

Genesis 24:7, 40

“The Angel of the Lord Will Watch Abraham’s Servant”

“The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father’s house and from the land of my birth, and who spoke to me and who swore to me, saying, ‘To your descendants I will give this land,’ He will send His angel before you, and you will take a wife for my son from there... He said to me, ‘The LORD, before whom I have walked, will send His angel with you to make your journey successful, and you will take a wife for my son from my relatives and from my father’s house.’”

The Patriarch Abraham knew that his son Isaac could not marry one of the local Canaanite women, and so he commissioned his most trusted servant, most probably Eliezer of Damascus (Genesis 15:2), to return to Mesopotamia, to find a suitable wife for him (Genesis 24:1-14). As Abraham is instructing his servant, he reminds him how God had said, “I will assign this land to your offspring” (Genesis 24:7b, NJPS), a sure statement about how finding a wife for Isaac bears a significance beyond just two people being married. Abraham informs his servant, presumably as an assurance that he will be protected on his journey, *yishlach malakho l’phaneikha* (לְפָנָיו מַלְאָכּוֹ לְפָנֶיךָ), “He shall send His messenger before you” (Genesis 24:7c, Alter).

The bulk of Genesis 24 records the scene of Abraham’s servant encountering Rebekah, who will become Isaac’s wife (Genesis 24:15-67). When he encounters Rebekah, informing her of the charge he has been given, among the things he says is, “The LORD, in whose presence I have walked, shall send His messenger with you” (Genesis 24:40a, Alter), *l’panayv yishlach malakho ittakh* (לְפָנָיו יִשְׁלַח מַלְאָכּוֹ אִתְּךָ).

Read isolated by itself, the messenger or angel noted in Genesis 24:7, 40, does not have to be the figure of the *malakh* YHWH or “messenger/angel of the LORD,” who is witnessed speaking in the first person as the LORD or YHWH. However, when a selection of passages are considered, it is fair to conclude that the messenger or angel spoken of by Abraham and his servant, is this figure, who is ensuring that Abraham indeed would have progeny, with his son Isaac finding a wife.

Genesis 31:10-13

“The Angel of the Lord Speaks to Jacob”

“And it came about at the time when the flock were mating that I lifted up my eyes and saw in a dream, and behold, the male goats which were mating *were* striped, speckled, and mottled. Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, ‘Jacob,’ and I said, ‘Here I am.’ He said, ‘Lift up now your eyes and see *that* all the male goats which are mating are striped, speckled, and mottled; for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar, where you made a vow to Me; now arise, leave this land, and return to the land of your birth.’”

When the Patriarch Jacob amasses a great amount of wealth, becoming a threat to his father-in-law Laban, he is directed by the Lord to leave Paddan-aram, and return to Canaan (Genesis 31:1-21). The record includes the statement, “Then the LORD said to Jacob [*v’yomer* YHWH *el-Ya’akov*, וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-יַעֲקֹב], ‘Return to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you’” (Genesis 31:3). As Jacob and his two wives look on his flock, as they prepare to return (Genesis 31:4), he reviews the tense situation which has arisen with Laban (Genesis 31:5-6), Laban’s unethical business practices (Genesis 31:7), and their agreement on which of the flock would be Jacob’s, based on their appearance (Genesis 31:8). Jacob indicates how “Thus God has taken away your father’s livestock and given *them* to me” (Genesis 31:9).