

Israel's Guardian Angel

By Rich Jacobs, M.D.

*Behold, I am going to send an angel before you to guard you along the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Be on your guard before him and obey his voice; do not be rebellious toward him, for he will not pardon your transgression, since My name is in him. But if you truly obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. For My angel will go before you and bring you in to the land of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will completely destroy them. **Exodus 23:20–23, NAS***

1. Who could this angel be? Notice the hints, as underlined, found in **Exodus 23**. This angel will
 - a. be sent by YHWH, God,
 - b. go before Israel to
 - c. guard Israel and
 - d. lead them into the Promised Land, and
 - e. he will not pardon Israel's transgression because
 - f. YHWH's name will be in him.

2. Original language hints
 - a. The Hebrew word translated as "angel" is "*malach*" (מַלְאָךְ), which can mean "*angel, messenger, envoy, or ambassador*". Although this word most often refers to a spirit, it need not do so. Sometimes, it can even be used to refer to the Lord Himself.
 - b. The "angel" is being sent by God to "guard", or in Hebrew, "*shamar*" (שָׁמַר) Israel. This word could also mean "*watch, attend, protect, or care for.*" The connotation of this word is looking after someone else's welfare.
 - c. The Hebrew word translated "before you" is "*lepanecha*" (לְפָנֶיךָ), which most literally means "*to your face*" or "*in your presence*".
 - d. The Hebrew phrase translated "*will not pardon*" is "*lo yissha*" (לֹא יִשָּׂא) can also be translated "*cannot carry or lift*". So it is possible that this "angel" is incapable of pardoning, lifting, or carrying Israel's sins.
 - e. The Hebrew phrase translated "*since My name is in him*" is "*ki shemi bechirbo*" (כִּי שְׁמִי בְּקִרְבּוֹ) which could also be translated "*that my name is close to him*".

3. Consider the possible identities for this "angel" sent by God include the following
 - a. an angelic spiritual being
 - b. God Himself, possibly in the person of Jesus
 - c. a man whose name resembles God's name

4. Do you know the name of any angels that would fit? The "angelic spirit" possibility.

*Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. **Daniel 12:1, NAS***

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- a. The Hebrew name “Michael” means “who is like God”. In a way, he bears the name of God close to him.
- b. In the Hebrew of **Daniel 12:1**, the word “guard” does not appear. Instead, the Hebrew says that Michael, “*will be*” or “*is standing*” (imperfect) “*over the sons of your people*”. The context and grammar points to a future event.
- c. At the time of the death of Moses, Michael disputed Satan’s claim on Moses’ body, presumably taking authority over it. This verse says that Michael is an archangel (**Jude 9**).
- d. Michael also is seen fighting against Satan and his fallen angels in **Revelation 12:7**, just as he was opposing demonic forces in **Daniel 10:13-21**. The context of these verses is for arguably a future end-time and for Daniel’s lifetime (i.e. 6th Century B.C.), all on Israel’s behalf.

Michael, an angel of high heavenly office, clearly attended to Israel’s welfare over the course of many centuries. Could Michael have been the angel of whom the Lord was speaking in **Exodus 23**? Did Michel lead Israel into the Promised Land by “going before them”?

5. The “God possibility”, who may also be Christ before Jesus was born!

- a. An Old Testament example of when God Himself is called an “angel”.

*But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” And he said, “Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.” . . . Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, “By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.” **Genesis 22:11,12, 15-28, NAS***

- b. Old Testament theophanies are often regarded to be christophanies. Consider the following examples.
 - i. God walking in the garden - **Genesis 3:8-10**. Here, God has a physical body, like Christ, which can be heard walking. (Compare with **John 1:18; 4:24**, which says “God is spirit”, who cannot be seen.)
 - ii. The man, who was an angel and God, who physically wrestled with Jacob and changed his name to Israel. **Genesis 32:24-32**
 - iii. The example of the “angel” who was a “man” who looked like the a “son of the gods” walking in the furnace with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego - **Daniel 3: 20-30**.
 - iv. Melchizedek - (meaning, “King of Righteousness”) - an Old Testament Christophany, though he is not called an “angel” - **Genesis 14:18; Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5-7**.

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6. The “man possibility”-- For example, see Genesis 32:3-6, where Jacob’s “messenger” (plural of “*malach*”) are men.
 - a. Is there a man who meets the criteria spelled out by **Exodus 23** for this “angel”? This criteria includes that
 - i. he was sent by God (YHWH, יהוה - the name of the covenant God of Israel),
 - ii. to go before Israel into the Promised Land,
 - iii. and watch over and guard Israel,
 - iv. who cannot or will not forgive (“carry” or “lift”) their transgressions, and
 - v. who also bears God’s name.
 - b. Joshua (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ) - means “*YHWY is salvation*”. This can also be pronounced “Yeshua”, or Jesus. One may argue that Joshua has the name of Jesus, or God, “in him”.
 - i. Joshua, the son of Nun, was the **military leader** who succeeded Moses. This man led Israel into their first settlement of the Promised Land, also after going before them as one of the ten spies..
 - (1) Chosen and sent by God - **Numbers 27:8; Deuteronomy 31:3**
 - (2) Went before Israel into the Promised Land - **Numbers 13:16-21; Deuteronomy 3:28; 31:3, 23**
 - (3) Joshua, son of Nun, watched over, guarded, cared for Israel, by giving them military leadership, directing their defense, and providing them with moral example. For example, see **Joshua 8:1-35**.
 - (4) As a mere man, Joshua could not pardon or carry Israel’s transgressions, but he led Israel in reconciliation with the Lord - **Joshua 5:2-9**.
 - ii. Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the High Priest and **spiritual leader** during the Persian repatriation of Israel, following the Babylonian exile - the second time Israel went into the Promised Land and built their Temple!
 - (1) Was the High Priest of Israel from about 515 B.C.-490 B.C., with the restoration of the Temple (see **Ezra**).
 - (2) Along with Zerubbabel, was chosen and anointed by God to lead Israel back to the Promised Land, at the end of the Babylonian exile - **Ezra 2:2-9**
 - (3) Was the High Priest when Israel observed Festival of Booths for the first time since the days of Joshua, son of Nun - **Nehemiah 8:7, 13-18**.
 - (4) He could not pardon Israel’s transgressions, but as High Priest, he “stood in the gap” for Israel, receiving God’s cleansing atonement - see **Zechariah**, below.

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. The LORD said to Satan, “The LORD rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?” Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and standing before the angel. He spoke and said to those who were standing before him, saying, “Remove the filthy garments from him.” Again he said to him, “See, I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with festal robes.” Then I said, “Let them put a clean turban on his head.” So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments, while the angel of the LORD was standing by. And the angel of the LORD admonished Joshua, saying, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘If you will walk in My ways and if you will perform My service, then you will also govern My house and also have charge of My courts, and I will grant you free access among these who are

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standing here. 'Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you — indeed they are men who are a symbol, for behold, I am going to bring in My servant the Branch. 'For behold, the stone that I have set before Joshua; on one stone are seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave an inscription on it,' declares the LORD of hosts, 'and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. 'In that day,' declares the LORD of hosts, 'every one of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and under his fig tree.'" **Zechariah 3:1-10, NAS**

- (5) The “angel of the Lord” is now distinct from Joshua, though Joshua bears His name, leads Israel in the Promised Lands, tends to her welfare, and cannot forgive her iniquities. Here, Joshua is also symbolic.
- c. A third man, “Joshua”, will lead Israel into the Promised Land in the future, after she is dispossessed of Jerusalem, yet again. This is the God-Christ-Man possibility for the angel of **Exodus 23**.
- (1) Antichrist will drive Israel from the Promised Land, occupying Jerusalem and the Temple. (**Revelation 12, 2; Thessalonians 2, etc.**)
 - (2) During this time, the remnant of Israel will hide in the desert, in “Azal, for three and a half years (**Revelation 12; Zechariah 14:5**)
 - (3) During the distress of that time, Israel will seek the Lord desperately and will finally find Him, on the third day, after confession and repentance. (**Isaiah 63:1-3; Zechariah 12:9, 10; Hosea 6:1, 2**)
 - (4) Then, Jesus will go before redeemed remnant of Israel to break out (of their exile) and pass through (the land) into the gate (of Jerusalem).

“I will surely assemble all of you, Jacob, I will surely gather the remnant of Israel. I will put them together like sheep in the fold; Like a flock in the midst of its pasture. They will be noisy with men. The breaker (from the Hebrew, “Parats” פָּרַץ - “he has broken through”) goes up before them; They break out, pass through the gate, and go out by it. So their king goes on before them, And the LORD at their head.” **Micah 2:12, 13, NAS**

- (5) As a result, the remnant of Israel will finally be established in Jerusalem by the Joshua who can save them. Though the land has been made desolate, yet will Israel renew it with the Lord (**Micah 7:8-20**)
- (6) Jerusalem will be come the capital of the world's nations with the Church - both Jew and gentile -- as first among the peoples and the Lord will sit upon His earthly throne (**Micah 4:1-8; Revelation 11:15; Revelation 14:1-3**)
- (7) Thus the first two Joshuas are “angels” that foreshadowed the “third Joshua”, who is the conquering Lord Jesus, when “Thy Kingdom come, on earth, as it is in Heaven”, the days of the final redemption of the entire remnant of Israel (**Romans 11**).
- (8) What role do you think each of us as a Christian has as an “angel” (“ambassador, messenger”) to go before God's people, watch over them, and bear God's name? What authority and strength do you have to accomplish such a mission?