

TEACHINGS BY RABBI YECHIEL ECKSTEIN
INTRODUCTION BY Yael Eckstein

ANGELS

TEN BIBLICAL LESSONS
ON GOD'S MYSTERIOUS
MESSENGERS



International Fellowship
of Christians and Jews®

Angels — Ten Biblical Lessons on God's Mysterious Messengers

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*Praise the LORD, you his angels,
you mighty ones who do his bidding,
who obey his word. —PSALM 103:20*

INTRODUCTION — ANGELS IN OUR MIDST



*For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways . . . —PSALM 91:11*

EVERY NIGHT WHEN I PUT MY CHILDREN TO BED, I SING THEM traditional Hebrew songs about angels. Like Jewish mothers around the world, we sing and pray that the four archangels — Michael, angel of mercy; Gabriel, angel of strength; Uriel, angel of light; and Raphael, angel of healing — surround our sweet little ones as they sleep.

I'll sing a song with words from the patriarch Jacob when he blessed Joseph's sons: "*the Angel who has delivered me from all harm— may he bless these boys . . .*" (Genesis 48:16). We send our children off to sleep with thoughts of angels, guarding and protecting them.

Angels are mentioned throughout the Bible—from the angel who guards the Garden of Eden with a fiery sword, to the three angels who visited Abraham with good news about the pending birth of Isaac. It was an angel who stopped Abraham from sacrificing Isaac, and another angel who rescued Hagar and Ishmael in the desert. The list goes on.

Moreover, in Judaism, we mention angels every single day in our prayers. On the Sabbath, our tradition is that angels accompany us home from the synagogue, and our Sabbath meal begins by welcoming God's angels.

So why does God want us to know about these invisible celestial

beings? According to the Jewish sages, a group of highly respected scholars who helped interpret the *Torah* and its teachings, the answer is simple: God wants us to know about angels because He wants us to know how much He loves us.

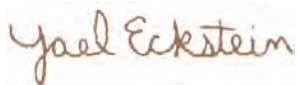
Consider this: Despite the fact that angels are described as other-worldly beings, who are purely good yet endowed with supernatural powers to destroy if commanded by God, God chose us, mortal humans, as the object of His desire. He told these awe-inspiring creatures that all Creation is for the sake of humanity. Consider, too, that while angels are pure spiritual creatures, they have no free will. Yet because God loves us so much, He gave us free will so that we could choose to be close to Him!

The most common Hebrew word for angels is the word *malach*, which also can mean “messenger.” Angels function as God’s army of helpers, charged with guiding, protecting, challenging, and helping human beings.

In this study, my father, Rabbi Eckstein, provides 10 lessons of different encounters people of the Bible had with angels. We will discover that just beneath the surface, a whole other world abounds filled with God’s mysterious messengers sent to guide us through our lives.

God wants us to know that we are not alone. And while God is our ultimate Savior, He sends legions of His angels to assist us every single day.

With blessings for *shalom*,



Yael Eckstein

Senior Vice President

The Fellowship

ANGELS IN DISGUISE



Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground. — GENESIS 18:2

IF YOU HAVE EVER HAD THE SUSPICION THAT A PERSON YOU ENCOUNTERED was an angel in disguise, you are not alone. We need not look any further than Genesis 18 to see that, indeed, angels can disguise themselves as people and pay us a visit when we need it the most.

In the beginning of Chapter 18, we find Abraham sitting at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. What makes this noteworthy is that Abraham had just undergone circumcision three days earlier at the age of 99! The Jewish sages comment that the third day after any operation or injury is always the most difficult.

In fact, when the Bible tells us that Abraham sat in the heat of the day, it is also teaching us that God had made the day unusually hot because He didn't want any visitors bothering Abraham while he recovered. However, Abraham, who was known for his hospitality and kindness, found the lack of visitors even more painful than circumcision.

So Abraham sat at the entrance of his tent looking and hoping for visitors. When God saw how much Abraham desired to be hospitable, He sent him three angels. The sages teach that angels are able to “dress up” or disguise themselves as people. In this case, Abraham had no idea that his visitors were actually angels. The Bible refers

to them as men, and Abraham treats them as such. Full of joy, he washed their feet and prepared them a feast. Obviously, angels have no need for any of the things that Abraham did for them, but Abraham desired to give, and so they graciously received his generosity.

However, giving Abraham an opportunity to perform loving-kindness was not the only purpose of the angels. According to Jewish tradition, each angel can have only one mission. These three angels had three unique purposes: One was sent to heal Abraham; one was sent to tell Abraham and Sarah the good news that they would have a child in their old age; and the final angel was sent to destroy Sodom after visiting Abraham. Although the angels looked like men, they were God's divine messengers, making Abraham's life a little more joyful and carrying out God's plan.

God does send us His angels. Sometimes we can see them, and sometimes we cannot. Sometimes we may know we are dealing with a supernatural being, but more often than not, we are not aware. The Bible only refers to the men who visited Abraham as angels in Chapter 19, once they had left Abraham and had arrived in Sodom. Perhaps Abraham never even knew there had been angels in his home. And perhaps we, too, have been visited by angels though we never knew it either.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

Can you think of a time, or perhaps multiple times, in your life when a stranger showed up at just the right time to help you out? Consider that perhaps you were visited by an angel in disguise. How might that affect your feelings about life, living, and going through tough times?

ANGELS ARE EVERYWHERE



He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. —GENESIS 28:12

ONE OF THE MORE FAMOUS SCENES IN THE BIBLE IS WHEN JACOB had his dream about a ladder spanning heaven and earth with angels ascending and descending it. Jacob's glimpse into the spiritual world that surrounds us all surprised even him: "*When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, 'Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it'*" (Genesis 28:16).

The Jewish sages explain that Jacob, in that moment, understood that God sends His angels to all places, though we are not aware of them. Angels obviously don't need a ladder, but the ladder symbolizes and teaches us that a tangible bridge connects man and God, the physical world to the heavenly cosmos. The angels are the couriers on this bridge.

Scripture describes Jacob's dream as follows: "*... he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.*" The sages note the very important fact that the verse specifies that the angels first ascend and then descend. Shouldn't it be the other way around? Don't angels descend to earth and only then return by ascending to heaven?

The surprising answer is that angels often start their journey on earth. What Jacob saw in his dream was that our actions, prayers, and

intentions can have a direct effect on the spiritual realm. What we do here is carried up, so to speak, to heaven by angels. God then sends down blessings, providence, and protection, through the angels coming down the ladder. This system can work in a negative way as well with bad actions moving God to send just consequences, via His messengers. However, the general principle remains the same: Angels serve as God's constant messengers between heaven and earth.

Additionally, Jacob's dream teaches us that every moment of our life is significant. Whether we know it or not we are interacting with angels all the time. Everything we do, say, or think has a consequence. There is nowhere that we are not joined by angels who represent God and report directly to Him.

Knowing this can add meaning to our lives and significance to our actions. If we could peel away the layers that shield us from the spiritual world we would be extremely mindful about how we go about our days.

Most people go through life feeling like heaven is a far-away place, meant for the distant future. Jacob's awe was in the revelation that we are closer to heaven than we might think. Those angels were busy going up and down 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There is constant interaction, a constant flow of reactions to our actions. Whatever happens on earth most certainly impacts what happens in heaven.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

What would you like the angels to report to God every day about your thoughts and actions? If you could write a specific script for the angels to read, what would you like it to say? What one thing could you do today to live according to that script?

WRESTLING WITH ANGELS



So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. — GENESIS 32:24

IN GENESIS 32, WHILE PREPARING TO MEET HIS BROTHER ESAU FOR the first time since stealing his older brother's birthright and fleeing home, Jacob found himself alone. His family had crossed the river ahead of him, while he gathered their remaining possessions. Jacob had prepared for meeting his sworn enemy, but he was not prepared for what happened next.

Scripture reads: *"So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak."* The Jewish sages teach that this nameless man was an angel. Jacob struggled with the angel. The angel tried to overcome him, but Jacob persevered. At the end of the story, the man/angel had to leave because of daybreak. The sages ask: What about morning caused the angel to flee?

As we've learned previously, every angel has a mission to fulfill. According to Jewish teaching, once they complete their mission, they must leave and sing God's praises before the next day arrives. This angel had completed its mission. Its mission wasn't to cause Jacob to fail — it was to help Jacob succeed.

The angel's job was to give Jacob an opportunity to overcome his weaknesses. When Jacob did so, the angel's job was done and so it had to leave. Had Jacob given in, the angel would have had to stay and do its job over and over again until Jacob succeeded. Only then

would the angel's mission be complete.

This story of Jacob wrestling with an angel has important lessons for us. While it is true that angels are often sent to help us, they are also sent to challenge us because it is through adversity that we are able to become greater.

Before Jacob fought with the angel, he was just Jacob. After he overcame the angel, he was given a new name: Israel. It is as though Jacob became a new person and had stepped up a level — one only attainable through trials and tribulations. This adversity and subsequent transformation was sent just when Jacob needed it most — just before the dangerous meeting with his brother. Perhaps this change in Jacob is what led him to triumph. It gave Jacob the confidence to meet his brother with humility and turn what could have been a catastrophic encounter into an emotional reunion.

When we think of angels who might show up in our lives, we often think of the kind lady who helped us through a difficulty or a mysterious man who showed up to help just in the nick of time. But angels can also be the difficult stranger who challenges us to extend the limits of our patience or the beggar on the street who demands we grow in our capacity for giving.

We may never know when we are in the presence of angels sent to help us along our path. Sometimes those we think have come to harm us are truly sent by God to help us.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

Think of a person who has challenged you in the past. How did that experience help you grow? How can you change your approach to difficult people you may encounter in life? In what ways can you see the difficulty as an opportunity?

WHO IS AN ANGEL?



*"They have moved on from here," the man answered.
"I heard them say, 'Let's go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after
his brothers and found them near Dothan. — GENESIS 37:17*

PERHAPS YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED HAVING THE RIGHT PERSON SHOWING up at exactly the right time to help you out in an unexpected way. Or maybe you have met a stranger who said something or did something that changed the trajectory of your life. Many of us have experienced such occurrences, and we are left wondering if just maybe an angel has touched our lives.

In the Bible we see this phenomenon clearly in the story of Joseph. In Genesis 37 Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers who had gone to Shechem with the family flock of sheep. Joseph traveled to Shechem, but when he got there, his brothers were nowhere to be found. Now, what should have happened was for Joseph to return home and tell his father that he couldn't find his brothers.

But that's not what happened, and it's all because of a person whom the Bible only identified as a *"man."*

This mysterious man asked Joseph for what or whom he was looking. When Joseph told the man that he was looking for his brothers who were out grazing their sheep, the man then told Joseph that they had moved on to Dothan. This piece of information offered by "the man" changed history.

We all know what happened next. Joseph went to Dothan where

his brothers ultimately sold him to a band of gypsies who took Joseph to Egypt. Joseph went through some extremely difficult times — including being thrown into prison — but eventually he became the Prime Minister of Egypt. When the brothers faced famine years later, Joseph was able to provide for his family.

And this is how the children of Israel ended up in Egypt, where they became slaves to the Egyptian Pharaoh, were ultimately redeemed, and so on and so forth. All because of “the man”!

The Jewish sages comment that it’s possible that this mystery man was really an angel. But others suggest that the man was a person functioning like an angel of God. On the simplest level, an angel is a messenger of God. The Hebrew word for “angel,” *malach*, means just that. God can also send a person to be His messenger. A person who chooses to do God’s bidding can be an angel of God. Sometimes angels come disguised as people, but other times people can act like one of God’s angels.

Yes, there are angels all around us. Some of them are spiritual beings, but others are flesh-and-blood like you and me. When someone makes a positive difference in your life, they are serving as God’s angel. And when we choose to serve God by being His emissary, we, too, can be one of His angels.

Whether we give charity, speak words of encouragement, or simply point someone in the right direction, we are acting as God’s angels.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

Who are the “angels” in your life right now? In what ways can you be an angel in someone else’s life today? What unique treasures and talents has God given you so that you might serve as His messenger to bring goodness and godliness to your corner of the world?

GOD'S AGENTS ON EARTH



Then he blessed Joseph and said, "May the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked faithfully, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, the Angel who has delivered me from all harm – may he bless these boys. May they be called by my name and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac, and may they increase greatly on the earth." — GENESIS 48:15–16

IN THE NIGHTTIME PRAYERS THAT JEWS SAY BEFORE GOING TO BED and which are sung as lullabies to our children as they drift off to sleep, we say the following verse: *"the Angel who has delivered me from all harm — may he bless these boys . . ."* It's a sweet prayer that many of us have heard since childhood. However, when we study the blessing in context of the surrounding Scriptures, an inconsistency appears.

These words were said by Jacob as he blessed Joseph's children, Ephraim and Manasseh. Jacob started out by saying, *"May the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked faithfully, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day . . ."* Twice, Jacob referred to God while giving this blessing and then suddenly changed to calling upon an angel. Why the switch? Why call upon an angel at all? In fact, Judaism maintains that angels can only do what God directs them to do. Surely the blessings directly from God are greater than the blessing of an angel!

The answer is that Jacob wanted Joseph's sons to know that sometimes it's apparent that God is the one doing the saving and leading,

but other times, His face is hidden and He sends His angels — whom we may or may not recognize as God’s agents — instead.

Abraham and Isaac experienced miracles that were clearly from God. It was evident to them and those around them that they had unique providence from the Master of the Universe. That was why Jacob mentioned *“the God whom my fathers . . . walked”* with. But with Jacob, who had many troubles in life, sometimes God’s intervention was evident and other times it was not, but ultimately God shepherded him the entire time.

Joseph’s sons were the first to be born outside the family, in Egypt, where God’s presence was hidden. They represented the majority of history where we would *not* experience open miracles and obvious providence. So Jacob blessed them so that they would always see God’s hand in all life gave to them.

If they could do that — if they could see God’s messengers even when they were hidden — they would ultimately see God directly. The blessing concludes: *“May they be called by my name and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac.”* They, too, would be grouped with the forefathers who enjoyed a direct connection with God.

God’s angels come in many forms. They can be people, circumstances set up a certain way, or an instinct to do something we wouldn’t normally have considered. The more we acknowledge that God is behind it all through His messengers — His angels — the more we will experience Him in our lives.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

When you look back on your life, in what ways has the hand of God accurately and precisely guided you to where you are today? How do you see your “lucky breaks” as God’s providence? Even more challenging, how can you see your “bad luck” also as God’s intervention for your very best?

WHEN AN ANGEL STANDS IN OUR WAY



But God was very angry when he went, and the angel of the LORD stood in the road to oppose him. Balaam was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. —NUMBERS 22:22

I ONCE HEARD THE FOLLOWING STORY ABOUT AN ASPIRING PSYCHIATRIST who toured a mental hospital so that he could observe the patients. In the first room he entered, there was a broken-looking man sitting on the edge of his bed staring at the wall. Over and over again he cried, “Elizabeth! Elizabeth!”

The student left the room and asked the nurse, “What’s wrong with that guy?” She explained that the man had been madly in love with a woman named Elizabeth and wanted to marry her but she rejected him. The man simply couldn’t handle the rejection.

The student continued to the next room, where again, he saw a man sitting on the edge of his bed, looking even more broken than the first man, also crying out, “Elizabeth! Elizabeth!” The student asked the nurse, “Was that man rejected by Elizabeth, too?” “No,” replied the nurse. “That’s the man she agreed to marry.”

Sometimes, when God stands in our way, it’s for our own good.

When the Israelites were in the desert, the sorcerer Balaam agreed to go with the advisers of King Balak in order to curse them. But God sent an angel to block him. This sword-wielding angel looked so frightening and threatening that Balaam’s donkey, who could see

the angel, refused to continue on his way.

The Jewish sages teach that although this supernatural being looked like the angel of death, it was actually the angel of mercy that God had sent. In His infinite love and mercy, God was trying to stop Balaam from doing something that he shouldn't have been pursuing. God was trying to save Balaam from himself.

Friends, often it seems that something is terribly wrong when things don't go our way. We may have had our hearts set on a job that we were sure should be ours, but for some reason, we didn't get it. Or maybe there is a house we have our hearts set on buying, but no matter how hard we try, we just can't seem to get everything lined up to make it happen. Or, it could be that we met a man or a woman with whom we really wanted to spend the rest of our life, but that person didn't feel the same way.

In all these instances, God sent His angel of mercy to stand in our way!

Whether things work out how we like or not, we can always praise our God. Sometimes His blessing is in giving us what our heart desires, but many times the blessing is His salvation in sending His angel of mercy to protect us from what might have otherwise caused us harm.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

When have you felt like something was standing in your way? Looking back at that situation, how was not getting what you wanted an actual blessing in disguise? What is blocking what you desire in your life today? What message might God be sending you by holding back what you want?

ACCOMPANIED BY ANGELS



"Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?" — JOSHUA 5:14

JUST BEFORE JOSHUA BEGAN HIS CONQUEST OF THE LAND OF ISRAEL, a very strange exchange occurred between an angel and him. As Scripture tells us, Joshua saw a man wielding a sword and asked, *"Are you for us or for our enemies?"* (Joshua 5:13). Like any good general, Joshua wanted to know whose side the warrior was on in the battle that was about to commence.

The angel revealed his true identity and said: *"... as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come."* Realizing in whose presence he stood, Joshua bowed low to the ground and asked, *"What message does my Lord have for his servant?"* Joshua understood that angels always function as God's messengers, so he asked the angel what message God had sent to him. In response, the angel instructed Joshua, *"Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy"* (v. 15).

Now, how is that an answer to Joshua's question? What is the message God was truly relaying to Joshua at this important time?

To understand the answer, let's first look at the context of this encounter. The Israelites had just concluded 40 years in the desert. Forty years where God's presence was tangible and evident miracles

occurred daily. They ate manna from heaven, drank water from a well that traveled with them, and were surrounded by the protective Clouds of Glory. Jewish tradition teaches that during those 40 years, their clothing never wore out, nor did their shoes. In short, they lived an otherworldly existence that was more spiritual in nature than physical. With the entry into Israel, all that would change.

Just a few verses earlier we learn that the manna had stopped falling from heaven. The people would have to grow, hunt, and prepare food like everyone else. Gone were the daily open miracles, and real life was about to begin. The start of it would be the most physical demanding act of all — war. As the people headed for battle, and away from living a purely spiritual existence, they were concerned. How would they stay connected to God?

Now we can understand the angel's message to Joshua. The angel, in essence, was telling Joshua that this physical existence and living was also holy ground. Here, too, God would send His angels to protect, guide, and deliver. The angel was sent to reassure Joshua that he would be successful and battle with God's angels fighting by his side.

The message for us is that God's angels assist us, too, no matter how physical or mundane the task may be. Whether we are washing dishes, making a living, or raking leaves in the yard, God sends His angels to help us in all we do.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

How might we view our lives differently if we were truly aware that angels were by our side at all times? How might this awareness change the way we approach challenges? How might this awareness alter the understanding of our successes? What can you do to remember that there are angels by your side throughout your day?

THE ANGELS WE DON'T SEE



"Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, "Open his eyes, LORD, so that he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. —2 KINGS 6:16–17

IN 2 KINGS 6, THE KING OF ARAM WAGED WAR AGAINST ISRAEL. THE problem for him, however, was that somehow the king of Israel always seemed to know where his army was located. At first the king of Aram suspected treason, but eventually, he discovered that the prophet Elisha was able to see his whereabouts supernaturally. Elisha then passed along that information to the king of Israel.

So the king of Aram decided to capture Elisha and put an end to this information funnel. When he found out where Elisha was staying, the king of Aram sent a might army, including hundreds of horses and chariots, to surround the city and capture Elisha.

Early that morning, Elisha and his servant noticed the siege surrounding the city. The servant began to panic, but Elisha told him, *"Don't be afraid. . . . Those who are with us are more than those who are with them."*

Of course, the servant didn't see anyone or anything coming to their aid. Who was Elisha talking about? So Elisha prayed to God: *"Open his eyes, LORD, so that he may see."* Elisha prayed that his servant would see what was not evident naturally, but supernaturally. Elisha

prayed that his servant would see the reality that was not typically revealed to most people.

God's answer to Elisha's prayer is recorded in the Scriptures: "*Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.*" What the servant perceived were God's angels surrounding Elisha, ready to protect and defend him.

The Jewish sages note that Elisha did not pray to God that He send the angels to protect him. Elisha already knew that they were there because angels always surround the righteous. He asked only that his servant may see them so that he would not be afraid or endanger the people of the city by giving up Elisha's position.

Once the servant's eyes were open to the supernatural reality that exists all around us, Elisha prayed that God close the eyes of the enemies to physical reality. King Aram's armies were struck with blindness, and Elisha was able to escape with his servant.

Just as the Arameans were blind to physical reality, we are often blind to spiritual reality. We cannot see the angels that surround us, but that does not mean that they are not there. Yes, seeing is believing, but equally as true, *believing* is seeing. And while we might not see God's angels in our physical world, we can feel the peace that comes with knowing they are here — spiritually and supernaturally — to protect God's righteous ones.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

Which statement best describes how you view the world: seeing is believing? Or believing is seeing? In what ways does our world today make it more difficult to see spiritual reality? How can we, as people of faith, overcome that blindness?

WHAT THE ANGELS TEACH US



Then he taught me, and he said to me, "Take hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands, and you will live." — PROVERBS 4:4

IN JUDAISM, THE *TALMUD* TEACHES THAT AS A BABY IS GROWING and developing in the mother's womb, a personal angel is sent to teach that child all there is to know about God, His Word, and the truth about life. This idea is derived from the verse in Proverbs which states: "*Then he taught me, and he said to me, 'Take hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands, and you will live.'*"

First we are taught all there is to know about life, and then we are sent to live. However, just before a baby is born the angel touches it and it forgets everything. Still, there is one thing that remains with us from this spiritual encounter — the impression that the angel made on us, literally.

The Jewish sages teach that the place that the angel touches us is right between our nose and our mouth. Anatomically, this place is called the philtrum — the vertical indentation in the middle portion of the upper lip. And if you look closely at the philtrum, it does look like the imprint of a fingertip!

Interesting story, you might think, but what's the point? Why would God have an angel teach us everything only to make us forget it? The answer is that while the knowledge may be forgotten, it is not gone. It remains inside us — we need only to uncover it.

Think of it this way. When you forget where you put your car

keys, you can eventually remember where you placed them because that knowledge is there. But it's impossible to remember where someone else put them because that information is not in you. Or perhaps you've had the experience of forgetting how to get to a place you've been before, but you know that when you see the right roads, you'll remember.

Not all that is forgotten is gone. In fact our forgotten wisdom can guide us throughout our lives. Either we can connect with the knowledge deep within us, or we can be guided by knowing the truth when we see it because we have seen it before.

Either way, the good news is that God doesn't send us into the world clueless. All we need to know is with us; we need only to uncover the truth and bring it into our lives by our own effort.

The next time you feel confused or out of answers, touch the place where the angel touched you. In doing so, you also will be placing your finger over your lips. This is the message that your personal angel left for you: Get still, be quiet, and remember.

The answers are all inside each of us. We just need to be willing to search and work for the wisdom we need and be confident that we will find it.

The answers are right under our nose.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

If God's truth resides within each one of us, how can you access that wisdom? When has your intuition guided you in the right direction when your logic and reason failed? What can you learn from that experience?

SEND ME AN ANGEL



"Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God." — DANIEL 3:28

IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL WE ARE WITNESS TO ONE OF THE MOST spectacular displays of faith and, consequently, one of the most glorious demonstrations of God's salvation. Three Jewish youth, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who had been taken captive and exiled to Babylon, decided to disobey King Nebuchadnezzar.

The king had built a massive golden idol and declared that everyone under his rule must bow down and worship it. The penalty for failing to do so would be death by fire. The three young men refused as it would be committing idolatry — one of the three sins for which a Jew must choose death over disobeying that command.

When the matter was brought to the king, he was so furious that he ordered the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than it already was, and that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be bound and thrown into it. The furnace was so hot that the soldiers who brought the convicted three to its door died immediately from the scorching heat. By all natural measures, the three youths should have perished in seconds.

Yet, this is what happened: *"Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, 'Weren't there three men*

that we tied up and threw into the fire? . . . Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods” (Daniel 3:24–25). What Nebuchadnezzar saw was God’s angel in the furnace with the men. The angel had untied and protected them. When the men emerged, not only were they completely unharmed, but they also didn’t even smell like they had been anywhere near a fire!

In shock and awe, Nebuchadnezzar proclaimed: *“Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king’s command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.”*

Nebuchadnezzar recognized that the three youths’ faith was what caused God to send His angel to rescue them.

We’ve all heard of guardian angels. We’ve heard of modern-day accounts where people have felt saved by a stranger whom they suspected was an angel in disguise. However, as much as we value or believe in the assistance of angels in our lives, we can learn an important lesson from the words of Nebuchadnezzar.

The angel didn’t come of its own accord. It was the faith and trust that the men placed in God that caused God to send the angel. Our job isn’t to place our hope in angels. Our job is to place our hope steadfastly and completely in God and God alone. If we do that, He may just send the angel we need.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

What challenges are you facing today? How do you typically handle those situations? Where would you say you place most of your trust and energy in overcoming those challenges? How can you place your faith more fully in God in facing those challenges?

BUILDING BRIDGES, SAVING LIVES

The *International Fellowship of Christians and Jews* was founded in 1983 by Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein to promote understanding between Christians and Jews, and build broad support for Israel through these following programs:

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Isaiah 58.



- ***On Wings of Eagles*** — Helping bring needy Jews to the Holy Land
- ***Isaiah 58*** — Providing lifesaving aid and assistance to impoverished Jews in the former Soviet Union
- ***Guardians of Israel*** — Assisting the needy in Israel with food and lifesaving needs, and providing security against terror attacks

UNDERSTANDING THE JEWISH ROOTS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

למוד **Limmud**



- ***Limmud***, an online series of monthly studies on biblical topics from a Jewish perspective
- ***Holy Land Moments*** daily radio program, devotionals, and Hebrew Word of the Day
- Online teaching videos and other resources on Jewish faith, holidays, history, and culture

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ANGELS

TEN BIBLICAL LESSONS ON GOD'S MYSTERIOUS MESSENGERS

*For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways . . . —PSALM 91:11*

DO YOU BELIEVE IN ANGELS? YOU SHOULD! THE BIBLE IS FILLED WITH STORY AFTER story of encounters with these supernatural creatures who carry out God's bidding. Clearly, God wants us to know about these mysterious messengers who He has sent to protect, encourage, guide, and assist us. Discover more about the role angels play in our daily lives through the encounters that people of the Bible have had with these otherworldly beings. The more we know about angels, the more confident we can be in facing the challenges of our lives, knowing we are never alone.



RABBI YECHIEL ECKSTEIN

In 1983, Rabbi Eckstein founded the *International Fellowship of Christians and Jews* (*The Fellowship*), devoting his life to building bridges of understanding between Christians and Jews and cultivating broad support for the state of Israel. Under his leadership, *The Fellowship* now raises over \$125 million annually, making it the largest Christian-supported humanitarian nonprofit working in Israel today.

Rabbi Eckstein is the author of 10 highly acclaimed books, including *How Firm a Foundation: A Gift of Jewish Wisdom for Christians and Jews*, and *The One Year® Holy Land Moments Devotional*. His daily radio program, *Holy Land Moments* (*Momentos en Tierra Santa*), is now heard in English and Spanish on more than 1,500 stations on five continents, reaching more than 9.1 million listeners weekly.



Yael ECKSTEIN

As senior vice president of the *International Fellowship of Christians and Jews* (*The Fellowship*) in the office of the president, Yael Eckstein oversees all ministry programs and serves as the international spokesperson for the \$125 million organization. Prior to her present duties, Yael held the position of director of program development and ministry outreach. Based in Jerusalem, Yael is recognized as a published writer, a respected social services professional, and an expert on Jewish-Christian relations. Her most recent book, *Spiritual Cooking with Yael*, is a celebration of her love for cooking healthy, simple, delicious food for her family and dozens of weekly *Shabbat* guests.