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B. BECKING

ANGEL I מלאך

I. The consonants L'K in the Semitic languages signify 'send', with a more focused nuance in certain languages of specifically 'send with a commission/message' (CUNCHILLOS 1982). The *mēm-* prefix and *a*-vowels of Heb *mal'āk* conform generally to what is expected for an instrumental noun (*maqtal*) identifying the vehicle or tool by which the action of the verb is accomplished (in this case, the means by which a message is sent, hence 'messenger'). Because the verb is not attested in Hebrew, some suspect that this noun is a loan word from another language. However, since the root is widely attested in the Semitic languages, and since even the verb is attested in north-west Semitic (Ugaritic), it is best to see the Hebrew noun as a relic of a once more generative root that otherwise disappeared in Hebrew because of a semantic overlap with a preferred and less specific term ŠLḤ 'send'.

The Bible characteristically uses *mal'āk* to designate a human messenger (e.g. 1 Sam 11:4; 1 Kgs 19:2). A smaller number of the over 200 occurrences of the word in the OT refer to God's supernatural emissaries. As God's envoys, they represent extensions of God's authority and activity, beings "mighty in strength, who perform His word" (Ps 103:20).

Supernatural messengers in other ancient Near Eastern cultures typically are identified by the lexical item in that language also used to identify human messengers or subordinates sent on missions (Sum **kin-gi$_4$-a**, **sukkal**; Akk *mār šipri*; Eg *wpwty*; Ug *ǵlm, ml'ak*; Eth *mal'ak*). There is therefore no specially reserved term to distinguish a class of such gods from other gods on the one hand or from human messengers on the other. This is in contrast to the English 'angel', which is just such a specialized term qualitatively distinguishing God from his assistants, and a term which cannot be used of humans apart from metaphor (cf. the Vulgate's consistent use of *angelus* for divine messengers in contrast to human messengers identified by the noun *nuntius*). It is possible that the proper name of one Mesopotamian messenger deity (Malak, CT XXIV 33.24-31) preserves the West Semitic noun as a loan word in Akkadian.

II. The gods of the ancient Near East, like humans, communicated with each other over great distances by means of messengers. They were neither omniscient nor capable of immediately transporting themselves from one location to another. Although the gods were privy to knowledge largely unavailable to humans (cf. 2 Sam 14:20), they communicated and learned information about events and the cosmos in the same way humans did. Although many aspects of human communication find their counterpart in the divine realm, there are nevertheless several discontinuities (for data on generalizations below with respect to human messenger activity see MEIER 1988).

Those gods who cluster near the upper echelons of the pantheon typically dispatch as their envoys a single messenger who is a high official, often the **sukkal** in Mesopotamia (a Sumerian term that early on could designate a position of intimacy and authority second only to one's lord or mistress). Just as human messengers normally travelled alone unless there were special circumstances, so in the Mesopotamian god lists, there is a tendency to identify one specific messenger (*mār šipri*) in the employ of a god who needs such a figure. This reflects the general pattern found in mythological texts as well, where a god typically sends a single, specific, lower-ranking messenger god. Nuska and Kakka are messenger gods who appear frequently in Mesopotamian sources, serving different masters. One does find exceptions where larger numbers of messenger gods are in the employ of high

ranking gods (e.g. seven and even eighteen messenger deities are attested for a single god [CT XXIV 33.24-31]). The war or storm god is unusual in typically dispatching more than one messenger god on errands (cf. GINZBERG 1944), perhaps safety or strength in numbers being a concomitant of his more belligerent profile.

The story of →Nergal and Ereshkigal suggests that a messenger deity might have abilities or privileges unparalleled among the other gods. In that account, the boundary between the underworld and the upper realm of the gods could be described as safely bridged only by a messenger deity, as the gods articulate: "We can not descend to you nor can you ascend to us" (Amarna version lines 4-5; in the Sultantepe version, the messengers bridge the distance by employing a stairway connecting the two realms; cf. the rainbow as the path along which the Greek divine female messenger Iris travels). The perception of the privileged status of a messenger god in bridging the gap is comparable to that of the Greek divine herald, →Hermes, who as the god of communication across boundaries is specifically associated with the boundary between the living and the →dead.

Some features of human messenger activity are not duplicated in the divine realm. The provision of escorts for human messengers was a common courtesy, if not a necessity, for safe or trouble-free communication. Passports and the circumvention of bureaucratic hurdles was a persistent feature of human communication. Provision for lodging and meals along an extended route was a necessity. None of these aspects of human communication reappears in depictions of divine messenger activity.

III. The translation of *mal'āk* by 'angel' in English Bibles obscures the ancient Israelite perception of the divine realm. Where English 'angel' is the undifferentiating term for all of God's supernatural assistants, *mal'āk* originally could be applied only to those assistants whom God dispatched on missions as messengers. Thus, an early Israelite from the period of the monarchy would probably not have identified the theriomorphic →cherubim and →seraphim as *mal'ākîm* 'messengers', for the frightful appearance of these creatures made them unlikely candidates to serve as →mediators of God's message to humans (and indeed, there is no record of their ever having done so in the Old Testament). Even the Greek word *angelos* meant at first simply 'messenger' (→Angel II). It is only in later texts in the Old Testament, and everywhere in Apocryphal and NT texts, that the words *mal'āk* and *angelos* become generic terms for any of God's supernatural assistants, whether they functioned as messengers or not. When English borrowed the term "angel" from Greek, it was not in its earlier sense 'messenger' but in its later significance of any supernatural being under God's authority.

Not all sections of the Bible describe divine messengers. In the D and P sections of the Pentateuch they are never mentioned, nor do they appear in most of the pre-exilic prophetic literature where prophets receive their messages directly from God. In texts where God speaks frequently and directly to humans, there is of course less need for a messenger to mediate God's message to humans. A tension is evident in the Bible between an earlier worldview evident in some texts where God speaks freely and comfortably with humans, while in other later passages God prefers to send subordinate emissaries to deal with humankind.

When God's messengers are portrayed in narratives as primary actors interacting with other characters, they typically are presented as individuals who work alone. The most obvious example of this is the →angel of Yahweh. Only occasionally are supernatural messengers (*mal'ākîm*) identified in groups of two or more in the OT. God is assumed to have a numerous pool—at one place described as a "camp" (Gen 32:2-3[1-2])—of these figures at his behest who bless and praise him (Pss 103:20; 148:2), employ a ladder to travel between heaven and earth (Gen 28:12), protect from physical harm the traveller who trusts in God (Ps 91:11-12),

and are as swift and inscrutable in the performance of their task as the wind (Ps 104:4; both the masculine *rwḥy* and feminine *rwḥwt* plural construct of this word for 'wind, spirit' become one of the most common designations for angels at Qumran). More than one messenger may appear where Yahweh's envoys enter hostile territory or confront inimical humans (Gen 19:1-22; Ps 78:49).

A frequent role played by a messenger in the ancient Near East was to act as an escort to individuals who were travelling under the protection of the sender. Similarly, a divine messenger despatched by God accompanies humans on their travels to protect them *en route* in order to bring them safely to journey's end and the accomplishment of their tasks (Gen 24:7.40; Exod 14:19; 23:20-23; 32:34; 33:2; Tob 5:21), even providing food and drink for the traveller (1 Kgs 19:5-6). The later angelic protection of God's people in any context can be perceived as an extension of this original messenger task (Dan 3:28; 6:23[22]; Bar 6:6 [= Ep Jer 6]).

It is important to distinguish this protection *en route* from the custom of dispatching messengers in advance of distinguished travellers in order to inform their future hosts of their soon arrival. The Mari archives in particular point to an elaborate system of advance notification of arrivals and departures of significant travellers within a kingdom's territory. This aspect of messenger activity is not reproduced frequently in the divine realm, but it is found in a highly charged eschatological context that becomes the object of frequent attention in Judaism and Christianity: God sends his messenger in advance "to prepare a way before me" (Mal 3:1; cf. David b. Kimchi).

The primary burden of the messenger in the ancient Near East was not the verbatim delivery of a memorized message but the diplomatically nuanced explication of the sender's intent. It is appropriate, then, for a supernatural messenger from God not only to give messages from God to humans (1 Kgs 13:18; Zech 1:14), and even to other divine messengers (Zech 2:7-8[1:3-4]), but also to entertain questions from humans and explain perplexing features of messages from God (Zech 1:9; 2:2[1:19]; 4:1-6; 5:5-11; 6:4-5). This interpretative and hermeneutical role (the latter adjective derived from Hermes, the Greek divine herald who played a similar role) also accounts for the mediatorial function that divine messengers fulfilled in representing humans before God (Job 33:23-24, Tob 12:15): in the same way that human messengers completed their task by bringing the response of the addressee back to the sender, so God's messengers were responsible for bringing back and explicating the response of the humans to whom they were dispatched.

Human messengers were often responsible for the collection of debts and fines, and in general the satisfaction of outstanding obligations owed to their senders. When an obligation was not satisfied, appropriate measures were taken to enforce payment and punish the offender. God's supernatural messengers can function in a similar capacity, appearing in a combative and bellicose role *vis-à-vis* those who resist or rebel against God (Gen 32:25-29[24-28]; Hos 12:4; Ps 78:49; see →Destroyer).

Messengers were typically given provisions by the hosts to whom they were sent, and indeed Genesis 18 depicts God's messengers eating and drinking with humans. But other traditions insist that this is only apparent and not real (*Pal. Tgs.* Gen 18:8, "It seemed to him as if they were eating"), for divine messengers do not eat or drink terrestrial fare ("I did not eat or drink, but you saw a vision", Tob 12:19; cf. Judg 13:16; *b. Yoma* 75b). It is unconscionable for a messenger to refuse a friendly host's offer of food among humans, but the seemingly brusk behaviour of God's messengers in this regard may be tolerated in consideration of the fact that the food they are accustomed to is of a higher quality, more like manna (Ps 78:25; Wis 16:20; 4 Ezra 1:19 see F. SIEGERT, Können Engel essen?, in his *Drei hellenistisch-jüdische Predigten* II [Tübingen 1992] 253-255).

A divine messenger dispatched by God

has considerable authority and is to be obeyed as the representative of God that he is (Exod 23:20-22). This should not be taken, however, to imply that God's messengers were cast of the same moral rectitude and deserved the same trust as God himself. As humans invariably had problems with the veracity of their messengers, so divine messengers could not always be trusted to tell the truth or to reveal the entire purpose of their errands. God does not trust his own messengers (Job 4:18), and there are accounts of prevaricating and misleading messengers sent by God (1 Kgs 22:19-23; 2 Kgs 19:7; cf. 1 Kgs 13:18). Even Paul anticipates this possibility (Gal 1:8).

Divine messengers are usually depicted as indistinguishable from human beings (Heb 13:2; Gen 19:1-22; 32:25-31[24-30]; Dan 8:15; Tob 5:8.16; Luke 24:4; cf. Judg 13:3-23), while it is in the later books of the OT that they are depicted in overwhelmingly supernatural terms (Dan 10:6). Therefore, since humans could also be perceived as messengers sent from God—notably prophets (Hag 1:13), priests (Mal 2:7), and kings (1 Sam 29:9; 2 Sam 14:17.20; 19:28[27])—the use of the same term *mal'āk* to identify both human and supernatural messengers results in some passages where it is unclear which of the two is intended if no further details are provided (Judg 2:1-5; 5:23; Mal 3:1; Eccl. 5:5).

It is frequently asserted that messengers, when delivering their messages, often did not distinguish between themselves and the one who sent them. It is true that messengers do speak in the first person as if they were the sender of the message, but it is crucial to note that such speech, in unequivocal messenger contexts, is always preceded by a prefatory comment along the lines of "PN [the sender] said to you" after which the message is provided; thus, a messenger always clearly identifies the words of the one who sent the message. A messenger would subvert the communication process were he or she to fail to identify the one who sent the messenger on his or her mission. In texts that are sufficiently well preserved, there is never a question as to who is speaking, whether it be the messenger or the one who sent the messenger (MEIER 1992).

There is therefore no evidence for the frequently made assertion that messengers need not make any distinction between themselves and the ones who sent them. In its extreme form, this argument will even claim that messengers could be called by the names of the ones who sent them (cf. David b. Kimchi on Zech 3:2). The only contexts in biblical and ancient Near Eastern literature where no distinction seems to be made between sender and messenger occur in the case of the "angel (literally "messenger") of Yahweh" (*mal'ak YHWH*). It is precisely the lack of differentiation that occurs with this figure, and this figure alone among messengers, that raises the question as to whether this is even a messenger of God at all. Some see it as originally Yahweh himself, modified through the insertion of the word *mal'āk* into the text in order to distance God from interacting with humans (possible motivations including a reticence to associate God with certain activities, or a developing tendency toward God's transcendence). It must be underscored that the angel of YHWH in these perplexing biblical narratives does not behave like any other messenger known in the divine or human realm. Although the term 'messenger' is present, the narrative itself omits the indispensable features of messenger activity and presents instead the activities which one associates with Yahweh or the other gods of the ancient Near East. "We can, omitting the word *mal'āk*, find in the J and E messenger stories exactly the same motifs and the same literary patterns as are common in all ancient Near Eastern literature" pertaining to the gods themselves, not their messengers (IRVIN 1978:103).

Some features of divine messenger activity elsewhere in the ancient Near East are not duplicated in Israel's religion by the very nature of Israel's monotheism. Enlil, for example, sends his envoy Nuska to negotiate a marriage for Enlil in the story of

Enlil and Sud, a task in which human messengers are frequently attested (cf. Genesis 24). Since God has no spouse (apart from his metaphorical bride Israel), he needs no messengers to arrange his nuptials. The angel who assists Tobit in overcoming the dangers of his marriage is a completely different matter, a function of the envoy who assists God's people in their endeavours (Tob 6:15-17).

IV. In literature written after the Old Testament, including the Apocrypha and New Testament, the functions typical of messengers continue to apply to what are now better termed in English as "angels". Thus, angels continue to serve as protectors to those who travel (*T. Jud.* 3:10), to relay and interpret God's messages to humans (*2 Bar* 55:3-56:56), or to requite disobedience to God (Acts 12:23). However, in this later literature, which continues to use the same messenger vocabulary (*mal'āk*, *angelos*), the role of messenger *per se* becomes less significant than the exalted, supernatural status of the marvelous being who now communicates God's message to humans. As a result, there is usually no problem in the later literature in distinguishing an angel from a human being, for the former's appearance is often quite awe-inspiring and frightening (e.g. Matt 28:3), and these later angels are carefully categorized according to an intricately complex hierarchy hardly detectable in the Old Testament. The reticence in the Old Testament to provide divine messengers with personal names is also abandoned in post-biblical literature, which even returns to the laconic biblical texts and supplies them with the names they originally lacked (e.g. Zagnugael in *Tg. Ps.-J.* Exod 3:2; see OLYAN 1993).

In Semitic texts, the word *mal'āk*, therefore, broadens its original significance of "messenger" and tends to become the word of choice to designate all supernatural beings who do God's work. If it applies to supernatural creatures opposed to God, it usually is qualified by an adjective such as "evil". Mandaean gnostic texts are a noteworthy exception, employing the word *mal'āk* not to describe good angelic-type beings (for which they instead employ the term *'uthra*) but instead the genii of sorcery or →evil spirits.

V. *Bibliography*

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S. A. MEIER

ANGEL II ἄγγελος

I. *Angelos* ("messenger"; Vg and VL *angelus*) is in Greek, Early Jewish and Christian literature the most common designation of an otherworldly being who mediates between →God and humans. In LXX the word is usually the translation of *mal'ak*. It occurs 175 times in NT (according to the editions of Nestle-Aland^{26} and the Greek New Testament^{3}, including Luke 22:43, which is often considered as a later addition). It is used sometimes of human messengers (e.g. Jdt 1:11; in the NT Luke 7:24; 9:52; Jas 2:25, and the OT quotation referring to John the Baptist in Mark 1:2-3 and parallels). The most detailed 'angelology' in the NT is found in Rev (67 occurrences of *angelos*).

II. Angels are self-evident figures in Early Jewish and Christian literature, although not all Jewish groups accepted their existence (see Acts 23:8 concerning the Sad-

ducees). OT conceptions of the *Mal'ak Yhwh* (→Angel of Yahweh) and the divine →council underlie the early Jewish and Christian ideas (MACH 1992), but pagan influences should be taken into account too. The etymology of *angelos* is not clear. The word originated somehow from the East (cf. ἄγγαρος "mounted courier" in Persia). The connection with Sanskrit *ángiras* is based on the assumption that this name refers to →mediators between gods and men and is not certain (H. FRISK, *Griechisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* 1 [Heidelberg 1960] 7-8). To a certain extent angels could correspond to the →demons in Greek religion (cf. Philo, *Gigant.* 6; 16; →Demon). The Greeks were familiar with messengers from the gods since the archaic period, as appears from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* where birds bring divine messages to humans (*Il.* 24:292, 315) and →Hermes acts as the *angelos* of the gods (*Od.* 5:29). For most of the appearances and functions of angels pagan parallels can be found, and in some cases the absorption of pagan conceptions is quite probable. This does apply already to older ideas like the heavenly army of YHWH (Josh 5:14, →Yahweh zebaoth) and the →sons of the gods (*Bĕnê 'ĕlîm/'ĕlōhîm*), which have parallels in North West Semitic mythology (MULLEN 1980); it is certainly also true for the Hellenistic period with its intensive cultural exchange. The traditions concerning (mounted) angels in 2 Maccabees are connected with the common motif of the *epiphaneia* of the patron god of the temple (2 Macc 2:21; 3:24), who protects his temple by causing natural phenomena or by sending his messengers. In the description of the rescue of the sanctuary of Delphi from the Gauls in 279 BCE by Pausanias the heroes Hyperochus, Laodocus, Pyrrhus and Phylacus appear in this role (10.23.1-2). The angels who assist the Jews on the battlefield (e.g. 2 Macc 10:29-31) correspond to pagan supernatural helpers like the →*Dioskouroi*. Compare also the guardian angels with certain Mesopotamian gods (A. FINET 1989:37-52), the fiery appearance of angels and divine messengers in North West Semitic texts (M. S. SMITH, Biblical and Canaanite Notes to the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* From Qumran, *RQ* 12 [1985-1987] 585-588), and angels as companions of the soul (*psychopompos*) after death (e.g. *T. Job* 52; cf. Luke 16:22; see →Demon, and →Hermes).

From the third century BCE onward the appearances of angels increase, their manifestations are described more extensively and their functions diverge more and more (see for instance *1 Enoch*, Tob, Dan, *Jub.*, 2 Macc). This development should not be explained by the coming into being of apocalyptic literature only (cf. MICHL 1962: 64: "Dabei ist es die mit dem Buche Daniel aufkommende Apokalyptik, die den fruchtbarsten Boden für diese Entwicklung bietet"; also MACH 1992:115), but also by the assimilation of popular ideas (see e.g. Tob) and the absorption of pagan conceptions (e.g. *Jos. and As.* and 2 Macc, MACH 1992: 242-249 and 265-278). In LXX ἄγγελος/-οι can be an interpretative translation of Hebrew or Aramaic expressions concerning sons of God or members of the divine council (e.g. LXX Job 2:1 for *Bĕnê 'ĕlōhîm*; LXX Dan 3:92 ὁμοίωμα ἀγγέλου θεοῦ for 3:25 MT דמה לבר־אלהין; Theodotion differently); LXX Dan 4:13.23 for עיר וקדיש Dan 4:10.20 MT (→Watcher). According to MACH (1992:65-113) the translators tried to avoid references to a (polytheistic) conception of several figures acting as gods/sons of God and to relate certain actions which were ascribed to God in MT rather to angels, because it did not become God to do these things (esp. LXX Job).

III. In Early Jewish and Christian literature the angelic messenger of the Lord is very common (*angelos kyriou/theou*). He appears on earth (e.g. →Gabriel in Luke 1-2) or manifests himself in a dream (Matt 1:20; 2:13.19) to bring a message from God or to help people (e.g. Acts 5:19). →Raphael accompanies Tobias (Tob 5:4-12:22) and helps him to get rid of the demon who caused the death of the earlier husbands of his bride Sarah (8:2-3). As a consequence of the fusion of the conceptions of the messenger of the Lord and the divine council,

angels usually reside in heaven, i.e. near the throne of God (Rev 5:2.11), where they worship and praise him. The saying of →Jesus that the risen will live like angels in heaven (Mark 12:25 and parallels) can be connected to sources which refer to a coming community of humans and angels or a transformation to angels or →stars (e.g. *1 Enoch* 39:4-5; 71:11; 104:6; 4 Ezra 7:85. 95; in Qumran texts a common worship by humans and angels can be realized also in the present). Angels move forward in the air, but are rarely represented with wings (*1 Enoch* 61:1 according to some manuscripts). The angel of the Lord transports Habakkuk in one day from Judah to Babylon and back by carrying him by his hair to bring Daniel a meal in the lion-pit (Bel 33-39; cf. Ezek 8:3). Angels often resemble humans (Dan 8:15; 10:18; *Jos. As.* 14:3) and can have a shining or fiery appearance (Dan 10:5-6).

Angels engage in a variety of activities. They act as intermediaries for the revelation of the →Torah (Acts 7:53; Gal 3:19), reveal divine knowledge and explain revelations (Zech 1:9; 4:5-6; Dan 8:16; *4QSerekh Shirot 'Olat ha-Shabbat* [NEWSOM 1985]; →Uriel in *4 Ezra*). The angel of the Lord gives the spirit of understanding to →Daniel (LXX Sus 44-45). The angel of Jesus reveals to John's hearers his testimony for the churches (Rev 22:16). The heavenly visitor (→Michael) mentions the angel *Metanoia* as his sister to Aseneth after her confession (*Jos. As.* 15:7-8). Metanoia is a daughter of the Most High (STROTMANN 1991) and will intercede for Aseneth and all who repent in the name of the Most High (cf. Phanuel as angel of repentance in *1 Enoch* 40:9, and the anonymous angel of repentance in Hermas, *Vis.* 5:8; Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis dives* 42:18; *Test. Gad* 5:7-8 and the personification of *metanoia* in pagan texts, e.g. *Tabula Cebetis* 10-11). Angels bring death to the enemy and godless people (→Angel of Yahweh) according to 2 Kgdms 19:35 (parallels Isa 37:36 and 2 Chr 32:21; reminiscences in 1 Macc 7:41; 2 Macc 15:22-23; Sir 48:21; Josephus, *Bell.* 5:388; cf. Exod 12:23; 2 Sam 24:16; 1 Chr 21:12.15; Sus 55; 59 and LXX Sus 62; Acts 12:23 and LXX Job 33:23 *aggeloi thanatēphoroi* [GAMMIE 1985]). Similar functions are mentioned in an eschatological context: angels are witnesses of the events on earth and write down the acts of men in the heavenly books (*1 Enoch* 89:62-64). They take part in the final judgement, intercede on behalf of the faithful, bring charges against the godless and execute the sentence (cf. the seven angels with the final plagues in Rev 15-17; 21:9 and the angel of the abyss →*Apollyōn* or →*Abaddōn* in Rev 9:11; 20:1).

As far as names of angels are concerned in biblical literature only, the names of Gabriel (Dan 8:16; 9:21; Luke 1:26), Michael (Dan 10:13, 21; 12:1; Rev 12:7), *Abaddōn/ Apollyōn* and Beliar (2 Cor 6:15; →Belial) occur. In Tob 5-12 Raphael/ Azarias already appears. Several Jewish and Christian extra-canonical writings contain numerous names of angels (e.g. *1 Enoch* and *Jub.*; see further →Enoch for Metatron, →Melchizedek and the overview by MICHL 1962:200-254; OLYAN 1993). Several categories of angels are (later) connected with the heavenly court; some of them guard the heavenly throne of God: →Seraphim, →Cherubim, Ophannim, Zebaoth, Bĕnê 'ĕlōhîm, →Saints and Watchers. Further groups of four, six or seven higher angels (→Archangel) occur. The angels of the nations appear e.g. in 4QDeut 32:8-9 and LXX Deut 32:8-9, *Jub.* 15:31-32, *1 Enoch* 89:59; 90:22.25 and Dan 10:20-21; 12:1 (Michael). Other groups of angels performing the same duty are the angels of death and those who accompany the Son of Man at his second coming (e.g. Matt 13:41; 16:27; 24:31 and 25:31 (cf. 2 Thess 1:7; →Son of Man). →Satan has his own angels (cf. 2 Cor 12:7) waging war with Michael and his angels (Rev 12:7). The fall from heaven of Satan (→Dragon) and his angels in Rev 12:7-9 (cf. John 12:31), which causes the suffering of the people of God in the final period of history might be an adaptation of the idea of the fall of certain angels (→Giants) in primaeval time (Gen 6; *1 Enoch* 6-11).

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J. W. VAN HENTEN

ANGEL OF DEATH → ANGEL

ANGEL OF YAHWEH מלאך יהוה

I. The word →'angel' in this phrase is literally 'messenger'. The juxtaposition of the common noun "messenger" with a following divine name in a genitive construction signifying a relationship of subordination is attested elsewhere in the ancient Near East (e.g. *mlak ym, KTU* 1.2; *mār šipri ša DN*, cf. *CAD* M/1 265). However, most of the appearances in the Bible of the phrase *mal'ak YHWH* are not easily explicable by recourse to near eastern paradigms, for the *mal'ak YHWH* in the Bible presents a number of unique problems.

II. It is typical for gods in the ancient Near East to have at their disposal specific, lower-ranking deities who do their bidding in running errands and relaying messages. These messenger deities function primarily as links between gods and not between gods and humans; when a major god wishes to communicate with a human, he or she can be expected to make a personal appearance. When supernatural messengers are named at Ugarit, those of →Baal are characteristically

Gapnu (→Vine) and Ugaru, while Qadish and Amrar serve Athirat (→Asherah). Papsukkal is a typical envoy of the high gods in Sumerian texts, and in Akkadian texts Kakka or Nuska is the messenger of their choice. In Greece, →Hermes is the messenger and herald *par excellence*, with a female counterpart in Iris. These deities all behave in a fashion similar to their human counterparts who function as messengers on earth for all humans, from royalty to commoners.

It is precisely these features of ancient Near Eastern messenger gods that make analysis of the *mal'ak YHWH* so vexing, for these features do not always characterize the latter. In contrast to the messenger deities of the ancient Near East, the *mal'ak YHWH* is never given a name in the OT, and he does not always behave like a human messenger. Because the OT is reluctant to provide names for God's angels (angels are given proper names only in Daniel 8-12; cf. Gen 32:29; Judg 13:17-18), there is no onomastic evidence from within the Bible to determine if →Yahweh, like other deities in the ancient Near East, prefers dispatching a particular supernatural being on missions. Furthermore, although in many early narratives Yahweh himself appears to humans (just like other ancient near eastern deities), in later texts there is a marked preference for Yahweh to send a messenger in his place.

III. The phrase *mal'ak YHWH* (where *mal'āk* is singular) is not uniformly distributed in the Bible. It can refer to a human messenger sent by →God (priest and prophet respectively in Mal 2:7 and Hag 1:13; cf. what may be a personal name "Malachi" meaning "my messenger" in Mal 1:1; cf. however, LXX Μαλαχίας 'Messenger of Yahweh'). Elsewhere, the phrase is either unclear or certainly supernatural in its orientation. The single book with the most appearances of the phrase is Judges (2:1.4; 5:23; 6:11-22; 13:3-21). It appears in only two psalms which are contiguous (34:8; 35:5.6), four contexts in the Pentateuch (Gen 16:7-11; 22:11.15; Exod 3:2; Num 22:22-35), one passage in the books of Samuel and Chronicles (2 Sam 24:16 // 1 Chr 21:12-30), and three contexts in the books of Kings (1 Kgs 19:7; 2 Kgs 1:3.15; 19:35). In the prophets the single occurrence in Isaiah (37:36) is a passage parallel to one already mentioned in 2 Kings (19:35), and apart from a single reference in Hosea (12:5) it is confined to Zechariah (Zech 1:11 *bis;* 3:1-6; 12:8).

Since the Hebrew definite article cannot be employed in the construct when the *nomen rectum* is a proper name, and since not all construct phrases with a proper name are to be construed as definite (*IBHS* 13.4c; HIRTH 1975:25-26), a problem of specificity arises that can be seen by contrasting two recent Bible translations: the New Jewish Publication Society typically translates *mal'ak YHWH* when it first appears in a narrative as "*an* angel of the Lord" where the New Revised Standard Version translates "*the* angel of the Lord". If the latter translation is more accurate, then another problem arises: is this figure a unique envoy who is always sent by God, or can a number of different supernatural beings be dispatched as "the angel of Yahweh"? In other words, is the phrase "angel of Yahweh" a description of an office held by different creatures, or is the phrase a title borne by only one unique figure?

Because Greek, like English, usually must distinguish definite from indefinite in genitive constructions (unlike Hebrew and Latin), early evidence from Greek is invaluable in discerning how the Bible's earliest accessible interpreters understood the phrase. The NT knows of no single "The angel of the Lord/God", for the definite article never appears when a figure identified by this phrase makes its first appearance—it is always "an angel of the Lord" (Matt 1:20; 2:13.19; 28:2; Luke 1:11; 2:9; John 5:4; Acts 5:19; 8:26; 10:3 ["of God"]; 12:7.23; Gal 4:14). The Septuagint generally follows suit in translating *mal'ak YHWH* in the OT, although there are a few exceptional cases where the definite article appears when the figure first appears in a narrative (Num 22:23; Jud 5:23 [LXX cod. A]; 2 Sam

24:16; contrast the far more numerous cases where LXX presents the figure as indefinite: Gen 16:7; 22:11.15; Exod 3:2; 4:24 [LXX]; Judg 2:1; 5:23 [LXX cod. B]; 6:11.12 [LXX Cod. A].22a.22b [LXX Cod. B]; 13:3.6.16b. 21b; 2 Kgs 1:3.15; 19:35 [// Isa 37:36]; 1 Chr 21:12; Zech 3:1; 12:8).

Parallel passages within the MT support the early perception of a figure which was not definite: 2 Chr 32:21 rephrases the "angel of Yahweh" of 2 Kgs 19:35 to read simply "an angel". Even within a single passage, "an angel" (indefinite) will first be introduced only later to be reidentified as *mal'ak YHWH* (1 Kgs 19:5-7; 1 Chr 21:15-16); this sequence confirms that the latter phrase in these contexts means no more than simply an angel of no particular significance sent from Yahweh. Extra-biblical Jewish literature presents the "angel of Yahweh" as a designation applicable to any number of different angels (STIER 1934:42-48). Other early witnesses who are forced to make a choice in this regard will be noted below, and their overwhelming consensus is that the phrase is to be translated as indefinite.

When one scrutinizes the OT itself, a major obstacle for analysis lies in the many passages that are textually problematic. Few generalizations can be made about all the passages, and each must be discussed on its own terms. If one can trust the evidence of early translations such as the LXX, Vulgate, and Syriac, these translations presume a *Vorlage* that is often at variance with the Hebrew text in its description of this figure. This obstacle seems to be related to a further problem that resists an easy solution, namely, the figure of the *mal'ak YHWH* is often perplexingly and inconsistently identified with Yahweh himself. One or both of these difficulties can be found in the following ten passages: the phrase "messenger of Yahweh" appears six times in Judg 6:11-23 to identify a figure who is also described as a "messenger of God" (v 20) and as Yahweh (vv 14.16). The LXX levels all descriptions so that everywhere he is called "messenger of Yahweh" (even in vv 14.16. 20). Josephus recounts this event about "a spectre (*phantasmatos*) in the form of a young man" (*Ant.* V.213-14). The figure speaks but never claims to have been sent from Yahweh nor to be speaking words that another gave him. At only one point does he possibly refer to Yahweh as distinct from himself, but as a greeting the statement may be purely conventional ("Yahweh is with you", v 12). He seems to have sufficient authority in his own right, never claiming it is grounded in another: "Have not I sent you?" (v 14) and "I will be with you" (v 16) are most comfortable as statements coming from God's mouth, but the *mal'āk* speaks these himself. He works wonders in touching meat with his staff, causing it to be consumed with fire, after which he vanishes (v 21). The final reference to Yahweh who verbally comforts Gideon after the disappearance of the *mal'āk* is disorienting, for it raises the question why the *mal'āk* was ever sent at all if Yahweh can speak this easily to Gideon (v 23).

In Judg 13:3-23, the figure in question is identified in the MT by a number of different designations in the first part of the story where he is "the man" (vv 10-11), "the man of God" who seemed to be a *mal'āk* of God (v 6) sent by YHWH (v 8), and who actually was a *mal'āk* of God (v 9). In the second part of the story (as well as the very first reference in the story) he is identified as *mal'ak YHWH* (vv 13.15.16 *bis*.17.18.20. 21*bis*), until the final allusion where he is called *'ĕlôhîm* (v 22). The LXX once inserts an additional reference to simply "the messenger" (v 11). Josephus' summary of this account (*Ant.* V.277-84) speaks of "a spectre (*phantasma*), an angel of God in the likeness of a comely and tall youth." The *mal'āk* refuses an hospitable offer of food, recommending instead that an offering be made to Yahweh (v 16). This *mal'āk* talks about God as someone distinct from himself (v 5), but never refers to the fact that he has been sent from God, nor that the words he speaks come from God. Indeed, it is not God's word that is to be heeded, but "Let her take heed to all that I said" (v 13), and "Take heed to all that I commanded her" (v

14). He is reluctant to identify himself by name, describing his name as "full of wonder" (v 18). It is not clear if it is Yahweh or the *mal'āk* who performed wonders in v 19 while Manoah and his wife looked on. The *mal'āk* ascends to heaven with the flame from the sacrifice (v 20).

In Numbers 22:22-35, Yahweh himself is active (opening a donkey's mouth and Balaam's eyes) in the midst of an extended description of the *mal'ak YHWH*'s activity. The versions are not in agreement as to how to identify this figure: the Hebrew text presents the *mal'ak YHWH* at work everywhere (except of course for Yahweh's activity in vv 28.31a); the LXX generally identifies this figure as the messenger of "God" and not Yahweh (with some exceptions and even variations within the manuscript tradition); the Vulgate mentions the "angel of the Lord" only in v 22 and everywhere else simply calls the figure an *angelus* or omits reference to it entirely (vv 25.34). Josephus' summary of the account (*Ant.* IV.108-111) refers to it as "an angel of God" and a "divine spirit" (*theiou pneumatos*) in contrast to the LXX "the messenger of God" (v 23). The narrative describes this *mal'ak YHWH* as an adversary (*śāṭān,* vv 22.32), standing in roads and vineyards (vv 22.23.24.26.31) with drawn sword in hand (vv 23.31), receiving homage from a human (v 31). Balaam treats this *mal'āk*—and not God—as the ultimate court of appeal ("If it is displeasing in your eyes", v 34). The *mal'āk* does not indicate that he has been sent by God, for he speaks of himself as an independent authority ("I came out as an adversary because your way was contrary to me", v 32; "I would have killed you", v 33; "Only the word I speak to you shall you speak", v 35).

In Gen 16:7-13, all texts agree that a figure identified as "messenger of Yahweh" (vv 7.9.10.11) speaks (LXX adds a further reference to this figure in v 8, while Vg deletes its mention in vv 10-11). When it first appears in Josephus (*Ant.* I.189), it is simply called "a messenger of Yahweh" (cf. *Jub.* 17:11, "an angel of the Lord, one of the holy ones"). Only once does the *mal'āk* seem to speak of Yahweh as someone distinct from himself (v 11), but he never intimates that Yahweh sent him or that the words he speaks come from Yahweh. Instead, the *mal'āk* speaks as if he were God: "I will greatly multiply your descendants" (v 10). Even the narrator closes by noting that it was Yahweh who spoke to Hagar, prompting her to be surprised that she still remained alive (v 13).

In Judg 2:1-4, where MT clearly has a lacuna in the introduction, the phrase *mal'ak YHWH* appears twice (vv 1.4). The words spoken by the *mal'āk* in the MT are entirely in the first person as if God were speaking ("the land which I swore to your fathers"). But LXX Cod. B prefaces these words with a citation formula ("*Thus says the Lord,* '...the land which I swore...'"), while LXX^{A} modifies the person in the first half of the speech without the citation formula ("the land which he [i.e., Yahweh] swore..."). The Targum interpreted this messenger as a human prophet (for a similar interchange, cf. apocryphal Ps 151:4 "his prophet" in 11QPs^{a} which appears as "his *aggelos*" in Greek).

God's revelation to →Moses at the burning bush (Exod 3:2-4:17) encompasses 38 verses in which Yahweh is explicitly and repeatedly described as speaking with Moses. But the entire account is made problematic when it is prefaced with the phrase, "*mal'ak YHWH* appeared to him in a blazing fire" (Exod 3:2), which is quoted in the NT as an indefinite "an angel" with no reference to "the Lord" (Acts 7:30; cf. vv 35.38). On the other hand, the Vulgate simply reads, "Yahweh appeared...," preserving no reference to a *mal'āk* (Josephus refers only to a "voice" that speaks from the bush before God is identified in *Ant.* II.264-2).

Although most versions present Yahweh as the one who intends to kill Moses in Exod 4:24 over the issue of circumcision, the LXX identifies "an angel of the Lord" as the aggressor (the Targums also insert the word *mal'āk,* cf. *b. Ned.* 32a; *Jub.* 48:2-4 sees it as the wicked angel →Mastemah; see →Destroyer).

Although God himself had earlier commanded →Abraham to sacrifice Isaac (Gen 22:1-2), in Gen 22:11-18 it is only a *mal'ak YHWH* that speaks "from heaven" with Abraham when the sacrifice is in progress (vv 11.15). *Jubilees* calls it the "angel of the presence" (*mal'ak happānîm*; 18:9-11; cf. 2:1), but Josephus depicts only God speaking (*Ant.* I.233-236). With the exception of a reference to God in the third person (v 12), the speech of the *mal'āk* sounds like God talking: "You have not withheld your son from me" (v 12), "I will greatly bless you" (v 17), "you obeyed my voice" (v 17). Nowhere does this *mal'āk* indicate that he was sent from God or that he speaks these words at God's command. Although the phrase "says (*nĕ'ûm*) the Lord" is inserted in the midst of the *mal'āk*'s speech at one point (v 16), this phrase is found only here in Genesis, and no other biblical *mal'āk YHWH* ever employs it.

As →Elijah flees from →Jezebel in 1 Kings 19, he is twice provided in the MT by a *mal'āk* with food and drink for his long journey (vv 5.7). This *mal'āk* is called a *mal'ak YHWH* only when it is mentioned on the second occasion (some Vulgate MSS also call the first appearance a *mal'ak YHWH*). In the LXX the first mention of the *mal'āk* does not identify it as such, simply saying "someone", while the second appearance appears with the definite article. Josephus never mentions a *mal'āk* in his account (*Ant.* VIII.349), simply saying "someone".

The phrase *mal'ak YHWH* appears three times in Zechariah's vision of the High Priest Joshua in Zechariah 3. Joshua stands before this angel (vv 1.5; cf. v 3) who admonishes him with words prefaced by, "Thus says Yahweh" (v 6), and who orders bystanders to remove Joshua's filthy garments (vv 5-6). Because Yahweh speaks awkwardly in v 2, one should take seriously the Syriac rendition of v 2 which includes instead another reference to the figure: "and the angel of the Lord said...."

In contrast to the ten preceding passages, the following two passages present neither textual problems nor internal conflicts in identifying who is speaking: the words and actions of the *mal'ak YHWH* present no conceptual difficulties. Nevertheless, the texts evince certain peculiarities that require attention.

In 2 Kings 1, a *mal'ak YHWH* (vv 3.15) appears and twice gives orders to Elijah as to what he is to say and do. Thus, Elijah himself is to function as God's *mal'āk* "messenger" in relaying a message from God ("Thus says the Lord", vv 4.6), but Elijah does not receive the commission directly from God. This fact is striking since God elsewhere in the Elijah stories typically speaks directly to this prophet (or the phrase appears "the word of Yahweh came to Elijah"). Josephus summarizes this account without mentioning a *mal'āk*: it is God who speaks (*Ant.* IX.20-21.26).

In the Song of Deborah, the sentence appears, "'Curse, Meroz,' said the angel of the Lord, 'utterly curse its inhabitants'" (Judg 5:23). The sudden, unmotivated, and unclear significance of a reference to *mal'ak YHWH* at this point prompts many to be uncomfortable with the originality of the phrase "said the angel of the Lord."

The following four passages pose no problems in analysing the *mal'ak YHWH*, for there is nothing inconsistent with this being's function as a supernatural envoy sent by Yahweh, and any textual variants are not problematic. 2 Kgs 19:35 (= Isa 37:36; cf. 2 Chr 32:21) narrates tersely how a *mal'ak YHWH* (LXX indefinite) "went out" and destroyed Sennacherib's army as it besieged Jerusalem (→Destroyer). When 2 Macc 15:22-23 records a later request by second century BCE Jews to re-enact this miracle for them, it is simply "an angel" (indefinite) that they anticipate from God.

An "angel of Yahweh", clearly distinct from Yahweh, does not speak but does act in accord with Yahweh's commands regarding the devastation of David's kingdom (2 Sam 24:16; cf. 1 Chr 21:12.15.16.18.30). This creature is also described as "the destroying angel", the "smiting angel" and a "destroying angel of Yahweh".

In the only two psalms to mention *mal'ak YHWH*, one of the benefits accruing to God-fearers is that a *mal'ak YHWH* camps (ḤNH participle) around them and delivers them (Ps 34:8[7]). The phrase appears twice in imprecations in Ps 35:5-6 summoning a *mal'ak YHWH* to pursue relentlessly (DḤH, RDP) the enemies of the psalmist. LXX treats all three as indefinite.

The last group of texts confirms that Yahweh can, indeed, send out a supernatural envoy to do his bidding, much like the messengers sent out by other gods of the ancient Near East. Unlike the other cultures, however, there is no firm evidence that Yahweh had a particular subordinate who fulfilled this role.

The first group of ten texts, however, presents a different picture with their textual variants and vacillating identifications of the "angel of Yahweh" (distinct from Yahweh? identical to Yahweh?). Among proposals offered to explain the evidence, one finds the angel of Yahweh in these passages interpreted as Yahweh in a theophany, the preincarnate →Christ, a means of crystallizing into one figure the many revelatory forms of an early polytheism, a hypostatization, a supernatural envoy of Yahweh where the confusion in identity results from messenger activity that merges the personality or speech of the messenger with the sender, or an interpolation of the word *mal'āk* into the text where originally it was simply Yahweh speaking and at work.

The notion that the identity of messenger and sender could be merged in the ancient Near East is incorrect: any messenger who failed to identify the one who sent him subverted the entire communication process (see →Angel). On the other hand, those who posit an identity (whether by theophany or hypostatization) between Yahweh and the *mal'ak YHWH* apart from this theory do not do justice to the full significance of the term *mal'ak* which must mean a subordinate (in contrast to other later terms such as →Logos, Memra, Shekinah, Kabod, see →Glory). The biblical poetic parallelism Yahweh // *mal'āk* (Isa 63:9; Hos 12:4-5[3-4]; Mal 3:1) does not justify the necessary equation of the two terms any more than the parallelism of Saul // David (1 Sam 18:7) or →heaven // →earth (Deut 32:1) identifies the respective elements. The identification of the *mal'ak YHWH* with the preincarnate Christ violates the original intent of the texts' authors. Instead, the remarkable textual instability in identifying the figure is best resolved by the interpolation theory, especially since there are passages where the interpolation is undeniable when it is not found in all witnesses (e.g. Exod 4:24). According to this theory, the figure is identified with Yahweh in some texts because it was, in fact, Yahweh before the interpolation of the word *mal'āk*. The behaviour of the *mal'ak YHWH* in many of these disputed passages is precisely that of a deity and not a deity's messenger (IRVIN 1978). The word *mal'āk* was inserted in certain contexts because of theological discomfort with Yahweh appearing as a *śāṭān* adversary (Numbers 22), or in visible form or with the actions of a man (Gen 16:13; Judges 6; 13; cf. Gen 22:14), or in contexts where the actual presence of God was otherwise theologically troublesome (Exod 4:24). In many passages, inadequate data hinder confidence in determining if the *mal'āk YHWH* is in fact an envoy or an interpolation.

In the Apocrypha, Susanna provides further evidence that there was a time when a choice between either the activity of God or an "angel of Yahweh" was a live option for writers. The Theodotian text indicates that "an angel of the Lord" gave a spirit of →wisdom to →Daniel in contrast to the LXX that specifies God as the source (v 45). LXX texts picture Daniel twice referring to "the angel of the Lord" who with his sword will slay the wicked (vv 55.59); Theodotian texts here preserve instead "an angel of God" and "the angel of God" respectively. Finally, LXX (not Theodotion) describes "the angel of the Lord" casting fire upon the two wicked men (v 62).

Elsewhere in the Apocrypha, there is never any question of identifying the "angel of Yahweh" with God, for the figure con-

sistently conforms to the pattern of a messenger despatched by God (usually without the definite article). Each time the figure is mentioned in Bel and the Dragon (LXX and Theodotion vv 34.36.39[LXX "of God"]), he is transporting Habakkuk by his hair to and from Babylon (no definite article when first mentioned), and when the angel speaks to Habakkuk, Theod prefaces its words with "Thus says the Lord", omitted by the LXX. In a prose interlude in the Song of the Three Children, "an angel of the Lord" (LXX; Theod "the angel of the Lord") descends to join the youths in the furnace and to dissipate the flames.

In the book of Tobit, no reference appears to an "angel of the Lord" until the close of the book. In 12:22 →Raphael, who has been active throughout the book and referred to elsewhere by the narrator simply as "an angel" (5:4) and by other characters as merely a "man" (5:8.16), ascends to God, at which time the onlookers in 12:22 refer to him as "the angel of the Lord" (LXX^{BA}; LXX^{S} "an angel of God"). Before he does so, he identifies himself as one of the seven holy angels who bring the prayers of God's people into God's presence (12:15).

In conclusion, there is in the Bible no single "*The* angel of Yahweh". The phrase *mal'ak YHWH* is better translated as "an angel (or messenger) of Yahweh" when it first appears in a narrative, for it represents the appearance of an unspecified supernatural envoy sent from Yahweh. In cases where a simultaneous identity and discontinuity is uncomfortably present between Yahweh and his messenger, the term *mal'āk* is probably a secondary addition to the text in response to changing theological perspectives.

IV. The phrase *mal'ak YHWH* is not yet attested in published, non-biblical materials from Qumran, despite a sophisticated and extensive angelology in these texts. This omission correlates with the non-specificity of the figure in early witnesses, for in spite of the proliferation of details about angels in extra- and post-biblical texts, the "angel of Yahweh" receives in general no special attention in Judaism. It is true that one may trace in Jewish apocalyptic the development of a single exalted angel that some have tried to derive from the earlier *mal'ak YHWH* (ROWLAND 1982:94-113), but the connection between the two remains undemonstrated and the terminology is different. Quite the contrary, a vigorous element in early Judaism resisted sectarians who believed that a certain principal angel was a special →mediator between God and man (SEGAL 1977:70). Developing descriptions about the highest-ranking angels tend to avoid the phrase "angel of the Lord" in favour of more elaborate titles. Extensive gnostic speculations about demiurges and the cosmic hierarchy likewise tend to bypass the nomenclature of the "angel of the Lord", although the "Messenger" is a significant divine emanation in some gnostic traditions such as Manichaeism (cf. Samaritan gnosticism [FOSSUM 1985]).

V. *Bibliography*

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ANTHROPOS Ἄνθρωπος

I. One designation, with or without qualification, of the highest being in many