

אברהם והמלאכים (בראשית יח)

Avraham and the Angels (Gen. 18)

מקדמה

(1) מורה נבוכים ב:מא-מב

I NEED not explain what a dream is, but I will explain the meaning of the term *mareh*, "vision," which occurs in the passage: "In a vision (*be-mareh*) do I make myself known unto him" (Num. xii. 6). The term signifies that which is also called *mareh ha-nebuah*, "prophetic vision," *yad ha-shem*, "the hand of God," and *maḥazeh*, "a vision." It is something terrible and fearful which the prophet feels while awake, as is distinctly stated by Daniel: "And I saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me, for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength" (Dan, x. 8). He afterwards continues, "Thus was I in deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground" (*ibid.* ver. 9). But it was in a prophetic vision that the angel spoke to him and "set him upon his knees." Under such circumstances the senses cease to act, and the [Active Intellect] influences the rational faculties, and through them the imaginative faculties, which become perfect and active. Sometimes the prophecy begins with a prophetic vision, the prophet greatly trembles, and is much affected in consequence of the perfect action of the imaginative faculty: and after that the prophecy follows. This was the case with Abraham. The commencement of the prophecy is, "The word of the Lord came to Abraham in a vision" (Gen. xv. 1); after this, "a deep sleep fell upon Abraham"; and at last, "he said unto Abraham," etc. When prophets speak of the fact that they received a prophecy, they say that they received it from an angel, or from God; but even in the latter case it was likewise received through an angel. Our Sages, therefore, explain the words, "And the Lord said unto her" that He spake through an angel. You must know that whenever Scripture relates that the Lord or an angel spoke to a person, this took place in a dream or in a prophetic vision. There are four different ways in which Scripture relates the fact that a divine communication was made to the prophet. (1) The prophet relates that he heard the words of an angel in a dream or vision; (2) He reports the words of the angel without mentioning that they were perceived in a dream or vision, assuming that it is well known that prophecy can only originate in one of the two ways, "In a vision I will make myself known unto him, in a dream I will speak unto him" (Num. xii. 6). (3) The prophet does not mention the angel at all; he says that God spoke to him, but he states that he received the message in a dream or a vision. (4) He introduces his prophecy by stating that God spoke to him, or told him to do a certain thing, or speak certain words, but he does not explain that he received the message in a dream or vision, because he assumes that it is well known, and has been established as a principle that no prophecy or revelation originates otherwise than in a dream or vision, and through an angel. Instances of the first form are the following:--"And the angel of the Lord said unto me in a dream, Jacob" (Gen. xxxi. 11); "And an angel said unto Israel in a vision of night" (*ibid.* xlvi. 2); "And an angel came to Balaam by night"; "And an angel said unto Balaam" (Num. xxii. 20-72). Instances of the second form are these: "And *Elohim* (an angel), said unto Jacob, Rise, go up to Bethel" (Gen. xxxv. 1); "And *Elohim* said unto him, Thy name is Jacob," etc. (*ibid.* xxxv. 10); "And an angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time" (*ibid.* xxii. 15); "And *Elohim* said unto Noah" (*ibid.* vi. 13). The following is an instance of the third form: "The word of the Lord came unto Abraham in a vision" (*ibid.* xv. 1). Instances of the fourth form are: "And the Lord said unto Abraham" (*ibid.* xviii. 13); "And the Lord said unto Jacob, Return," etc. (*ibid.* xxxi. 3); "And the Lord said unto Joshua" (Josh. v. 9); "And

the Lord said unto Gideon" (Judges vii. 2). Most of the prophets speak in a similar manner: "And the Lord said unto me" (Deut. ii. 2); "And the word of the Lord came unto me"

WE have already shown that the appearance or speech of an angel mentioned in Scripture took place in a vision or dream; it makes no difference whether this is expressly stated or not, as we have explained above. This is a point of considerable importance. In some cases the account begins by stating that the prophet saw an angel; in others, the account apparently introduces a human being, who ultimately is shown to be an angel; but it makes no difference, for if the fact that an angel has been heard is only mentioned at the end, you may rest satisfied that the whole account from the beginning describes a prophetic vision. In such visions, a prophet either sees God who speaks to him, as will be explained by us, or he sees an angel who speaks to him, or he hears some one speaking to him without seeing the speaker, or he sees a man who speaks to him, and learns afterwards that the speaker was an angel. In this latter kind of prophecies, the prophet relates that he saw a man who was doing or saying something, and that he learnt afterwards that it was an angel. This important principle was adopted by one of our Sages, one of the most distinguished among them, R. Hiya the Great (*Bereshit Rabba*, xlvi.ii.), in the exposition of the Scriptural passage commencing, "And the Lord appeared unto him in the plain of Mamre" (Gen. xviii.). The general statement that the Lord appeared to Abraham is followed by the description in what manner that appearance of the Lord took place; namely, Abraham saw first three men; he ran and spoke to them. R. Hiya, the author of the explanation, holds that the words of Abraham, "My Lord, if now I have found grace in thy sight, do not, I pray thee, pass from thy servant," were spoken by him in a prophetic vision to one of the men; for he says that Abraham addressed these words to the chief of these men. Note this well, for it is one of the great mysteries [of the Law].

(2) הקדמה לפ' חלק

The Seventh Fundamental Principle is the prophecy of Moses our Teacher. We are to believe that he was the chief of all other prophets before and after him, all of whom were his inferiors. He was the chosen one of all mankind, superior in attaining the knowledge of God to any other person who ever lived or ever will live. He surpassed the normal human condition and attained the angelic. There remained no veil he did not rend and penetrate behind, nothing physical to hold him back, no deficiency, great or small, to confuse him. All his powers of sense and fantasy were repressed, and pure reason alone remained. This is what is meant by saying that he spoke to God without angelic mediation...

(א) וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו ה' בְּאַלְנֵי מְמֹרָא וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פְּתַח-הָאֵהָל כְּחֵם הַיּוֹם: (ב) וַיֵּשָׂא עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה אַנְשִׁים נֹצְבִים עֲלָיו וַיֵּרָא וַיֵּרָץ לְקִרְאתָם מִפְּתַח הָאֵהָל וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ אֲרָצָה: (ג) וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי אֲסֹנָא מִצְּאֹתַי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֶל-נָא תַעֲבֹד מֵעַל עַבְדְּךָ: (ד) יִקַּח-נָא מֵעֵט-מִים וְרַחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם וְהִשְׁעֵנוּ תַּחַת הָעֵץ: (ה) וְאִקְחָה פֶתַח לֶחֶם וְסַעְדוּ לְבַכְּסֵי אַחַר תַּעֲבֹדוּ כִּי-עַל-כֵּן עֲבַרְתֶּם עַל-עַבְדְּכֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ כֵּן תַעֲשֶׂה כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ: (ו) וַיִּמְהַר אַבְרָהָם הָאֵהָלָה אֶל-שָׂרָה וַיֹּאמֶר מַה־רֵי שְׁלֹשׁ סָאִים קָמַח סֹלֶת לוֹשִׁי וְעֵשִׂי עֲגוֹת: (ז) וְאֶל-הַבְּקָר רֵץ אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקַּח בֶּן-בְּקָר כֶּךָ וְטוֹב וַיִּתֵּן אֶל-הַנְּעָר וַיִּמְהַר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֹתוֹ: (ח) וַיִּקַּח חֲמֹאָה וְחֹלֵב וּבֶן-הַבְּקָר אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּתֵּן לִפְנֵיהֶם וְהוּא-עֹמֵד עֲלֵיהֶם תַּחַת הָעֵץ וַיֹּאכְלוּ: (ט) וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו אֵיךְ שָׂרָה אֲשֶׁרְךָ וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה בְּאֵהָל: (י) וַיֹּאמֶר שׁוֹב אָשׁוּב אֵלֶיךָ כְּעַתְּ חַיָּה וְהִנֵּה-בֶן לְשָׂרָה אֲשֶׁרְךָ וְשָׂרָה שְׂמַעַת פְּתַח הָאֵהָל וְהוּא אַחֲרָיו: (יא) וְאַבְרָהָם וְשָׂרָה זָקְנִים בְּאִים בִּימֵם חֲדָל לְהוֹיֹת לְשָׂרָה אֶרֶח פְּנָשִׁים: (יב) וַתַּצְחַק שָׂרָה בְּקִרְבָּהּ לֵאמֹר אַחֲרַי בְּלֹלִי הֵיטֵה-לִּי עֲדָנָה וְאֲדֹנָי זָקֵן: (יג) וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-אַבְרָהָם לְמָה זֶה צָחֲקָה שָׂרָה לֵאמֹר הֲאֵף אֲמַנִּם אֵלַד וְאֲנִי זָקְנָתִי: (יד) הֲיִפְלֵא מִה' דְּבַר לְמוֹעֵד אָשׁוּב אֵלֶיךָ כְּעַתְּ חַיָּה וְלִשְׂרָה בֶן: (טו) וַתִּכְחַשׁ שָׂרָה לֵאמֹר לֹא צָחֲקָתִי כִּי יֵרָאָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ לֹא כִּי צָחֲקָתָ: (טז) וַיִּקְמוּ מִשֵּׁם הָאֲנָשִׁים וַיִּשְׁקְפוּ עַל-פְּנֵי סֹדֶם וְאַבְרָהָם הֵלֵךְ עִמָּם לְשִׁלְחָם: (יז) וְה' אָמַר הַמְּכַסֶּה אֲנִי מֵאַבְרָהָם אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה: (יח) וְאַבְרָהָם הָיָה יְהִיָּה לְגוֹי גָדוֹל וְעַצוֹם וְנִבְרָכוּ-בּוֹ כָּל-גּוֹי הָאָרֶץ: (יט) כִּי יִדְעֹתֶיךָ לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא אֶת-בְּנֵינוּ וְאֶת-בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו וְשָׁמְרוּ דְרָךְ ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט לְמַעַן הִבִּיא ה' עַל-אַבְרָהָם אֶת אֲשֶׁר-דִּבַּר עֲלָיו: (כ) וַיֹּאמֶר ה' זַעֲקַת סֹדֶם וְעַמָּהּ כִּי-רַבָּה וְחַטָּאתָם כִּי כִבְדָה מְאֹד: (כא) אֲרֹדְהָ-נָא וְאַרְאֶה הַכְּצַעֲקָתָהּ הַבָּאָה אֵלַי עֲשׂוּ בְלָה וְאֲסֹלָא אֲדַעָה: (כב) וַיִּפְּנוּ מִשֵּׁם הָאֲנָשִׁים וַיֵּלְכוּ סֹדְמָה וְאַבְרָהָם עֹדְדוֹ עֹמֵד לִפְנֵי ה': (כג) וַיִּגַּשׁ אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הֲאֵף תִּסְפָּה צְדִיק עַסְד־שָׁע: (כד) אוֹלַי יֵשׁ חֲמִשִּׁים צְדִיקִים בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר הֲאֵף תִּסְפָּה וְלֹא-תִשָּׂא לְמַקוֹם לְמַעַן חֲמִשִּׁים הַצְדִיקִים אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבָּה: (כה) חֲלִלָה לָךְ מִעֲשׂוֹתָ בְּדַבַּר הַזֶּה לְהַמִּית צְדִיק עַסְד־שָׁע וְהָיָה כְּצְדִיק בְּרָשָׁע חֲלִלָה לָךְ הַשִּׁפְטָל בְּלִ-הָאָרֶץ לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה מִשְׁפָּט: (כו) וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֲסֹא-מִצָּא בְּסֹדֶם חֲמִשִּׁים צְדִיקִים בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר וְנִשְׂאֹתַי לְכָל-הַמְּקוֹם בְּעִבּוֹרָם: (כז) וַיַּעַן אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה-נָא הוֹאֲלֹתִי לְדַבַּר אֶל-אֲדֹנָי וְאֲנֹכִי עֹפֵר וְאֲפֹר: (כח) אוֹלַי יַחֲסְרוֹן חֲמִשִּׁים הַצְדִיקִים חֲמִשָּׁה הַתְּשׁוּחִית בְּחֲמִשָּׁה אֶת-כָּל-הָעִיר וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֲשַׁחִית אֲסֹא-מִצָּא שֵׁם אַרְבָּעִים וְחַמְשָׁה: (כט) וַיִּסָּף עוֹד לְדַבַּר אֵלָיו וַיֹּאמֶר אוֹלַי יִמְצָאוּן שֵׁם אַרְבָּעִים וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֶעֱשֶׂה בְּעִבּוֹר הָאֲרָבָעִים: (ל) וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-נָא יַחַד לְאֲדֹנָי וְאֲדַבְּרָה אוֹלַי יִמְצָאוּן שֵׁם שְׁלֹשִׁים וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֶעֱשֶׂה אֲסֹא אֲמִצָּא שֵׁם שְׁלֹשִׁים: (לא) וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה-נָא הוֹאֲלֹתִי לְדַבַּר אֶל-אֲדֹנָי אוֹלַי יִמְצָאוּן שֵׁם עֶשְׂרִים וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֲשַׁחִית בְּעִבּוֹר הָעֶשְׂרִים: (לב) וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-נָא יַחַד לְאֲדֹנָי וְאֲדַבְּרָה אֶת-הַפְּעֵם אוֹלַי יִמְצָאוּן שֵׁם עֶשְׂרָה וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֲשַׁחִית בְּעִבּוֹר הָעֶשְׂרָה: (לג) וַיֵּלֶךְ ה' כַּאֲשֶׁר כָּלָה לְדַבַּר אֶל-אַבְרָהָם וְאַבְרָהָם שָׁב לְמַקְוֹ: (לד)

1 And the LORD appeared unto him by the terebinths of Mamre, as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; 2 and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood over against him; and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed down to the earth, 3 and said: 'My lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant. 4 Let now a little water be fetched, and wash your feet, and recline yourselves under the tree. 5 And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and stay ye your heart; after that ye shall pass on; forasmuch as ye are come to your servant.' And they said: 'So do, as thou hast said.' 6 And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said: 'Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes.' 7 And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it unto the servant; and he hastened to dress it. 8 And he took curd, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat. 9 And they said unto him: 'Where is Sarah thy wife?' And he said: 'Behold, in the tent.' 10 And He said: 'I will certainly return unto thee when the season cometh round; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son.' And Sarah heard in the tent door, which was behind him.-- 11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, and well stricken in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.-- 12 And Sarah laughed within herself, saying: 'After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?' 13 And the LORD said unto Abraham: 'Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying: Shall I of a surety bear a child, who am old? 14 Is any thing too hard for the LORD. At the set time I will return unto thee, when the season cometh round, and Sarah shall have a son.' 15 Then Sarah denied, saying: 'I laughed not'; for she was afraid. And He said: 'Nay; but thou didst laugh.' 16 And the men rose up from thence, and looked out toward Sodom; and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way. 17 And the LORD said: 'Shall I hide from Abraham that which I am doing; 18 seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? 19 For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice; to the end that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him.' 20 And the LORD said: 'Verily, the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and, verily, their sin is exceeding grievous. 21 I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto Me; and if not, I will know.' 22 And the men turned from thence, and went toward Sodom; but Abraham stood yet before the LORD. 23 And Abraham drew near, and said: 'Wilt Thou indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? 24 Peradventure there are fifty righteous within the city; wilt Thou indeed sweep away and not forgive the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? 25 That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked, that so the righteous should be as the wicked; that be far from Thee; shall not the Judge of all the earth do justly?' 26 And the LORD said: 'If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will forgive all the place for their sake.' 27 And Abraham answered and said: 'Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the LORD, who am but dust and ashes. 28 Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous; wilt Thou destroy all the city for lack of five?' And He said: 'I will not destroy it, if I find there forty and five.' 29 And he spoke unto Him yet again, and said: 'Peradventure there shall be forty found there.' And He said: 'I will not do it for the forty's sake.' 30 And he said: 'Oh, let not the LORD be angry, and I will speak. Peradventure there shall thirty be found there.' And He said: 'I will not do it, if I find thirty there.' 31 And he said: 'Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the LORD. Peradventure there shall be twenty found there.' And He said: 'I will not destroy it for the twenty's sake.' 32 And he said: 'Oh, let not the LORD be angry, and I will speak yet but this once. Peradventure ten shall be found there.' And He said: 'I will not destroy it for the ten's sake.' 33 And the LORD went His way, as soon as He had left off speaking to Abraham; and Abraham returned unto his place.

אברהם רלב"ג

- (4) שמות ג, כד
(ב) וַיֵּרָא מְלֹאכְךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵי בְלַבְת־אִשׁ מִתּוֹךְ הַסֶּנֶה וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה הַסֶּנֶה בֹּעֵר בְּאֵשׁ וְהַסֶּנֶה אֵינְנוּ אֹכְלִים: (ג) וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶסְדֶּה נָא וְאֶרְאֶה אֶת־הַמְרֹאָה הַגְּדֹלָה הַזֶּה מִדּוֹעַ לֹא־יִבְעַר הַסֶּנֶה: (ד) וַיֵּרָא ה' כִּי סָר לְרֵאזוֹת וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהֵי אֱלֹהִים מִתּוֹךְ הַסֶּנֶה וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר הַנְּנִי:
רשב"ם שמות ג
- (5) וירא י"י - המלאך קורא על שמו של הק':
- (6) שמות יג, כא
וְה' הִלִּיךְ לִפְנֵיהֶם יוֹמָם בְּעַמּוּד עָנָן לְנַחֲתָם הַדֶּרֶךְ וְלַיְלָה בְּעַמּוּד אֵשׁ לְהַאֲדִיר לָהֶם לֶלְכֶת יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה:
רשב"ם שמות יג, כא
- (7) וי"י הולך - מלאך שהיה מוליך לפני ישראל עמוד האש ועמוד הענן:
- (8) שופטים ו, יא-טו
(יא) וַיֵּבֵא מְלֹאכְךָ ה' וַיִּשְׁבַּע תַּחַת הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר בְּעַפְרָה אֲשֶׁר לְיוֹאֵשׁ אָבִי הַעֲזָרִי וְגִדְעוֹן בְּנֵי חַבְטֵי חֲטִיִּים בְּגַת לְהִנָּסִים מִפְּנֵי מִדְּיָן: (יב) וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהֵי מְלֹאכְךָ ה' וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהֵי ה' עִמָּךְ גְּבוּר הַחֵיִל: (יג) וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהֵי גִדְעוֹן בֵּי אֲדָנִי וַיֵּשׁ ה' עִמָּנוּ וְלִמָּה מִצָּאֵתָנוּ כָּל־זֹאוֹת וְאִיֶּה כָּל־נַפְלְאוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר סִפְרוּ־לָנוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ לֵאמֹר הֲלֹא מִמִּצְרַיִם הֶעֱלֵנוּ ה' וְעַתָּה נִטְשָׁנוּ ה' וַיִּתְּנֵנוּ בְּכַף־מִדְּיָן: (יד) וַיִּפֶן אֱלֹהֵי ה' וַיֹּאמֶר לֶךְ בְּכַחֲךָ זֶה וְהוֹשַׁעְתָּ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכַּף מִדְּיָן הֲלֹא שְׁלַחְתִּיךָ: (טו) וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהֵי בֵּי אֲדָנִי בְּמָה אוֹשִׁיעַ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל הִנֵּה אֶלְפִי הִדָּל בְּמִנְשָׁה וְאֲנֹכִי הַצֵּעִיר בְּבֵית אָבִי:
- (9) פירוש רשב"ם בראשית יח
(א) וירא אליו י"י - היאך? שבאו אליו שלשה אנשים שהיו מלאכים. שבהרבה מקומות כשנראה המלאך קורוהו בלשון שכינה כדכת' כי שמי בקרבו, שלוחו כמותו. וכן וירא אליו מלאך י"י בלבת אש מתוך הסנה, וכתו' שם וירא י"י כי סר לראות:
(ט) איה שרה אשתך - אעפ"י שהיו יודעים, היו שואלים. כדרך שמצינו בשכינה שאמ' לאדם איכה. וכן בבלעם מי האנשים האלה עמך. וכן ישעיה שהיה יודע שאל כן לחזקיה בשלוחי אויל מרודך. וכל זה דרך התחלת הדיבור:
(יג) ויאמר י"י - המלאך. גדול שבהם:
ואני יקנתי - שאמרה אחרי בלותי וגו':
(יד) היפלא מו"י - ששלחנו אליך דבר? וכן וי"י המטיר על סדום גפרית ואש מאת י"י מן השמים, הראשון שבפסוק הוא גבריאל והשני שבפסוק הוא הק'. וכן הוא מפורש בספר הגדה:
(טז) ויקמו משם האנשים - שנים מהם הלכו לסדום כדכת' ויבאו שני המלאכים סדומה, וגדול שבהם היה מדבר עם אברהם. וזהו שכת' בו וי"י אמר המכסה אני וגו', [וכן] ואברהם עודנו עומד לפני י"י. שני פסוקים אלו מדברים [ב]שלישי:
(כ) ויאמר י"י - המלאך לאברהם, שלוחים הללו אני שולח בשביל זעקת סדום, כמו שאמר למעלה ואנשי סדום רעים וחטאים:
(כה) השופט כל הארץ - ששלחך כאן לא יעשה משפט:
(כו) ויאמר ד' - המלאך, [וכן] עומד לפני י"י, לפני המלאך לבקש פניו: