

Is the Trinity Doctrine Biblical?

By Dr. S. K. Blad ©

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Chapter 5 – The Principle of Agents

In the previous chapter we covered the texts where the Eternal speaks in plural form. We saw that if we are faithful to the Hebrew language, read the text as it is written and in context where the text explains the text, it is less of a stretch to conclude that the Eternal is addressing his heavenly council in those texts where he is speaking in plural form, than it is to claim that he is speaking out of a plurality of personalities.

This principle of sharing and delegating authority to created beings can be found throughout all of Scripture. We are going to take a closer look at this principle here.

The Hebrew word that is translated as “angel” is “malach”^[1]. The word occurs approximately 200 times in the Tanach (OT) and is used to describe both heavenly and earthly messengers. The word “malach” means messenger, ambassador, representative, and agent. The word has the same root as the word “melachah”,^[2] which means work, service, creative work, (see Genesis 2:2). This means that the word “malach” has more to do with a function than with a type of being. When we talk about “angels” in English, our thoughts naturally turn to supernatural heavenly beings. But the Hebrew word “malachim” does not necessarily have to refer to heavenly beings, but could just as well be used about humans. The word describes a role, not a type of created being.

The word “malach” – angel – occurs for the first time in Genesis 16. In verses 7-14 it is written,

*“And the angel of the LORD found her by the fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur. And the angel of the LORD said to her, ‘Hagar, Sara’s maid, from where do you come, and where are you going?’ And she said, ‘I am fleeing from the face of my mistress Sarai.’ And the angel of the LORD said to her, ‘Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hands.’ And **the angel of the LORD** said to her, ‘**I will surely multiply your seed, so that they shall not be numbered for multitude.**’ And the angel of the LORD said to her, ‘Behold you are with child, and shall bear a son, and shall call his name Ishmael, for **the LORD has hearkened** to your humiliation. He shall be a wild man, his hands against all, and the hands of all against him, and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren. And she called the name of **the LORD God who spoke to her**, ‘You are the God who sees;’ for she said, ‘For I have openly seen Him that appeared to me.’ Therefore she called the well, The well of Him whom I have openly seen; behold it is between Kadesh and Bered.”(AB^[3])*

This is talking about the “malach” – messenger – of the Eternal who finds Hagar in the desert. In this case it is a heavenly being sent by the Eternal to bring a message to Hagar. Notice that this messenger uses two ways of speaking on behalf of the Eternal. First he speaks in first person, “**I will surely multiply your seed...**” Then he speaks in third person, “**The LORD has**

hearkened...” When he is speaking in first person, does it mean that the angel that Hagar is seeing is the Eternal? No, it means that he is a voice declaring what the Eternal is saying.

Hagar says that it was the Eternal who spoke with her and that she had seen Him who saw her. Does this mean that it was the Eternal who revealed himself directly, without a mediator, without sending a representative? No, it means that the one who is sent speaks on behalf of the sender and that he represents him.

If we have the principle of the function of an agent as a point of reference, we will understand from the context that it was the Eternal who revealed himself *through* his messenger. Thus the messenger becomes the Eternal’s representative and whatever the messenger is saying is what the Eternal says, whether he is speaking in first or third person, in “I-mode” or “he-mode”.

The Hebrew text contains the word “gam” – also – which is translated into English as “openly”. Rashi interprets this as Hagar expressing her surprise that she is seeing angels in the desert *also*, and not just in Avraham’s home where she was used to see these heavenly beings. The fact that Hagar was not afraid when she saw this angel, proves that this was not the first time for her to see angels, in contrast to Shimshon’s father Manoach who believed that he would die when he had seen Elohim (see Judges 13:22). Hagar saw angels four times in a row without being afraid.[\[4\]](#)

If Rashi’s interpretation is correct, it means that we must go back to the previous chapter where it speaks about how the Eternal revealed himself to Avraham and see how he did this. In Genesis 12:1 it says that the Eternal only *spoke* to Avraham and commanded him to go out of his land and leave his relatives. But in the same chapter it says, according to the Hebrew text, that the Eternal *revealed* himself to him when he was in Shechem (Sichem) (see Genesis 12:7). Could Avraham really see the Eternal? Most likely, we must understand this text to mean that it was a messenger, an agent, who showed himself to Avraham and who represented the Eternal. How could Avraham have seen the Invisible One?

In Exodus 33:20, it is written,

*“But it is not possible for you to see my face, for **no man may see me and still go on living.**”*(BBE)

In 1 Timothy 6:16, it is written,

*“Who only has life for ever, living in light to which no man may come near; whom **no man has seen or is able to see:** to whom be honor and power for ever. So be it.”*(BBE)

Avraham could therefore not have seen the Eternal. When it says that the Eternal revealed himself to him, He did it through a messenger. This is where we learn the principle that one who has seen a messenger of the Eternal has seen the Eternal through him.

The next text that speaks about how the Eternal revealed himself to Avraham is found in Genesis 17:1, where it is written,

*“And Abram was ninety-nine years old, and **the LORD appeared to Abram** and said to him, **I am your God, be well-pleasing before Me, and be blameless.**”*(AB)

Further on, in verse 22 of the same chapter, it is written,

“And having said these words, God went up from Abraham.”(BBE)

This means that the Eternal revealed himself to Avraham in such a way that it could be said that he *went up over him*, as the text literally says. Avraham must have clearly seen someone in front of him who could then go up. Could he see the Eternal? No, it was an agent who spoke and acted on behalf of the Eternal. Whatever the messenger does and says is therefore attributed to the one who sent him, so that in reality we cannot tell the difference between the sender and his agent. Whoever has met the agent has therefore through him seen and heard the one who sent him.

We can see a similar phenomenon in chapter 18. In verse 1 it says that the Eternal *revealed himself* or *showed himself* to Avraham when three men came for a visit. The Torah calls one of the three YHWH, (see verses 1, 13, 17, 20, 22, 26, 33), and Avraham addresses him with that Name (according to a restored original text of verses 3 and 27-32, which we talked about in a previous chapter). Notice verses 22-23, where it is written,

*“And the men, turning from that place, went on to Sodom: but **Abraham was still waiting before the LORD**. And Abraham **came near**, and said, ‘Will you let destruction come on the upright with the sinners?’”*(BBE)

Here it says that Avraham *was before* YHWH, the Eternal, and that he *came near* to Him. This is obviously talking about a physical revelation of the Eternal. Could Avraham see the Invisible One? No, it was one of his messengers who was given the authority to represent Him fully at that moment.

If the Eternal gives his Name to one of his agents, it means that he has delegated his full authority to him so that he can act and speak on His behalf. The Torah does not only ascribe the words and actions of the agent to the sender, but even his very presence as well. The agent therefore practically becomes the same as the sender and he bears His Name (compare with Psalm 118:26).

In Exodus 23:20-22, it is written,

*“See, **I am sending an angel** before you, to keep you on your way and to be your guide into the place which I have made ready for you. Give attention to him and give ear to his voice; do not go against him; for your wrongdoing will not be overlooked by him, **because my name is in him**. But if you truly **give ear to his voice, and do whatever I say**, then I will be against those who are against you, fighting those who are fighting you.”*(BBE)

Here we see that an angel who has been sent out can bear the Name of the Eternal and can speak whatever the Eternal says.

This agent, who bore the name YHWH, and who visited Avraham together with the two others, who were called “malachim” – messenger, angels – (see 19:1, 15), remained behind with Avraham while the two others went down to Sedom (Sodom). Avraham’s intercession for Sedom was therefore done before this agent who bore the Name of the Eternal. Later, in verse 33, it is written,

“And the LORD went on his way when his talk with Abraham was ended, and Abraham went back to his place.”(BBE)

Here it does not say that the Eternal went up, as it said in the previous chapter (see 17:22), but that he went on his way. Where did he go? He went down to Sodom, which he had said earlier that he would do, according to verses 20-22, where it is written,

“And the LORD said, ‘The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah has been increased towards Me, and their sins are very great. I will therefore go down and see, if they completely correspond with the cry which comes to Me, and if not, that I may know.’ And the men, having departed from there, came to Sodom; and the LORD stood before Abraham.”(AB)

The Eternal, YHWH, was therefore on his way down to Sodom, but he stayed back for a while to converse with Avraham. Who was this agent that is called YHWH?

According to the restored original text of Genesis 19:18, Lot calls the angels YHWH the following day. The question is whether or not the third angel, who had stood and talked with Avraham the previous day, had arrived and if Lot was including him as well. The fact is that it is written that Lot said YHWH to **them**, in plural. Then he changes over to using singular form. In verses 18-22 it is written,

“And Lot said to them, ‘Not so, O my LORD (actually YHWH); See now, your (singular) servant has had grace in your (singular) eyes and great is your mercy in keeping my life from destruction, but I am not able to get as far as the mountain before evil overtakes me and death; This town, now, is near, and it is a little one: O, let me go there (is it not a little one?) so that my life may be safe.’ And he said, ‘See, I have given you your request in this one thing more: I will not send destruction on this town. Go there quickly, for I am not able to do anything till you have come there.’ For this reason, the town was named Zoar.”(BBE)

Notice that only one of the angels answered Lot. This could be the same agent who stayed behind for a while and spoke with Avraham and who then later went down to Sodom. Verse 24 goes on to say,

“And the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven.”(AB)

Here it seems as though this man, whom the Torah calls YHWH and is on the earth, is the one who sees to it that brimstone and fire come from heaven, from YHWH, who is in heaven.

This type of revelation of YHWH in human form on the earth, somehow separate from the YHWH who is in heaven, has been the source of a special concept within Jewish theology. It is called YHWH-Katan, or “Adonai-Katan”, which means “Little YHWH”.

This is therefore clearly a question of an agent, a messenger, an ambassador who comes down to the earth in human form, moves in the physical world, is found in only one place at a time (compare with 19:27), who bears the Name of the Eternal, and whom also is addressed as the Eternal by the humans who meet him. Who is this agent? Is it YHWH himself? No, this could not be, because **“no man has seen or is able to see”** the Eternal. It must therefore be someone else who fully represents Him. The rabbis call him Adonai-Katan.

Here Christian Bible commentators find support for their doctrine of the trinity, which says that the Son of God existed in eternity as God the Son and that he thus revealed himself before he was born in Bethlehem, and was called “the Eternal” since he is part of a triune Godhead.

One might then ask the question, -Did Avraham and Lot believe in a triune Elohim and were they convinced that this Adonai-Katan was the Son who revealed himself in bodily form, something which in Christian theology is called “Christophany”, Christ revelation?

Was it the “Son of God” who revealed himself to Avraham?

Could the Son reveal himself physically to humans and speak to them before he was born?

Let us see what the Apostolic Writings (NT) has to say about this. In Hebrews 1:1-2, it is written,

“God, having in the past spoken to the fathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, has at the end of these days spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds.”(HNV)

Notice that it says that Elohim spoke through the prophets to the forefathers of the Jewish people many times and in various ways in the times that were before the end times, and that now, in the end times, he has spoken to the Jewish people through his Son. This means that previously he spoke through the prophets, and not through the Son, but now, in the end times, after the coming of the Son, he has spoken through the Son. The very point of this passage is that the Eternal had not spoken to his chosen people through his Son until the end times. The Eternal did not speak to the forefathers through the Son. It was therefore not the Son who spoke to Avraham at this occasion. So, this must be talking about another agent who received authority to carry the Eternal’s Name at a given moment.

In Galatians 4:4, it is written,

“But when the fullness of the time came, God sent out his Son, born to a woman, born under the law”(HNV)

The Literal Translation of the Holy Bible translates this passage the following way,

“But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, having come into being out of a woman, having come under Law...”

The Analytical-Literal Translation writes it this way,

But when the fullness [or, completion] of the time came, God sent forth His Son, having been born of a woman, having been born under [the] Law...

From this text we learn two things. First of all, we learn that the Son of Elohim was born of a woman. The title “Son of God” does therefore not determine who bore the child. We know that this woman was neither “God” nor “the mother of God” so that he, through her, could be

called “God’s Son”. The idea that God can reproduce himself is completely foreign to Jewish thinking.

The title “Son of God” denotes a function, as the highest representative and judge and is especially tied to the Anointed and promised King, the Messiah, (see 2 Samuel 7:12-14; 1 Chronicles 17:11-14; 22:9-10; Psalm 2:6-7; Hebrews 5:5). Notice that King Shlomo (Solomon) had the title “son of God”. This title was given to Israel’s kings who represented the Eternal’s rule on the earth (compare with 1 Chronicles 28:5; 29:23; Jeremiah 3:17; Acts 1:6).

According to Luke 1:32, 35 Yeshua would be great and would be *called* the “Son of God” and would be given the royal throne of his father David. This teaches us that the concept “Son of God” is describing a function. This is a royal title and does not primarily have to do with a being or origin but rather with an assignment. The word “son”, in Hebrew “ben”^[5], in the Scriptures, does not only have to do with origin, but it also has to do with succession and representation. The root of the word “ben” is “banah”,^[6] which means build. When it concerns origin, there is another word that is used more often and it is “yalad”,^[7] which means “bear” (as in “bear a son”). The word “yeled” – child – comes from the same root. Yeshua is called the “Son of God”, not the “Child of God”, and therefore the expression ought to be understood more as an assignment rather than proof of origin. By this we have not said that the Son does not come from the Eternal. What we are saying is rather that the title “Son of God” in and of itself, does not have that meaning in the Apostolic Scriptures (NT).

In the Scriptures we can see that at several occasions the title “Son of God” is equivalent to the title “Messiah”.

In Matthew 16:16, it is written,

*“And Simon Peter made answer and said, You are the **Messiah**, the **Son of the living God**.”*(BBE revised)

In Matthew 26:63, with his statement, the high priest equates the expression “the Messiah” with “Son of God”, as it is written,

*“But Jesus said not a word. And the high priest said to him, I put you on oath, by the living God, that you will say to us if you are **the Messiah, the Son of God**.”*(BBE revised)

We can see the same thing in the corresponding account in Luke 22:66-70,

*And when it was day, the rulers of the people came together, with the chief priests and the scribes, and they took him before their Sanhedrin, saying, ‘**If you are the Messiah, say so**’. But he said, ‘If I say so you will not have belief; And if I put a question to you, you will not give an answer. But in the future the Son of man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.’ And they all said, ‘**Are you then the Son of God?**’ and he said, ‘You say that I am.’ And they said, ‘What more need have we of witness? **we have the very words of his mouth**.’”*(BBE revised)

In Luke 4:41 we can also see how the title “Son of God” is used synonymously with the title “Messiah”, as it is written,

*“And evil spirits came out of a number of them, crying out and saying, You are the **Son of God**. But he gave them sharp orders not to say a word, because they had knowledge that he was **the Messiah**.”*(BBE revised)

In John 1:49, we see that the concept “Son of God” is equated with being king of Israel, as it is written,

*“Nathanael said to him, Rabbi, you are the **Son of God**, you are **King of Israel!**”*(BBE)

In John 11:27, it is written,

*“She said to him, ‘Yes, Lord: my faith is that you are the **Messiah, the Son of God**, who was to come into the world.’”*(BBE revised)

The title “Son of God” is therefore a Messianic title ascribed to the person who is equipped and glorified by the power of the Spirit of the Most High to be the heavenly high priest of Israel and to sit on the royal throne of David in Jerusalem for eternity.

The second thing that we learn from the text in Galatians 4:4 is that he who is called “Son of God”, i.e. “Messiah” – the anointed High Priest and the highest King – was sent when the fullness of time had come. There was, therefore, a predetermined time for the one who was born of a woman to be sent out. This means that the Son was not sent out into the world until that time had come. So, if the one called “Son of God” was not sent until he was born of a woman, how could he then have been sent to Avraham?

In Galatians, where Paul is saying that Elohim sent out his Son, i.e. the Messiah, into the world after he was born of a woman, it does not mean that Yeshua was born earlier of Elohim and was then sent into the world through the birth of a woman. That is not what the text in Galatians is saying. It says that the “Son of God” first came into being through a woman and thereafter he was sent.

A third witness from the Apostolic Writings concerning the fact that it could not have been the Messiah who revealed himself to Avraham together with the two angels who went down to Sodom, is found in 1 John 1:1-2, where it is written,

*“That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we saw, and our hands touched, concerning the Word of life and the **life was revealed**, and we have seen, and testify, and declare to you the life, the eternal life, which was with the **Father, and was revealed to us**”*(HNV)

Here it says that the Word of Life, which existed from the beginning, was revealed. When was it revealed? It was revealed at the time when John and his friends lived and could see it and touch it with their hands. Thereafter they could testify about it and declare it. The eternal life, which was revealed at a certain historic point in time, had therefore not been revealed earlier, but had been hidden with the Father (compare with Ephesians 3:9; 1 Peter 1:20). Previously it was with the Father, but now it was revealed to the apostles. Before that it had not existed in a way that could be touched or seen, for it had not yet come into the world (compare with John 1:9). The Word had not yet become flesh (see John 1:14).

How could then the Son have been revealed to Avraham if he at that time was hidden with the Father and was not to be revealed or to come into the world until later, when he became flesh?

An agent does not speak words of his own, but that which the sender wants to convey

The agent who was sent to Avraham together with the two others used the same manner of speaking with him as the angel who spoke with Hagar did, i.e. he spoke both in first and third person.

In Genesis 18:16-19, it is written,

*“And the men went on from there in the direction of Sodom; and Abraham went with them on their way. And **the LORD said**, ‘Am **I** to keep back from Abraham the knowledge of what I do; Seeing that Abraham will certainly become a great and strong nation, and his name will be used by all the nations of the earth as a blessing? For I have made him mine so that he may give orders to his children and those of his line after him, to keep the ways of **the LORD**, to do what is good and right: so that **the LORD** may do to Abraham as **he** has said.’”*(BBE)

Notice that it is Adonai-Katan who speaks to himself as Avraham is walking with the three men on their way down to Sedom. He says that he cannot hide what he is going to do from Avraham, and that he was the one who chose him. Then he changes his way of speaking and begins to speak of the Eternal in third person. According to the rules of consistent grammar, he should have said, “**my** ways... so that **I** may do to Abraham as **I** have said” instead of, “keep the ways of **the LORD**... : so that **the LORD** may do to Abraham as **he** has said.” Earlier we saw that the angel who spoke with Hagar did the same thing. This teaches us that the messenger represents the one who sent him to the extent that often we are unable to differentiate between their words. An agent can therefore easily be mistaken for the person who sent him. But, to *come* in the Name of the Eternal is not the same thing as *being* the Eternal.

We can see the same principle in Genesis 21:17-18, where it is written,

*“And the boy's cry came to the ears of God; and the **angel of God** said to Hagar from heaven, Hagar, why are you weeping? have no fear, for the child's cry has **come to the ears of God**. Come, take your child in your arms, for **I** will make of him a great nation.”*(BBE)

The angel of Elohim cries out to Hagar and says that Elohim, in third person – he – has heard the cries of the boy. Then he changes his way of speaking and says, “**I** will make of him a great nation.” Who would make him into a great nation? The angel? No, the Eternal would. So, why then does the angel say that he will make Yishmael into a great nation? This is because an agent can very well speak the words of his sender without directly saying that they are the words of the sender. It is not necessary for him to say, “Thus saith the LORD”. The Eternal can apparently speak through an agent prophetically and thus the agent becomes a voice instead of an echo.

The same principle applies to Genesis 22:11-18, where it is written,

*“But the **angel of the LORD** called him out of heaven, and said, ‘Abraham, Abraham.’ And he said, ‘Behold, I am here.’ And He said, ‘Lay not your hand upon the child, neither do*

*anything to him, for **now I know that you fear God**, and for **my** sake you have not spared your beloved son.’ And Abraham lifted up his eyes and beheld, and lo! A ram caught by his horns in a plant of Sabek; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a whole burnt offering in the place of Isaac his son. And Abraham called the name of that place, *The LORD has seen; that they might say today, In the mount the LORD was seen. Then **the angel of the LORD called Abraham the second time** out of heaven, saying, ‘**I have sworn by Myself, says the LORD**, because you have done this thing, and on **my** account have not spared your beloved son, surely blessing **I** will bless you, and multiplying **I** will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is by the shore of the sea, and your seed shall inherit the cities of their enemies. And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed **my** voice.’*”(AB)*

Notice that the first time the messenger of the Eternal cries out to Avraham, he speaks in first person – I – without directly declaring that he is conveying the words of the Eternal. The phrase, “*and for **my** sake you have not spared your beloved son*” proves that these are the words of the Eternal. When the angel calls out a second time, he adds the words, “*says the Eternal*”.

It is interesting to see that even the Eternal speaks in both first and third person singular. He says, “*for **now I know that you fear God** (not “me”), and for **my** sake you have not spared your beloved son.*” This manner of speech is not uncommon in the Scriptures. Here we see a few more examples of this.

In Exodus 20:1-7, it is written,

*“And God spoke all these words, saying: **I** am the LORD thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before **me**. Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any manner of likeness, of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down unto them, nor serve them; for **I** the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate **me**; and showing mercy unto the thousandth generation of them that love **me** and keep **my** commandments. Thou shalt not take **the name of the LORD thy God** in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh **His** name in vain.”*(JPS)

Notice the switch from first to third person singular. First he says, “I, me, my” and later he says, “the name of the Eternal your Elohim... His name.”

In Exodus 15:26, it is written,

*“and said, ‘If you will indeed hear the voice of **the LORD** your God, and do the things pleasing before **Him**, and will heed **His** commands, and keep all **His** ordinances, no disease which **I** have brought upon the Egyptians will **I** bring upon you, for **I** am the LORD your God that heals you.’*”(AB)

In Exodus 23:25, it is written,

*“And ye shall serve the LORD your God, and **He** will bless thy bread, and thy water; and **I** will take sickness away from the midst of thee.”*(JPS)

Notice the shift from third person to first person.

In Exodus 31:17, it is written,

*“It is a sign between **me** and the children of Israel for ever; because in six days **the LORD made** heaven and earth, and on the seventh day **he** took his rest and had pleasure in it.”*(BBE)

We could continue going through the Scriptures and see that it is not uncommon for the Eternal to speak of himself both in first and third person in the same sentence.

When the agents speak in first person, even though they might mention the Eternal in third person in the same sentence, it does not mean that they themselves are speaking. It might just as well have been a direct message from the Eternal that the agent was conveying. This means that an agent serves as the Eternal’s mouth.

In Genesis 31:11, 13a, it is written,

*“And in my dream the **angel of the Lord** said to me, ‘Jacob’: ‘and I said, Here am I... **I am the God of Beth-el**, where you put oil on the pillar and took an oath to me...’”*(BBE)

In Judges 2:1-5, it is written,

*“Now **the angel of the LORD** came up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, ‘**I** took you out of Egypt, guiding you into the land which I gave by an oath to your fathers; and **I** said, My agreement with you will never be broken by **me**: And you are to make no agreement with the people of this land; you are to see that their altars are broken down: but you have not given ear to **my** voice: what have you done? And so **I** have said, **I** will not send them out from before you; but they will be a danger to you, and their gods will be a cause of falling to you.’ Now on hearing these words which the **angel of the LORD** said to all the children of Israel, the people gave themselves up to loud crying and weeping. And they gave that place the name of Bochim, and made offerings there to the LORD.”*(BBE)

Throughout nearly the entire book of Deuteronomy, it is the prophet Moshe who speaks to the people. At times, however, it is hard to determine who is speaking, since Moshe speaks as an agent. He had reached such a high level of prophetic spirit, that it was practically impossible to distinguish his words from the words of the Eternal.

In Deuteronomy 11:13-17, Moshe speaks to the people and says,

*“And it will be that if you truly give ear to the orders which **I** put before you this day, loving **the LORD your God** and worshipping **him** with all your heart and all your soul, Then **I** will send rain on your land at the right time, the early rains and the late rains, so that you may get in your grain and your wine and your oil. And **I** will give grass in your fields for your cattle, so that you may have food in full measure. But take care that your hearts are not turned to false ways so that you become servants and worshippers of other gods; For if you do so, the wrath of **the LORD** will be burning against you, and **he** will shut up the heaven so that there is no rain and the land will give no fruit; and in a very little time you will be cut off from the good land which **the LORD** is giving you.”*(BBE revised)

Notice that it is Moshe who is speaking and saying that he will send rain. Can he send rain? No, he is merely speaking as an agent on behalf of the Eternal.

In Deuteronomy 29:4-7, it is written,

*“But even to this day **the LORD** has not given you a mind open to knowledge, or seeing eyes or hearing ears. For forty years **I** have been your guide through the waste land: your clothing has not become old on your backs, or your shoes on your feet. You have had no bread, or wine, or strong drink: so that you might see that **I am the LORD** your God. When you came to this place, Sihon, king of Heshbon, and Og, king of Bashan, came out to make war **against us and we** overcame them.”(BBE)*

Once again we are unable to distinguish between the words of Moshe and the words of the Eternal. This teaches us that it is not only heavenly messengers who can speak in first person and thus serve as the Eternal’s mouth, but that humans can as well. A prophet is therefore not an echo, but a voice, as it is written in John 1:23,

*“He said, **I am the voice** of one crying in the waste land, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said Isaiah the prophet.”(BBE)*

The agent does whatever the sender is doing

We saw earlier that the agent who was sent to destroy Sodom and Amora caused brimstone and fire to rain down from the Eternal who is in heaven. The Eternal acted through his agent. This means that the agent did the same thing that the Eternal was doing, and the Eternal did the same thing that the agent did. So when the agent goes up to heaven, it is the Eternal who goes up through him.

In Genesis 35:13, it is written,

*“Then **God went up** from him in the place where he had been talking with him.”(BBE)*

In Exodus 4:31, it is written,

*“And the people had faith in them; and hearing that the LORD had **taken up the cause** of the children of Israel and had seen their troubles, with bent heads they gave him worship.”(BBE)*

In this verse, we find the Hebrew word “pakad”,[\[8\]](#) which means “visit”. It has been translated as “taken up the cause”. This means that the Eternal came and visited the children of Israel in Mitzrayim (Egypt). How did he do this? Through his agents. In this case the agents who represented the Eternal by coming to visit the people and to bring them out were both heavenly and earthly. This means that what the agents did was accredited to the one who sent them.

Both a heavenly being, an angel, and a human, were sent to free the people from slavery.

In Isaiah 63:9, it is written,

*“In all their affliction he was afflicted, and **the angel of his presence saved them**: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.”(ASV)*

In Numbers 20:16, it is written,

*“And the LORD gave ear to the voice of our cry, and **sent an angel who took us out of Egypt**: and now we are in Kadesh, a town on the edge of your land;”(BBE)*

In Exodus 3:1-12 we can read an account about how Moshe met a heavenly agent in a burning bush, as it is written,

*“And Moses was feeding the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he brought the sheep close to the wilderness, and came to the mount of Horeb. And **the angel of the LORD** appeared to him in flaming fire out of the bush. And he saw that the bush burned with fire, but the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, ‘I will go near and see this great sight, why the bush is not consumed.’ And when **the LORD** saw that he drew near to see, **the LORD called him out of the bush**, saying, ‘Moses, Moses.’ And he said, ‘What is it?’ And He said, ‘Draw no closer! Loose your sandals from off your feet, for the place on which you stand is holy ground.’ And He said, ‘**I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.**’ And Moses turned away his face, for he was afraid to **gaze upon God**. And **the LORD said** to Moses, ‘I have surely seen the affliction of My people that are in Egypt, and I have heard their cry caused by their taskmasters; for I know their affliction. And **I have come down** to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them out of that land, and to bring them into a good and wide land, into a land flowing with milk and honey, into the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and Gergashites and Hivites and Jebusites. And now behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have seen the affliction with which the Egyptians afflict them. And now come, I will send you to Pharaoh king of Egypt, and you shall bring out My people the children of Israel from the land of Egypt.’ And **Moses said to God**, ‘Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh king of Egypt, and that I should bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt?’ And God spoke to Moses, saying, ‘**I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that I shall send you forth: when you bring out My people out of Egypt, then you shall serve God on this mountain.**’”(AB)*

Here we see yet another clear example of how an agent, an angel, both speaks and acts as though he was the Eternal. An interesting thing to note is that it says that the Eternal saw that Moshe was coming close. The angel who was revealed in the bush is called both YHWH and Elohim; he came in the Name of the Eternal. It was this angel who accompanied Moshe to Mitzrayim to set the people free (see Acts 7:35).

When Moshe was called to be a messenger, he was also called Elohim, which we have discussed earlier (see Exodus 4:16; 7:1). So, Elohim came and visited the people through an angel and through Moshe.

When a prophet comes to the people, it is the Eternal who comes and visits his people (compare with Zechariah 10:3; Luke 1:78; 7:16).

It is not only the agent’s words that are ascribed to the sender, but his actions as well. In Exodus 4:20, it says that Moshe took Elohim’s rod in his hand. Later on the Eternal says to

Paroh that he will strike the waters with the rod that is in his hand, as it is written in Exodus 7:17,

*“Thus says the LORD: By this you shall know that I am the Lord: behold, I strike the water which is in the river with **the rod that is in my hand**, and it shall change it into blood.”*(AB)

In verse 19 it says that it was Aharon’s rod that was used to strike the waters,

*“And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Say to your brother Aaron, Take **your rod** in your hand, and stretch forth your hand over the waters of Egypt, and over their rivers, and over their canals, and over their ponds, and over all their standing water, and it shall become blood. And there was blood in all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood and of stone.’”*(AB)

This means therefore that the Eternal says that he is holding Aharon’s rod in his hand. So, when Aharon, as his agent, strikes the waters, it is the Eternal who does it through him. Thus the act of the agent is accredited to the sender.

In Exodus 11:4 and 12:12, the Eternal says that in the middle of the night he will go through the land of Mitzrayim and will strike all the firstborn. In 12:13 he says that he will pass by the children of Israel when he sees the blood on their houses. Apparently he is speaking here about a messenger who would be sent in his Name to go out over the land and who could see the blood and then would pass by the houses of the Israelites. In verse 23, it is written,

*“For **the LORD will pass through** to strike the Mitzrim; and when **he sees the blood** on the lintel, and on the two side-posts, **the LORD will pass over** the door, and will not **allow the destroyer to come in** to your houses to strike you.”*(HNV)

The destroyer is a heavenly agent whom the Eternal sent out in order to strike the firstborn (compare with 1 Chronicles 21:15). That which the agent did was attributed to the one who sent him, as it is written in verse 29a,

*“It happened at midnight, that **the LORD struck** all the firstborn in the land of Mitzrayim”*(HNV)

If we do not understand the principle concerning agents, it will not be easy to understand these verses. The different persons in these texts will be mistaken for each other and we will not know who did what. If we understand that it is the Eternal who acts through his messengers and that the messengers carry the Eternal’s Name, then these texts are easy to understand.

We can see an additional example in Exodus 13:21, where it is written,

*“**The LORD went before them** by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them on their way, and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light, that they might go by day and by night”*(HNV)

In Exodus 14:19, 24 it is written,

*“Then **the angel of God, who had been before the tents of Israel**, took his place at their back; and the pillar of cloud, moving from before them, came to rest at their back... And in*

the morning watch, the LORD, looking out on the armies of the Egyptians from the pillar of fire and cloud, sent trouble on the army of the Egyptians”(BBE)

The angel of Elohim is once again called YHWH in this text and his actions are accredited to the Eternal.

Here are some more Scripture passages that demonstrate the same principle: Numbers 22:21-35; Deuteronomy 1:33; 31:3; Judges 6:11-24; 1 Samuel 3:2-10; 1 Chronicles 21:12-18; 28:5; 29:23; Zechariah 14:4-5; Malachi 3:1; 4:6 (in Heb. 3:24); Matthew 9:1-8; compare Matthew 27:7 with Acts 1:18; John 5:19-23, 30; 14:7-10; Acts 2:22; 7:25; 30-35; 2 Chronicles 5:19-20; Hebrews 1:1-2; 3:1; 1 John 2:23; Revelation 1:1, 8; 3:21; 11:15-17; 22:3, 12-13, 16.

Anyone who sees an agent sees the one who sent him

If we study the texts that talk about this principle of agents, we will not only see that the agent’s words and actions are accredited to the sender, but also to a certain degree his appearance, or radiance. Whoever has seen an agent, has to a certain degree seen the one who sent him. Concerning the heavenly messengers, they are not only created in the image of the Eternal, but they are also constantly looking at the face of the Eternal and are therefore filled with the radiance of his glory. Because of this, they are very much like the Eternal, so anyone who has seen an angel has seen much of the Eternal himself.

In Genesis 32:24-30, it is written,

“And Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him till the morning. And he saw that he prevailed not against him; and he touched the broad part of his thigh, and the broad part of Jacob’s thigh was numbed in his wrestling with him. And he said to him, ‘Let me go, for the day has dawned;’ but he said, ‘I will not let you go, except you bless me.’ And he said to him, ‘What is your name? And he answered, ‘Jacob.’ And he said to him, ‘Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name; for you have prevailed with God, and shall be mighty with men.’ And Jacob asked and said, ‘Tell me your name;’ and he said, ‘Why is it that you ask about my name?’ And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of that place Peniel; for, he said, ‘I have seen God face to face, and my life was preserved.’”(AB)

According to Genesis 32:1 and Hosea 12:4, we see that it was an angel with whom Yaakov wrestled.

In Exodus 3:2a, 6 it is written,

“And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flaming fire out of the bush... And he said, ‘I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And Moses turned away his face, for he was afraid to gaze upon God.”(AB)

In Judges 13:21-22, it is written,

“But the angel of the LORD did no more appear to Manoach or to his wife. Then Manoach knew that he was the angel of the LORD. Manoach said to his wife, ‘We shall surely die, because we have seen God.’”(HNV)

The same thing happened to Moshe when he had been in the Eternal's glory cloud. His face shone with the glory of the Eternal and the people of Israel were able to see some of the Eternal in and through him (see Exodus 34:29-35; 2 Corinthians 3:13-18).

In John 14:9b, it is written,

"He who has seen me has seen the Father."(HNV)

The treatment shown to an agent is the treatment of the one who sent him

Since a messenger represents the one who sent him, everything done for or against a messenger is considered to have been done for or against the one who sent him.

In Exodus 17:2, it is written,

"Therefore the people quarreled with Moshe, and said, 'Give us water to drink.' Moshe said to them, 'Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?'"(HNV)

When the people complained to Moshe, it was considered as though they were complaining to the Eternal.

In Zechariah 11:13; 12:10, it is written,

*"The LORD said to me, 'Throw it to the potter, the handsome price **that I was valued at by them!**' I took the thirty pieces of silver, and threw them to the potter, in the house of the LORD... I will pour on the house of David, and on the inhabitants of Yerushalayim, the spirit of grace and of supplication; and they will look to **me whom they have pierced**; and they shall mourn for **him**, as one mourns for his only son, and will grieve bitterly for **him**, as one grieves for his firstborn."*(HNV)

Whatever is done unto the messenger of the Eternal is done unto the Eternal.

In Matthew 10:40-42, it is written,

"He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives him who sent me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward: and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. Whoever gives one of these little ones just a cup of cold water to drink in the name of a talmid, most assuredly I tell you he will in no way lose his reward."(HNV)

In Luke 10:16, it is written,

"Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me. Whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me."(HNV)

In John 12:44-45, it is written,

“Then Jesus said with a loud voice, He who has faith in me, has faith not in me, but in him who sent me. And he who sees me, sees him who sent me.”(BBE)

Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen that an agent who is sent out by the Eternal, carries the Eternal’s Name, speaks the Eternal’s words, acts on behalf of the Eternal, and looks like the Eternal. We have seen how the Eternal uses both heavenly and earthly agents in order to carry out his plans on the earth.

It is often difficult to see the difference between the messenger and the one who sent him, since the messenger is the sender’s voice, arm, and face. However, coming in the Eternal’s Name is not the same thing as being the Eternal. Even so, receiving a messenger who comes in the sender’s name is the same thing as receiving the one who sent him.

When the Eternal sends an agent, one cannot bypass the agent and deal directly with the Eternal, since the way to Him is through His messengers. This means that one who rejects a messenger, rejects the one who sent him.

“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you have known me, you will also know my Father. From now on you know him and have seen him.”
(John 14:6-7 ISV)

[1] **Strong H4397** ג [ʃe!mal-awk', From an unused root meaning to *despatch* as a deputy; a *messenger*; specifically of God, that is, an *angel* (also a prophet, priest or teacher): - ambassador, angel, king, messenger.

[2] **Strong H4399** ג-פֶֿׁב&mel-aw-kaw', From the same as H4397; properly *deputyship*, that is, ministry; generally *employment* (never servile) or work (abstractly or concretely); also *property* (as the result of *labor*): - business, + cattle, + industrious, occupation, (+ -pied), + officer, thing (made), use, (manner of) work ([-man], -manship).

[3] The Apostles' Bible, English Septuagint Version of the Holy Bible.

[4] Rashi and Bereshit Rabbah 45:7.

[5] **Strong H1121** \-h&bane, From H1129; a *son* (as a *builder* of the family name), in the widest sense (of literal and figurative relationship, including *grandson*, *subject*, *nation*, *quality* or *condition*, etc., (like H1, H251, etc.): - + afflicted, age, [Ahoh-] [Ammon-] [Hachmon-] [Lev-]ite, [anoint-]ed one, appointed to, (+) arrow, [Assyr-] [Babylon-] [Egypt-] [Grec-]ian, one born, bough, branch, breed, + (young) bullock, + (young) calf, X came up in, child, colt, X common, X corn, daughter, X of first, + firstborn, foal, + very fruitful, + postage, X in, + kid, + lamb, (+) man, meet, + mighty, + nephew, old, (+) people, + rebel, + robber, X servant born, X soldier, son, + spark, + steward, + stranger, X surely, them of, + tumultuous one, + valiant[-est], whelp, worthy, young (one), youth.

[6] **Strong H1129** \°h°b&baw-naw', A primitive root; to *build* (literally and figuratively): - (begin to) build (-er), obtain children, make, repair, set (up), X surely.

[7] **Strong H3205** s°f!^&yaw-lad', A primitive root; to *bear* young; causatively to *beget*; medically to *act as midwife*; specifically to *show lineage*: - bear, beget, birth ([-day]), born, (make to) bring forth (children, young), bring up, calve, child, come, be delivered (of a child), time of delivery, gender, hatch, labour, (do the office of a) midwife, declare pedigrees, be the son of, (woman in, woman that) travail (-eth, -ing woman).

[8] **Strong H6485** j°k [ˈpaw-kad', A primitive root; to *visit* (with friendly or hostile intent); by analogy to *oversee*, *muster*, *charge*, *care for*, *miss*, *deposit*, etc.: - appoint, X at all, avenge, bestow, (appoint to have the, give a) charge, commit, count, deliver to keep, be empty, enjoin, go see, hurt, do judgment, lack, lay up look, make X by any means, miss, number, officer, (make) overseer have (the) oversight, punish, reckon, (call to) remember (-brance), set (over), sum, X surely, visit, want.

To be continued.