack thereof to Torah. Only within this framework can one best appreciate the rabbinic use of the guardian angel.

A further facet of this approach becomes apparent in the following comment on guardian angels:

> If a person makes himself into a righteous person by [always] speaking the truth, then he is given an angel who deals with him in a righteous manner by speaking truthfully on his behalf. If a person makes himself into a saintly person by bearing all that comes his way, then he is given an angel who deals with him in a saintly manner by bearing all on his behalf. But if a person makes himself into a wicked person by lying and deceiving, then he is given an angel who deals with him in a wicked manner by lying and deceiving in his case.[6]

Again it is clear that through the presentation of the angels in a given <u>midrashic</u> passage, one is able to learn something about Torah observance and its worth. In fact, the idea that bad as well as good angels can be assigned to a person fills out the image of Torah presented in the first selection. It actually concretizes the idea of reward and punishment, the lesson being that while reverence for the Torah's ways is important, disregard of those ways actually has real and negative consequences.

Such consequences can even attain cosmic dimensions as one selection from Seder Eliahu Rabbah demonstrates through its use of the notion of "angels of destruction."[7] The text establishes that devotion to Torah is crucial by stating that if it were not for the continuing dedication of

Israel to God's laws, the "angels of destruction" would destroy the whole world instantly.[8] The text therefore illustrates what significant results allegiance to Torah can have for the world and it does this by using the angels as concrete examples of the punishment that follows on disobedience of Torah.

Approaching this same idea of the salutary results flowing from obedience to Torah, the rabbis also use angels in another way. To do this, they elaborate on an approach to the angels first suggested in the apocryphal/pseudepigraphic literature[9] and already referred to in these pages when discussing the rabbinic approach to Israel.[10] This approach involves employing the angels as symbols of excellence and then establishing that certain human beings are outstanding by comparing them favorably to the already "excellent" angels. In the case of the <u>midrashim</u> at hand, a person is said to achieve prominence if he follows Torah's ways. The actual fashion in which his achievement is then expressed is to say that because of his righteousness a person can become the equal or the superior of no less than the angels.

A text from Sifre Deuteronomy illustrates one aspect of this approach to the angels:

> So R. Simi used to say: All creatures who were created in heaven have souls and bodies that are heavenly. All creatures who were created on the earth have souls and bodies that are terrestial. This is so except for human beings whose souls are heavenly while their bodies are terrestial. Therefore if a person follows Torah and fulfills

> the will of his Father in heaven, he becomes like the creatures above, as it is said: "I said: You are godlike beings and all of you sons of the Most High" (Ps. 82:6). But if a person does not follow Torah and fulfill the will of his Father in heaven, he becomes like the creatures below, as it is said: "Nevertheless you shall die like human beings" (Ps. 82:7).[11]

The further idea of the righteous person's being superior to the angel is developed through the exegesis of two biblical verses. Thus Joel 2:11 is read as a reference to both angels and righteous persons. The phrase כי רב מאוד מחנהו is taken to be a description of the angels, while the following phrase in the verse, כי עצום עשה דברו, is understood to consist of a question and an answer. The question is who is mightier than those in the Lord's camp and the answer is that those who fulfill God's word are. The righteous are therefore said to be greater than the angels.[12]

The same conclusion is reached through an exegesis of Numbers 23:23 which is identical to the one employed above in establishing Israel's superiority to the angels. Here, in place of Israel, the righteous are promised that they will stand closer to God than the angels in the messianic future. At that time, the angels will have to ask those who have distinguished themselves by their love of Torah: "'What is God doing' (Num. 23:23)? What has the Holy One, blessed be He, taught you?"[13] The righteous will then be able to teach the angels because they will have earned the reward of learning God's will before any other members of creation.

Taking these last texts together, one can see that the thrust of each of them is towards establishing the importance of observing Torah. Each selection promises a great reward for the person who is observant and thereby earns the title of tzadik. In addition, the fact that there is a discrepancy between the selections as to whether the righteous person becomes equal or superior to the angels indicates that the authors of these texts must not have been very concerned with the concrete beings of the angels. For if they had been interested in such matters, one would expect to learn that the righteous person becomes either the equal or the superior of the angels, but not both. The very fluidity of the angels' image, then, indicates that the angels per se were not of special importance to the rabbis. Rather, the rabbis described the angels in different ways as they sought to make different homiletic points.

In particular, some of the rabbis focused on the Angel of Death in order to teach a further lesson regarding the significance of Torah. In their midrashim, these rabbis highlight the prominence of Torah in God's eyes by suggesting that even death can be held at bay through the acquisition of Torah. More specifically, the exegesis of Exodus 32:16 referred to in Chapter Five is the primary means by which R. Judah and others conclude that accepting Torah allowed Israel to step outside the Angel of Death's domain.[14]

In terms of Israel's status, this last midrashic interpretation illustrates how much more blessed Israel is than the other nations who were

never allowed the opportunity to frustrate the Angel of Death. Additionally, in terms of Torah, the same midrash illustrates how very important Torah is to God. The text demonstrates this by establishing that as long as Israel was blameless (that is, true to Torah) God was willing to reverse the very fact of human mortality. In other words, even the Angel of Death's powers were made a function of Israel's deeds. Following Torah meant the achievement of immortality, while not following Torah meant that the Angel of Death could regain his powers. In either case, one sees how the rabbis subsume the Angel of Death under the category of Torah. In this way, death is made to seem less arbitrary an event and more a function of allegiance to God's teachings.

So then the rabbis attribute much importance to Torah and its observance. Given the respect and love with which they approach the divine gift of Torah, however, one might wonder how the rabbis deal with Israel's recurring disregard of this gift. It would seem that such negligence might ultimately jeopardize Israel's claim to Torah. In fact, exactly this concern is manifested in the following contribution by R. Acha:

> The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: "My children, let not My Torah be unto you like a man's grown-up daughter whom he seeks to marry off to anyone whom he may find. What is the meaning of: 'If thou wilt receive my words' (Prov. 11:1)? If you will merit you will receive My Torah, which the ministering angels coveted, but which I would not give unto them." Whence this? For it is said: "Kings of armies they flee, they flee" (Ps. 68:13). And Scripture continues: "And the beauty of the home Thou wilt divide as spoil" (Ps. 68:13)? They

> said before God: "Master of the Universe, wilt Thou divide amongst the earthly the beautiful thing which Thou hast in the high heavens?" Hence the force of: "If thou wilt receive my words" (Prov. 11:1); that is to say, if you will have the merit.[15]

The text teaches that God's Torah is not given unconditionally. On the contrary, when God gives the Torah to Israel, the people become responsible for preserving it and thereby proving their own merit. Furthermore, in order to emphasize this position, the angels are brought into the discussion. Their opposition serves as it has in previous *midrashim* to highlight the homiletic end of the selection, which in this case involves stressing the preciousness of Torah. If even the angels clamored to retain the Torah in heaven, the audience for R. Acha's comments is meant to conclude that they must certainly treat God's laws with special reverence. They must do so in order to ensure that they do not fall short of God's expectations and therefore do not forfeit their claim on His laws.

This motif of angelic opposition to a plan of God favoring humanity is, of course, a mainstay of the rabbis' angelic *midrashim.* Notwithstanding its importance in the other chapters of this work, however, the motif assumes its most elaborate form in the *midrashim* that deal with Torah. Two texts in particular expand on R. Acha's brief allusion to the angels' objections over the giving of Torah, and these texts portray what occurred at Sinai in vivid detail. The first and simpler account is taken from the Babylonian Talmud.

R. Joshua b. Levi also said: When Moses ascended on high, the ministering angels spake before the Holy One, blessed be He: "Sovereign of the Universe? What business has one born of woman amongst us?" "He has come to receive the Torah," answered He to them. Said they to him: "That secret treasure, which has been hidden by Thee for 974 generations before the world was created, thou desirest to give to flesh and blood! 'What is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that Thou visitest him? O Lord our God, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth! Who hast set Thy glory [the Torah] upon the heavens' (Ps. 8:5, 2)." "Return them an answer," bade the Holy One, blessed be He, to Moses. "Sovereign of the Universe," replied he, "I fear lest theyconsume me with the fiery breath of their mouths." "Hold on to the Throne of Glory," said He to him, "and return them an answer," as it is said: "He maketh him to hold on to the face of His throne. And spreadeth [פרשז] His cloud over him" (Job 26:9). Whereon R. Nachman observed: This teaches that the Almighty spread [פרש] the lustre [זיו] of His Shechinah and cast it as a protection over him. He then spake before Him: "Sovereign of the Universe! The Torah which Thou givest me, what is written therein? 'I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt' (Ex. 20:2)." Said he to them [the angels]: "Did ye go down to Egypt; were ye enslaved to Pharoah; why then should the Torah be yours? Again, what is written therein? 'Thou shalt have no other gods' (Ex. 20:3). Do ye dwell among peoples that engage in idol worship? Again, what is written therein? 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy' (Ex. 20:8). Do ye then perform work that ye need to rest? Again, what is written therein? 'Thou shalt not take [תשא]' (Ex. 20:7). Are there any business dealings [משא] among you? Again, what is written therein? 'Honor thy father and thy mother' (Ex. 20:12). Have ye fathers and mothers? Again, what is written therein? 'Thou shalt not murder. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal' (Ex. 20:13-15). Is there jealousy among you; is the Evil Tempter among you?" Straightway they conceded to the Holy One, blessed be He, for it is said: "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth" and it is not said: "Who hast set

> Thy glory upon the heavens" (Ps. 8:2). Immediately each one was moved to love Moses and transmitted something to him... The Angel of Death too confided his secret to him, for it is said: "And he put on the incense and made atonement for the people" (Num. 16:47); and it is said: "And he stood between the dead and the living" (Num. 16:48). Had he not told it to him whence had he known it?[16]

The second of these two selections is even longer than the first and gains its extra length from a fuller description of Moses' actual ascent to heaven. The text relates that "at the time Moses was to go up on high, a cloud came and lay down in front of him."[17] When he entered the cloud, it carried him directly to heaven's gate and a series of confrontations with several angels. First, there was Kemuel, "he that is in charge of the twelve thousand destroying angels that are seated at the gate of the firmament."[18] According to the text, Kemuel tried to prevent Moses from entering the firmament because he believed that Moses "born of a woman in heat"[19] did not merit being in a place of purity such as heaven. Apparently Moses did not agree with the angel, for the text relates that he struck and killed Kemuel. More was in store for Moses, however, as giant angels such as Hadarniel and Sandalphon also tried to impede his progress towards God's Throne. In particular, God escorted Moses by some of the greatest dangers, such as the river Rigyon "whose coals consume angels and consume men."[20] Finally, when Moses approached the Throne of Glory, the text tells of a last angelic attempt to take his life, in response to which God had Moses take hold of His Throne for protection. The selection then goes on to describe basically the same

proceedings in heaven as does the Talmudic passage.

The theme of these two *midrashim* is similar in part to the theme of R. Acha's text. That is to say, as one reads about the angels' intense desire not to give up the Torah and as one reads about the perils Moses endured with God's help in order to secure the Torah for Israel, one cannot help but be more appreciative of the Torah's importance.

In addition, the present texts describe a new aspect of Torah. This comes about as Moses debates with the angels in order to establish why Israel deserves God's laws and the angels do not. Basically Moses' point with the angels is that the Torah is not appropriate for them. His examples from the Ten Commandments illustrate that unless the holder of Torah can experience such things as fatigue, family, and jealousy, in others words unless the holder is human, the full gamut of commandments is meaningless.

Homiletically speaking, Moses' conclusions address an uncertainty voiced as early as the Book of Deuteronomy, when God must assure the people that His commandments are not beyond their capacities. ("Surely this instruction which I enjoin upon you this day is not too baffling for you, nor is it beyond reach" (Deut. 30:11).) In these *midrashim,* Deuteronomy's message is reiterated through Moses' demonstration that unless Israel does receive the Torah, there will be no one able to carry out God's will. In order to be actualized, then, Torah must pass into the earthly realm.

There is still another aspect to these texts describing Moses' ascent to heaven. Along these lines, several scholars have noted that the idea of an earthly figure encountering the enmity of heavenly powers while trying to obtain a heavenly treasure is not unique to rabbinic literature. According to Joseph Schultz, who summarizes the conclusions of Gershom Scholem and Alexander Altmann:

> This theme is a Jewish variation of a Gnostic myth of the second and third centuries which describes how the evil planets seek to prevent the ascent of the soul and its descent with the powers of light... This myth is... the background of the angels' opposition to the giving of the Law - the Law being the Jewish counterpart of the powers of light.[21]

To spell out the equation fully, Schultz is saying that Moses takes the place of the soul in the myth, that the evil planets are replaced by the angels, and that the light in heaven over which the two parties quarrel is Torah.

Peter Schäfer embraces this comparison of the rabbinic texts with the Gnostic myth and goes one step further by commenting on the parallels he finds between some Jewish hechalot texts and these rabbinic ones.[22] Schäfer does this on the assumption that the hechalot literature, with its many tales of heavenly journeys, is itself under the influence of Gnostic literature. Bearing this in mind, he points out that in the heavenly journeys described by the mystics, it is characteristic for the traveller to experience danger and fear, for there to be heavenly gates under the supervision of guards, and for the angels to be very large. All this is,

in fact, found in the rabbinic descriptions of Moses' ascent.

One concludes, then, that there is a strong correlation at this point between the Gnostic-mystic and rabbinic literatures. Scholars in the field conclude too that the Gnostic-mystic literature is probably the one that has influenced the patterns of the rabbinic so that the parallels between them do occur.[23] Nevertheless, the ways in which the rabbinic texts still differ from the Gnostic-mystic genre are also important. Indeed, one finds that in several significant areas, the rabbis have not simply transferred the other literature's material into theirs. Instead they have adapted it quite carefully to suit their own specific goals.

For example, Schultz notes that the Talmudic idea of the Torah's being hidden in heaven before Moses' arrival is paralleled in non-rabbinic sources by the idea of there being wisdom which is only revealed to designated individuals when they arrive in heaven.[24] On the other hand, Schultz points out that the rabbis do not borrow indiscriminately from the non-rabbinic sources. Thus, although many of these sources describing wisdom hidden in heaven go on to describe it as wisdom pertaining to the mysteries and secrets of creation, the rabbinic texts describe their heavenly wisdom altogether differently. In Schultz's words:

> The Talmudic legend describes the Law revealed to Moses as containing only a practical religious guide for daily life. No mention is made of the secrets of the universe or of creation. In his refutation of the angels, Moses stresses the practical nature of the Law which is applicable only to human beings.[25]

To Schultz's mind, the contrast between the rabbinic and non-rabbinic

sources is undoubtedly the result of a purposeful decision on the part of the rabbis. Schultz sees the rabbinic reworking of the heavenly wisdom idea as a polemic against those who did believe that true Jewish knowledge consisted of mysteries.[26] In fact, the following depiction of the events at Sinai affirms how very much the rabbis disagreed with an esoteric approach to Torah, and the passage thereby supports Schultz's conclusions.

> The angels began remonstrating with the Holy One, blessed be He, at the giving of the Torah. When the Holy One, blessed be He, was about to set forth the Torah on Sinai for Israel, they said: "What is man that Thou are mindful of him? O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth, yet surely above the heavens set Thy glory" (Ps. 8:5, 2). By this they meant: "Master of the Universe! It would be more fitting for Thee to set forth the Torah in heaven. Why? Because we are holy and pure and it, too, is pure and holy. We are eternally alive and Thy Torah is the tree of life. It would be better if the Torah were with us." God replied: "The Torah cannot find fulfillment among heavenly beings, for it is said of the Torah: 'Neither is it found in the land of the living' (Job 28:13). Is there land in heaven? Where can Torah find fulfillment? Among earthly beings, as it is said: 'I, even I, have made the land, and created man upon it; I, even My hands, have stretched out the heavens; and all their host have I commanded' (Isa. 45:12)." In the name of R. Judah, R. Nehemiah told the parable of a man whose son had a finger missing. The father sent his son away to have him taught the weaving of silk garments and whatever appertains to this craft - a craft requiring the use of all the fingers. After a time, the father came to the master-weaver and asked: "Why hast thou not taught my son the craft? The master-weaver replied: "This is a craft that requires the use of all the fingers, but thy son has a

> finger missing. Yet thou desirest that he should learn weaving." So, too, the Holy One, blessed be He, said to the angels: "The Torah cannot be taught to you, for there is no procreation among you, no uncleanness, no death, and no disease. All of you are holy. Yet in the Torah such things are said as: 'When a man dieth in a tent' (Num. 19:14); 'This shall be the law of the leper' (Lev. 14:2); 'If a woman be delivered' (Lev. 12:2); 'If a woman have an issue' (Lev. 15:25); 'These may ye eat' (Lev. 11:9); and 'These ye shall not eat" (Lev. 11:4).[27]

In response to those who might think that knowledge of God's will should be reserved for the select few, this midrash artfully establishes how totally accessible and "human" God's Torah is. More than that is accomplished, however, since the two texts describing Moses' ascent to heaven have already indicated that the Torah is meant for earthly beings. The further element added then in the present text emerges out of the specific claim to Torah lodged by the angels. They tell God that the Torah should remain in heaven because its absolute holiness demands absolute holiness from those who possess it. However, by stating their case so boldly, the angels lead God to answer them equally boldly. Therefore where the angels suppose that purity is a prerequisite for the gift of Torah, God tells them that only those who are impure can acquire Torah. Where the angels value immortality, God expresses His concern for those who lack immortality.

In other words, the angels act as foils in the midrash at hand and thereby allow God to define how very serious He is about humanity's right to the Torah. Specifically, the present midrash adds to the previous two mid-

rashim the explicit idea that when God designed the Torah so that it would require human followers, He did not imagine that such humans would all be saints. On the contrary, the very design of Torah takes into account how weak and how fallible human beings can be.

The fact of the matter is that, with the explication of this last midrash, this thesis itself has come full circle. For God's willingness to give Israel the Torah despite the people's necessary human shortcomings is also a response to the first midrash presented concerning humanity. In that text, "the earth was bewildered and confused"[28] by the difference in status between the angels and humanity. The implicit concern which that text introduced through its portrayal of the earth was one echoed throughout the chapter: Does the fact of human finitude mean that human life must always fall short of fulfillment? One learns now that in addition to the responses which may have been given to this question above, there is a final reason for not despairing over the limitations of humanity. It is the realization that God cares sufficiently for those on earth to have given them a heavenly source of guidance called Torah. In fact, with this gift from God, one can feel confident that it is possible for the fallible members of Israel to shape their lives according to no less than God's will.

CONCLUSION

According to Jean Seznec in his work The Survival of the Pagan Gods,[1] the Greek world encountered a "problem" with its deities as early as the fifth century B. C. E. The problem presented by the gods involved reconciling some of the very "human" activities and desires of the gods with the supposed divine origin of the gods. Seznec relates that for those inclined towards philosophy, the highly mythological tone of the stories dealing with the gods led to a crisis of belief and a rethinking of how the gods would be appreciated without doing violence to reason. As a result of this reconsideration, several schools of thought arose in which attempts were made to rationalize the stories of the gods through such means as allegory.

To some extent, Seznec's description of the Greeks offers an analogy for what has been discovered about the rabbis' treatment of the angels. In other words, alongside the literal belief in angels, what is basically a "rationalized" image of the angels has emerged in this thesis. Thus, as much as the thesis has shown how the rabbis allow for angels who control the rain and snow or intervene dramatically in the lives of biblical heroes, the thesis has also attempted to demonstrate that the rabbis can present angels in a far less literal manner.

God's castigating the angels, for example, when they do not fulfill their "sole purpose" of saving Hebrew babies from the Nile is a classic instance in which one realizes that the rabbinic text is meant to convey more than a literal description of the angels' encounter with God.[2]

Rather, insofar as the angels' attributes are shaped in order to allow the text to make a homiletic point about God and Israel, one sees that the angels are used as a literary device. One does not read the current midrash or the others presented in the thesis to learn about the angels per se as much as one studies the passages to see what lessons they teach about the central issues in rabbinic theology. As the Greeks looked beyond the literal accounts of the gods in their literature, the rabbis apparently did the same for the angels in their midrashim.

On the other hand, an important distinction must be made between the Greek pattern and that of the rabbis. For although one can say with certainty that the Greeks who rationalized their mythology did so quite explicitly and self-consciously, the same cannot be said for the rabbis. To be sure, there are some explicit rabbinic statements against the worship of angels, but these only occur in reaction to the threat such angel worship posed for strict monotheism.[3] In reference to the more subtle process wherein the angels take on roles that further the homiletic purposes of a given passage, the rabbis are silent. They certainly use the angels in both literal and non-literal ways, but they do not articulate this fact or any of its ramifications for their audience. As Schechter comments in his introduction to rabbinic theology as a whole,[4] the rabbis seem to have felt little need to express even the mainstays of their beliefs formally. So it is not surprising for this thesis to find that the rabbis do not explain their own twofold approach to the angels.

Perhaps the key word to be used, then, is the word "implicit." The literary functions which the angels fulfill in the rabbis' midrashim are implicit. So, too, the philosophy which these midrashim contain is implicit. Indeed, only by taking the midrashic passages as a whole can one see that in their different ways they all communicate a similar message. That is to say, as they explore the various aspects of humanity, Israel, God, and Torah, they speak out of a common conviction. Their conviction is that because of His love, God has made creation purposeful and given the individual Jew the real opportunity to make his existence on earth meaningful. Although the angels constantly attempt to undermine or deny God's commitment to the world in these midrashim, the fact that God cannot be swayed bespeaks the final affirmation of these passages on behalf of humanity and Israel.

Paraphrasing a final rabbinic source, one might ask whether the orientation of the angelic midrashim is towards viewing the world as ultimately cursed or blessed.[5] From what has been said above, the answer would seem to be in favor of blessing. The philosophy implicit in these midrashim is built on the assurance that, regardless of temporary setbacks, the world is blessed with the abiding concern of God.

NOTES

Introduction

1. Jakob J. Petuchowski, Prayerbook Reform in Europe, The Liturgy of European Liberal and Reform Judaism (New York: The World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1968), p. 166.

Chapter 1

1. Job 1:6-12, I Kings 22:19-22.

2. According to Yehezkel Kaufmann and G. Ernest Wright, the figures sitting in the celestial assembly are actually pagan gods who have been stripped of all power in the Israelite milieu and have been made subordinates of the one and only God. In addition, Jacob Licht and Theodor Gaster focus on the idea of God's having messengers in this heavenly court who carry out His will in heaven and on earth. This angelic function, which is described further as this chapter continues, is said to be paralleled in non-Israelite Semitic sources where the major gods each have their own special assistants. See Yehezkel Kaufmann, The Religion of Israel (English translation Moshe Greenberg, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), pp. 63-64. G. Ernest Wright, The Old Testament Against its Environment (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1950), pp. 7-42. Jacob Licht, "Mal'ach," Encyclopedia Mikra'it (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1962), Volume Two, pp. 975-976. Theodor Gaster, "Angel," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Abingdon, 1962), Volume One, p. 131.

3. Some examples occur in Gen. 32:4; Num. 21:21; Josh. 6:17, 25; II Samuel 11:16f. II Kings 10:8. On occasion mal'ach is used for both human and heavenly messengers in the space of one verse. Some instances of this usage occur in Num. 20:14 and I Kings 19:2. For an interesting discussion of the prophet as mal'ach, see R. North, "Angel-Prophet or Satan-Prophet," Journal of Biblical Literature, Volume 82, 1970, pp. 31-67.

4. Judg. 13:2-23.

5. II Kings 1:3-4. Further details on the angel as emissary can be found in W. G. Heidt, Angelology in the Old Testament (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1949), pp. 56-59.

6. I Kings 19:5-8. Further details on the angel as an aid to humans can be found in W. G. Heidt, Angelology, pp. 60-63.

7. See also Ps. 34:8 and Ps. 35:5, 6. In Chapter 2 and Chapter 7 the idea of the guardian angel for an individual is taken up again. Note that in rabbinic literature these same three verses from the Book of Psalms become standard prooftexts used in establishing the existence of guardian angels.

Chapter 1 (cont.)

8. Ex. 14:19-20, 23:20-23, 32:34-33:3. Isa. 24:21 would also seem to indicate that certain heavenly beings are associated with the earthly kingdoms.

9. The names given are Gabriel and Michael. Gabriel first appears in Dan. 8:16. Michael first appears in Dan. 10:13.

10. Dan. 10:4f.

11. II Kings 19:35-36, Isa. 37:36-37.

12. II Samuel 24, I Chron. 21.

13. See below Chapter 2 and Chapter 7.

14. See A. B. Davidson, The Theology of the Old Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904), pp. 297-298.

15. The increase in angelology as a whole which occurs after the Babylonian Exile and is alluded to again in Chapter 2 in discussing the angel as exegete is a difficult phenomenon to explain. Among the factors that seem to have contributed to the phenomenon are:
a) the increased familiarity of Jews with the complex angelology of Iranian culture (Theodor Gaster, "Angel," pp. 133-134),
b) the emergence of apocalyptic literature in which "secrets of the universe" had to be made known to human beings.

16. Ezek. 40:1f.

17. Zech. 4:1-7.

18. See above, note 3.

19. The angel sent to bring a plague upon Israel at the time of David is a case in point. He is referred to as " המלאך המשחית בעם " (II Sam. 24:16). That is, the focus in identifying him is on his function and not on his person.

20. Although the second account of the plague during David's reign in I Chron. 21:1 does present a specific figure with the personal name, Satan, this does not take away from the fact that the predominant attitude of the Bible towards angels is a functional one. The interest is in what they do, be it redeeming or accusing, so that only in exceptional cases such as this one found in a later text is a personal name and even a personality attributed to an angel. For further comment on the

Chapter 1(cont.)

Bible's functional approach towards ha-satan, see A. B. Davidson, The Theology, pp. 299-300 and W. Eichrodt, The Theology of the Old Testament (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), Volume One, pp. 196-197. For descriptions of Satan's emergence in later literature, see below Chapter 2, Chapter 3, and Chapter 6.

21. Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology, Volume 2 (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd Ltd., 1965), p. 50.

Chapter 2

1. See Slavonic Enoch 1-22.

2. The angel who escorts and counsels Tobias in the Book of Tobit, for example, is not the kind of anonymous angel encountered in the Bible. He has a name, which is Raphael, and in marked contrast to an angel like the one who visits Manoah and his wife (Jud. 13:2-23), Raphael readily reveals his name. (Tobit 12:15) Similarly, although anonymous angels are still found in the apocryphal and pseudepigraphic literature, many of the angels who are referred to are referred to by personal names. The most frequently mentioned other than Raphael are: Uriel, Michael, Gabriel, Ramiel, Phanuel, and Saraquel.

3. Scattered throughout the many-tiered heavens mentioned in this literature one finds numbers of angels with varying assignments. Closest to God is a small group of angels that is sometimes said to have seven members (Ethiopic Enoch 40:2-10). This inner grouping, privileged by "entry to the presence of the Lord" (Tobit 12:15), has responsibility for such matters as leading the angelic host, ruling over Paradise and the underworld, and overseeing the spirits of humans. In particular, these special angels are said to be the ones destined to help God directly in the punishment of the wicked at the end of time. (Ethiopic Enoch 54:6, 90: 21-22)

4. Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch 51:10-13.

5. Ethiopic Enoch 15:1-2, Slavonic Enoch 24:3.

6. Ethiopic Enoch 40:7.

7. Satan is certainly the name used most frequently for this evil angel, appearing in Slavonic Enoch, The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, The Books of Adam and Eve, and The Assumption of Moses. The other names appear less frequently although more than one of them, including Satan, can occur in a single book. Thus Mastema occurs in Jubilees and The Zadokite Work; Azazel occurs in Ethiopic Enoch and The Apocalypse of Abraham; Semjaza occurs in Ethiopic Enoch; and Belial occurs in Jubilees, The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, and

Chapter 2 (cont.)

The Zadokite Work. Samael only appears once and that is in The Martyrdom of Isaiah. By Amoraic times, however, it does become a very common name for the evil angel.

8. Jubilees 10:1-14.

9. See below Chapter 3.

10. See Bernard Bamberger, Fallen Angels (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1952), pp. 15-49.

11. See Slavonic Enoch 29, The Books of Adam and Eve 12-17.

12. See Ethiopic Enoch 6-11.

13. Bernard J. Bamberger, Fallen Angels, p. 20.

14. See Jubilees 2:2-3; Ethiopic Enoch 72-82; Slavonic Enoch 4-6, 19:2-4.

15. See Ethiopic Enoch 8:1-4, 69:6-13.

16. Books of Adam and Eve 22:2.

17. Jubilees 12:25.

18. Jubilees 30:20-22.

19. See above Chapter 1.

20. Greek Apocalypse of Baruch 11-15.

21. See also Ethiopic Enoch 100:5, Books of Adam and Eve 33:1-2.

22. Tobit 12:15.

23. Ethiopic Enoch 40:6, 47:2.

24. See above Chapter 1.

25. Apocalypse of Moses 28-29, 33.

26. Testament of Naphtali 8-9.

27. Ethiopic Enoch 20:5.

28. See also Testament of Dan 6:1-2.

29. Ethiopic Enoch 10:1-16.

Chapter 2 (cont.)

30. See Ethiopic Enoch 53:3, 56:1, 63:1, 66:1. For the idea of an angelic "army" which will work vengeance on the evil at the end of time, see Testament of Levi 3:3, Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch 51:11.

31. Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch 53-74. See also Fourth Ezra 9:38-10:57.

32. Examples of this angelic action are found throughout the following books: Ethiopic Enoch, Testament of Levi, Slavonic Enoch, and Greek Apocalypse of Baruch.

33. See also Testament of Levi 4 and Jubilees 2-50 where an angel (even though he is theoretically just repeating to Moses what God has told him) is responsible for giving Moses an outline of history down to its very conclusion.

Chapter 3

1. Angels are understood to be appointed over such phenomena as darkness, the sea, rain, wind, fire, pregnancy, the ripening of fruit, and the souls of the dead. Nevertheless there are some passages in which God is said to have control over what is elsewhere delegated to an angel. Compare Yoma 20b and Deuteronomy Rabbah 7:6, where in the first instance the specific angel, Ridja, is given control over the rain while in the second instance God is designated as the one and only power over the rain. One explanation for the difference between the passages could lie in the fact that the Babylonian rabbis emphasized angels more than their Palestinian counterparts. Hence the Babylonian passage accords greater prominence to the angel set over rain. For a full discussion of the angels and natural phenomena, see Peter Schäfer, Rivalität Zwischen Engeln und Menschen (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter 1975), pp. 51-59.

2. For an illustration of the angel as teacher, see Sota 36b, where Gabriel is said to have taught Joseph the world's seventy languages so that Joseph could assume his high position in Pharoah's court.

3. For an illustration of the angel as bookkeeper, see Deuteronomy Rabbah, ed. Liebermann, p. 105, where God cautions people to watch their words since an angel listens to and records everything that a person says.

4. Since the functioning of angels in each of these capacities from guardianship to chastisement will be presented in detail below, a listing of sources is unnecessary here. It need only be said that these particular functions of the angels are very important for the rabbis and that they become the focus for many of the homilies which do employ angels.

Chapter 3 (cont.)

5. In regard to the biblical stratum, see Psalms 29, 82, 89; Isaiah 6; Zechariah 3. In regard to the apocryphal/pseudepigraphic stratum, see Testament of Levi 5, Slavonic Enoch 22f., Greek Apocalypse of Baruch 11-15.

6. See I Kings 22:19-22, Job 1:6-12.

7. A classic formulation of this idea is quoted many times in the name of the third century Palestinian Amora, Elazar b. Pedat. According to Elazar, wherever the biblical text reads "and the Lord," the conjunction of the word "and" with the word "Lord" refers to an action taken by God only after consulting with the heavenly court. See Yer. Sanhedrin 1:1; Genesis Rabbah 51:2; Exodus Rabbah 12:4; Leviticus Rabbah 24:2; Song of Songs Rabbah 9:1:1; Pesikta Rabbati 175b; Tanchuma Va'era 16; Tanchuma Buber Vayera 19, 34; Tanchuma Buber Va'era 21; Tanchuma Buber Bo 17.

8. Deuteronomy Rabbah, ed. Liebermann, p. 68.

9. Yer. B'rachot 9:1, Sanhedrin 38b, Exodus Rabbah 32:4.

10. Avot de Rabbi Natan, Version B, Chapter 1.

11. Philo, On Dreams (English translation F. H. Colson, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), Book One, lines 140-143. Josephus, Jewish Antiquities (English translation Ralph Marcus, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), Book Fifteen, line 136. Acts 7:38, 53; Galatians 3:19; Hebrews 2:2.

12. Song of Songs Rabbah 1:2:2.

13. E. E. Urbach, "The Homiletical Interpretations of the Sages and The Expositions of Origen on Canticles, and the Jewish-Christian Disputation," Scripta Hiersolymitana, Volume 22, 1971, pp. 247-275.

14. Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 22, Pseudo-Seder Eliahu Zuta p. 49.

15. Genesis Rabbah 26:5. For an intriguing though dubious sociological interpretation of this passage, see Louis Finkelstein, The Pharisees: The Sociological Background of Their Faith (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, Third Edition, Revised, 1962), pp. 160-186.

16. Tanchuma Buber Noah 4.

17. Bernard J. Bamberger, Fallen Angels, p. 92.

Chapter 3 (cont.)

18. Ibid., p. 55-56.

19. Ibid., p. 56.

20. Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 13, 14, 21, 27.

21. Genesis Rabbah 8:9, Ecclesiastes Rabbah 6:10:1, Yalkut Genesis 23, Yalkut Isaiah 394.

22. B'rachot 16b, 46a.

23. B'rachot 19a, 60a, Ketubot 8b.

24. Shabbat 32a.

25. Particularly in times of danger Satan was felt to be ready as the accuser to take advantage of persons. See Yer. Shabbat 2:6 and Genesis Rabbah 91:9. As the seducer, Satan appears in what is actually a humorous incident on Kiddushin 81a where he dupes R. Meir into revealing some of his personal foibles.

26. Genesis Rabbah 57:4, Exodus Rabbah 21:7.

27. Sanhedrin 95a, 107a.

28. Baba Batra 16a.

29. Scattered throughout the midrashic literature are a great many of these embellishments to the Bible. A listing of many of them follows: Regarding the patriarchal narratives, the rabbis relate that Sarah was saved from Abimelech's nocturnal advances by an angel who stood over her and struck Abimelech whenever he approached her (Genesis Rabbah 52:13, Tanchuma Lech L'cha 5, Tanchuma Buber Lech L'cha 8, Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 26). They also specify that the three angels who visited Abraham at Mamre and went on to Lot were Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael (Baba Metzia 86b, Genesis Rabbah 50:2, Tanchuma Buber Vayera 4, 15). Later when Rebekah is brought back to Canaan to marry Isaac, she is said to have broken her hymen by falling off her camel at the sight of Isaac. To cover up this flaw, God sends Gabriel on a mission of mercy. He repairs her hymen and thus saves her for marriage to Isaac (Yalkut Genesis 109). After the marriage, when Rebekah becomes pregnant, one passage reports that Jacob and Esau did not wrestle with each other unaided in the womb. Samael helped Esau while Michael helped Jacob (Yalkut Genesis 110). When it comes time for Isaac to bestow his blessing, angels again come to the aid of Jacob. One angel delays Esau in his hunting by freeing every animal he traps before he can get to it (Tanchuma Buber 10). At the same time two

other angels physically support the trembling Jacob as he approaches Isaac to receive the blessing of the firstborn (Genesis Rabbah 44:3, 45:19). In still two more situations Jacob is aided by angels. When he is just building up his own fortunes, an angel secretly mixes Laban's sheep in with Jacob's (Genesis Rabbah 73:10, Tanchuma Buber Vayetze 24), and when he returns to Canaan, bands of angels pose as armed soldiers so as to frighten Esau (Genesis Rabbah 75:10, 78:11; Tanchuma Buber Vayishlach 7). Finally, Tamar benefits greatly from two instances of angelic help. First, the angel of desire convinces Judah that he should pay attention to the harlot he sees by the side of the road (Tanchuma Buber Vayeshev 17). Secondly, when Samael tries to steal what Judah has left in pledge, Gabriel restores it immediately to Tamar (Sota 10b). Regarding the story of Joseph, the rabbis explain that Joseph was able to find his brothers because three angels met him along the way and guided him to them (Genesis Rabbah 84:14, Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 38). Later, in Egypt, Joseph was saved from homosexual advances by Potiphar as a result of the Egyptian's castration by an angel (Sota 13b). In addition when Joseph revealed himself to his brothers, the rabbis suggest that his brothers would have killed him unless an angel had held them back (Tanchuma Vayigash 5). In the story of Moses and the exodus angels are also used for embellishments. The process begins with the decree against male Hebrew children when the _midrash_ relates that in order to save their babies, the Hebrew slaves would go out to the fields to give birth. They would then leave their infants there in the care of the angels sent by God to raise the boys (Sota 11b, Exodus Rabbah 1:12). Two texts even suggest that God may have tended for the children directly in place of the angels (Exodus Rabbah 28:8, Deuteronomy Rabbah, ed. Liebermann, p. 14f.)! Be that as it may, Gabriel is sent to Moses' aid when Pharoah's daughter first sees him in the river. Lest she not have pity on the baby, Gabriel slaps Moses so that he will stop behaving as an adult and begin to cry (Exodus Rabbah 1:28). Gabriel also knocks down the royal servants who suggest to Pharoah's daughter that she not disobey her father (Exodus Rabbah 1:27). Later when Pharoah tests baby Moses' intelligence, Gabriel forces him to take a burning coal into his mouth and thereby appear harmlessly stupid before Pharoah (Exodus Rabbah 1:26). The rabbis also elaborate the Pentateuch's story by suggesting that Moses only escaped from Pharoah's court because an angel took his place after Pharoah decreed that Moses be beheaded for killing the Egyptian (Mechilta, ed. Horovitz-Rabin, p. 192, Exodus Rabbah 5:8). Later, the angels act en masse on behalf of Israel by stoning and attacking the Egyptians as they enter the Sea of Reeds (Mechilta, ed. Horovitz-Rabin, p. 111). Finally, the angels are also credited with providing the Israelites with new clothes during the forty years in the wilderness (Song of Songs Rabbah 4:2:2). More than anywhere else the angels are used to embellish the Book of Esther. For example, when Esther dares to enter the king's court

Chapter 3 (cont.)

without permission angels help her by holding her head erect, endowing her with extra charm, and even telling Ahasuerus to be gracious to her. That night when the king's servants read the account of Mordecai's saving the king, one of them attempts to erase Mordecai's name, but Gabriel writes the name back into the text as fast as the servant erases it. At the final dinner party the angels are particularly helpful. Thus when the king goes into the garden, he sees angels posing as humans uprooting trees and they tell him that they are acting upon Haman's orders. Enraged by this, Ahasuerus returns to Esther's chambers just in time to see Haman lying on Esther's bed because he has been pushed onto it by an angel (Megillah 15b-16a, Esther Rabbah 10:9, Midrash Tehillim 22:27, Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 50).

30. Along these lines, the story is told of Chanina b. Dosa who with an offering for the Temple is miraculously transported from his home to Jerusalem by five angels. See Ecclesiastes Rabba 1:1:1.

31. B'rachot 6a.

32. Shabbat 2:5, Eruvin 4:1, Avot 5:6.

33. In making this point the rabbis sometimes stress the chronology of the first six days of creation, indicating that since the angels were created on either the second or fifth day, they could not have participated in creation with God. See Genesis Rabbah 1:3, 3:8, 11:9, 21:9; Midrash Tehillim 24:4, 86:4, 104:7; Tanchuma Buber Breshit 17; Exodus Rabbah 15:22, 17:1; Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 4; Yalkut Genesis 5; Yalkut Psalms 836, Yalkut Isaiah 460. On other occasions the rabbis suggest that the angels are so frail that most of them can only exist for a day. Consequently God creates angels every day. See Genesis Rabbah 78:1, Lamentations Rabba 3:8.

34. Tanchuma Buber Toldot 10.

35. Max Kadushin, The Theology of Seder Eliahu, A Study in Organic Thinking (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1932), p. 88f.

36. Henry Slonimsky, "The Philosophy Implicit in the Midrash," Essays (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1967).

Chapter 4

1. Sanhedrin 4:5.

2. Genesis Rabbah 2:2.

3. Eruvin 13b.

Chapter 4 (cont.)

4. Ellis Rivkin, Judaism, A Religion of City Dwellers: The Internal City, Weil Institute, Cincinnati, pp. 4-5. See also Joseph B. Tyson, A Study of Early Christianity (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1973), p. 67f.

5. For a literary account of the way in which Gnosticism may have affected the Jewish world of its time, see Eugene Mihaly, A Song to Creation: A Dialogue with a Text (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1975), pp. 41-51.

6. One sees here that with the elaboration of the concept of the heavenly court in rabbinic literature, what was once the function of a single angel, ha-satan, has now been generalized to extend to a whole group of angels. See above Chapter 3.

7. Genesis Rabbah 8:4-5.

8. Genesis Rabbah 8:4.

9. Although the fallen angel motif is largely absent from rabbinic literature, when it does occur these three names are used for the leaders of the fallen angels. See Yoma 67b. The names appear to be variants of the names Shemhazai and Azazel, who are the fallen angels' leaders in certain pseudepigraphic passages. See above Chapter 2.

10. Pseudo-Seder Eliahu p. 49. See also Deuteronomy Rabbah 11, at end. Other texts which make the same distinction between human beings and the angels, although without actual reference to a specific historic event prompting a debate between God and the angels are: Leviticus Rabbah 24:8, 26:5; Genesis Rabbah 48:11.

11. Tanchuma Vayera 18.

12. Seder Eliahu Rabbah p. 162.

13. Sanhedrin 38b. Although this text's homiletic purpose does revolve around the sort of existential problems being discussed here, two scholars have also suggested that the passage is written with other influences in force.
Ginzberg interprets the radical elimination of the angels as a polemic against Jews such as Philo who believed that God was aided by lesser powers in creating the world. See Louis Ginzberg, ed., The Legends of the Jews (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1920), Volume 5, p. 69.
Altmann attributes the motif of destroying the angels to gnostic sources which the rabbis reworked in order to give their rendition a moral tone.

Chapter 4 (cont.)

See Alexander Altmann, "Gnostic Background of the Rabbinic Adam Legends," Jewish Quarterly Review, Volume 35, 1944-45, pp. 371-391.

14. Pesikta de Rav Kahana 4:3. See also Pesikta Rabbati 59b, Tanchuma Chukat 6, Tanchuma Buber Chukat 12, Numbers Rabbah 19:3, Ecclesiastes Rabbah 7:23:1.

15. See Peter Schäfer, Rivalität Zwischen Engeln und Menschen (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1975), pp. 88-89.

16. See Eugene Mihaly, "It's All in the Name," Keeping Posted, Volume 18, Number 1, October 1972, pp. 3-6.

17. See above pp. 47-48.

18. Genesis Rabbah 8:6.

19. Genesis Rabbah 1:4. See also Jacob J. Petuchowski, "The Concept of Teshuvah in the Bible and the Talmud," Judaism, Volume 17, Number 2, Spring 1968, pp. 175-185.

20. Yer. Sanhedrin 10:2. See also Pesikta de Rav Kahana 24:11, Deuteronomy Rabbah 2:20, Ruth Rabbah 5:14, Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 43.

21. See below Chapter 6.

22. See above Genesis Rabbah 8

23. Henry Slonimsky, "The Philosophy," p. 11.

Chapter 5

1. See below note 38.

2. See below notes 29, 30, 31.

3. B'rachot 32b.

4. See above Chapter 4.

5. Henry Slonimsky, "The Philosophy," p. 14.

6. Cicero, Pro Flacco 28. Cited in Arthur Marmorstein, Studies in Jewish Theology (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 191.

7. Ibid., pp. 69-70.

Chapter 5 (cont.)

8. Eugene Mihaly, "A Rabbinic Defence of the Election of Israel," Hebrew Union College Annual, Volume 35, 1964, pp. 103-143. Arthur Marmorstein, Studies, pp. 1-72, 179-224.

9. Pesikta Rabbati p. 100a.

10. William G. Braude, Pesikta Rabbati trans. (New Haven: The Yale University Press, 1968), p. 420.

11. Seder Eliahu Zuta p. 43. For a discussion of this passage's bearing on the issue of anthropomorphism, see Arthur Green, "The Children in Egypt and the Theophany at the Sea," Judaism, Volume 24, Number 4, Fall 1975, pp. 446-456.

12. Ibid., p. 43.

13. Midrash Tehillim 8:2.

14. Tanchuma Trumah 9. See also Tanchuma Naso 12, Pesikta Rabbati 20b, Numbers Rabbah 12:7.

15. Peter Schäfer, Rivalität, pp. 161-164.

16. Tanchuma Ki Tissa 8, Tanchuma Vayikra 4, Tanchuma Bamidbar 13.

17. Tanchuma Bamidbar 13.

18. Tanchuma Trumah 9.

19. Pesikta Rabbati p. 135a. See also Midrash Tehillim 20:1, Seder Eliahu Zuta p. 28, Pseudo-Seder Eliahu Zuta p. 188, Yalkut Psalms 884.

20. Although the analogy probably did not suggest itself to the creator of this midrash, one is reminded here of Esther, Chapter Six, where Haman hopes to gain great advantage by suggesting a fine reward for the person who saved the king. Haman is quite surprised, as are the angels, however, to discover that the king's favor does not rest upon him. Instead Haman, like the angels, finishes by honoring the very person he despises: for Haman this is Mordecai; for the angels this is Israel as a whole.

21. Pseudo-Seder Eliahu Zuta p. 31.

22. Pesikta Rabbati p. 144b.

23. Ibid., p. 144b.

Chapter 5 (cont.)

24. Deuteronomy Rabbah 2:34. Compare to Deuteronomy Rabbah, ed. Lieberman, p. 68 in Chapter 3. The present text is similar to the Lieberman one, but it is different too in that it stresses the uniqueness of Israel in comparison to the other nations. For this reason it communicates more about Israel's nature than the Lieberman text which focuses on the problem of angel worship. In terms of historical precedents, the actual notion of Israel's being distinguished because God is its direct patron is presaged by at least two earlier sources: Ben Sira 17:17 and Jubilees 15:31-32. What exact effect these two sources or others like them could have had on R. Isaac's final text is uncertain.

25. See, for example, Genesis Rabbah 68:12, Pesikta de Rav Kahana 23:1, Midrash Tehillim 8:6, Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 35. In these texts the angels on the ladder in Jacob's dream are understood to be the patron angels of the various nations. For further background on the development of the idea of national guardian angels, see above Chapters 1 and 2.

26. See, for example, Yoma 77a, Tanchuma Buber B'reshit 23, Exodus Rabbah 18:5.

27. Numbers Rabbah 16:24. See also Avodazarah 5a; Exodus Rabbah 32:1, 32:7, 41:7, 51:8; Leviticus Rabbah 18:3; Tanchuma Ekev 8; Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 47. For a different perspective on this same portrayal of the angel of death, see below Chapter 7.

28. Exodus Rabbah 15:6.

29. Tanchuma Buber B'Shalach 13, Midrash Tehillim 106:2, Exodus Rabbah 23:7, Megillah 10b, Sanhedrin 39b.

30. Chagigah 12b.

31. Genesis Rabbah 65:21. See also Sifre Deuteronomy 306, Genesis Rabbah 45:22.

32. Sifre Deuteronomy 306; Chullin 91b; Deuteronomy Rabbah, ed. Lieberman, p. 69.

33. Tanchuma K'doshim 6, Deuteronomy Rabbah 2:36.

34. Tanchuma Buber K'doshim 2.

35. Nedarim 32a, Tanchuma Buber Balak 23, Numbers Rabbah 20:20. An interesting precedent for the idea of humans becoming privy to secrets hidden from the angels is found in both Ethiopic and Slavonic Enoch. In the former (14:21) Enoch is ushered into God's presence and is able

Chapter 5 (cont.)

to see God's glory as none of the angels can. In the letter (24:3) the issue of actual knowledge is taken up and God tells Enoch secrets about creation and world history that the angels are said not to know.

36. Pesikta de Rav Kahana 5:13. See also Pesikta Rabbati p. 77; Rosh Hashanah 8 a, b; Exodus Rabbah 15:2; Deuteronomy Rabbah 2:14; Midrash Tehillim 4:4, 81:6; Tanchuma Buber Bo 13; Yalkut Bo 190.

37. Shabbat 89a, Tanchuma Ki Tissa 19, Tanchuma Buber Ki Tissa 13, Genesis Rabbah 18:6, Exodus Rabbah 41:7.

38. Mechilta B'shalach 2, Parasha 6. See also Mechilta de Rabbi Shimon b. Yochai p. 67f.; Tosefta 6:5; Exodus Rabbah 21:7; 24:1.

39. B'rachot 20b.

40. Genesis Rabbah 78:9. See also Song of Songs Rabbah 3:6:3.

41. Song of Songs Rabbah 7:10:1.

42. Solomon Schechter, Aspects of Rabbinic Theology, Major Concepts of the Talmud (New York: Schocken Books, Inc., 1961), p. 61.

43. Henry Slonimsky, "The Philosophy," p. 61.

44. Song of Songs Rabbah 8:8:1.

Chapter 6

1. See above Chapter 4.

2. See above Chapter 4.

3. See above Chapter 5.

4. See above Chapter 5.

5. Abraham Heschel, The Prophets (New York: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1962), pp. 224-226. Although Heschel makes his remarks specifically in discussing the biblical appreciation of God, the rabbinic texts bear out his definitions so aptly that it seems quite proper to use the term "pathos" in reference to the rabbis' idea of God.

6. See Robert Katz, "Empathy in Modern Psychotherapy and in the Aggada," Hebrew Union College Annual, Volume 30, 1959, pp. 191-215.

7. Tanchuma Tzaveh 12, Pesachim 118a-b, Exodus Rabbah 18:5.

Chapter 6 (cont.)

8. Tanchuma Vayera 2, Midrash Tehillim 18:17, Baba Metzia 86b.

9. See above Chapter 5.

10. Megillah 10b. See also Sanhedrin 39b, Midrash Tehillim 106:2, Exodus Rabbah 23:7.

11. Megillah 10b.

12. Pesikta Rabbati p. 96a.

13. Abraham Heschel, The Prophets, p. 224.

14. Yer. Kiddushin 1:10, Shabbat 32a, Pesikta Rabbati p. 38b, Midrash Hagadol Numbers p. 217.

15. Pesikta Rabbati p. 185b.

16. See above Chapter 4.

17. Genesis Rabbah 8:4.

18. Mechilta Pischa 1, Parasha 1.

19. Tanchuma Buber Tazria 11. See also Genesis Rabbah 3:6; Midrash Tehillim 5:3, 86:7.

20. Ibid., Tazria 11.

21. Ibid., Tazria 12.

22. Examples of such sins found in Lamentations Rabbah are: smugness (2:2), refusal to repent (2:5), over-reliance on sacrifices (Proem 12), lack of concern for the misfortunes of others (1:20).

23. Lamentations Rabbah 2:5, Pesikta Rabbat p. 134a.

24. Leviticus Rabbah 24:2. For further comment on R. Eleazar's exegesis, see above Chapter 3, note 7.

25. Genesis Rabbah 51:2.

26. Genesis Rabbah 55:4, Sanhedrin 89b.

27. Tanchuma Buber Bo 1; Exodus Rabbah 12:4, 14:1.

28. Midrash Tehillim 5:7. See also Genesis Rabbah 53:14, Tanchuma Yitro 5.

Chapter 6 (cont.)

29. Tanchuma Emor 3; Tanchuma Buber Tazria 12, Emor 8; Yoma 77a; Midrash Hagadol Numbers p. 280.

30. Sanhedrin 103b. For further illustrations of this aspect of God's dealings with humanity, see Sanhedrin 96b, 105a.

31. George Foot Moore, Judaism, The First Centuries of the Christian Era and the Age of the Tannaim (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), Volume One, p. 388.

32. For a discussion of this saintliness which rises above the law, see Solomon Schechter, Aspects, pp. 199-218.

33. Tanchuma Buber Vayera 36, Pesikta Rabbati p. 175b.

34. Genesis Rabbah 56:8, Pesikta Rabbati p. 171a, Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 31.

35. See Samuel S. Cohon, "The Unity of God, A Study in Hellenistic and Rabbinic Theology," Hebrew Union College Annual, Volume 26, 1955, pp. 447-458. Arthur Marmorstein, The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God (New York: Ktav reprint, 1968), Volume One, pp. 148-217. Arthur Marmorstein, Studies in Jewish Theology (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), pp. 1-71.

36. Samuel S. Cohon, "The Unity of God," p. 453.

Chapter 7

1. Exodus Rabbah 29:9.

2. See above Chapter 1 and Chapter 2.

3. Tanchuma Vayishlach 3, Tanchuma Buber Vayishlach 3. The very popular text describing the good and bad angels following a person home on the eve of Sabbath is found in Shabbat 119b. Although it is not particularly important for this discussion's development, the popularity of the text warrants that it at least be mentioned here.

4. Pesikta Rabbati p. 184a.

5. Exodus Rabbah 32:6. See also Tanchuma Vayetze 3, Mishpatim 19; Deuteronomy Rabbah 4:4; Midrash Tehillim 17:7; Seder Eliahu Rabbah p. 100.

6. Seder Eliahu Zuta p. 176. See also Tanchuma Vayishlach 8.

7. See above Chapter 1 and Chapter 2.

Chapter 7 (cont.)

8. Seder Eliahu Rabbah p.182.

9. See above Chapter 2.

10. See above Chapter 5.

11. Sifre Deuteronomy 306.

12. Tanchuma Vayishlach 2; Midrash Hagadol Numbers pp. 164, 280; Yalkut Isaiah 778.

13. Yer. Shabbat 6:9. See also Tanchuma Buber Vayikra 6, Deuteronomy Rabbah 1:12, Midrash Tehillim 103:18.

14. See above Chapter 5, note 27 for listing of citations.

15. Deuteronomy Rabbah 7:9.

16. Shabbat 88b. See also Avot de Rabbi Natan, Version A, Chapter 2; Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 46, Midrash Hagadol Exodus p. 395, Yalkut Psalms 641.

17. Pesikta Rabbati p. 96b. See also Midrash Hagadol Exodus p. 560.

18. Ibid., p. 96b.

19. Ibid., p. 96b.

20. Ibid., p. 97a.

21. Joseph Schultz, "Angelic Opposition to the Ascension of Moses and the Revelation of the Law," Jewish Quarterly Review, Volume 61, 1970-1971, pp. 288-289. See also Gershom Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism (New York: Schocken Books Inc., 1961), p. 49f. Alexander Altmann, "Gnostic Background of the Rabbinic Adam Legends," Jewish Quarterly Review, Volume 35, 1944-1945, pp. 371-391.

22. Peter Schäfer, Rivalität, pp. 133-135.

23. See Joseph Schultz, "Angelic Opposition," pp. 288-295; Alexander Altmann, "Gnostic Background," p. 379.

24. Joseph Schultz, "Angelic Opposition," pp. 292-297.

25. Ibid., p. 297.

Chapter 7 (cont.)

26. Ibid., p. 297.

27. Midrash Tehillim 8:2. See also Song of Songs Rabbah 8:11:2, Tanchuma B'chukotai 4, Tanchuma Buber B'chukotai 6, Pesikta Rabbati p. 128a.

28. Genesis Rabbah 2:2. See above Chapter 4.

Conclusion

1. Jean Seznec, The Survival of the Pagan Gods, The Mythological Tradition and its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953).

2. See above Chapter 5.

3. See above Chapter 3, note 9.

4. Solomon Schechter, Aspects, pp. 11-20.

5. Genesis Rabbah 1:10.

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