

Angels appear in the torah repeatedly in the book of Genesis

In this week's sedra we have two incidents in which our Rabbis tell us Yaakov interacts with an angel

- 1) The messengers Yaakov sends in the first verse of the Parsha to find out the intentions of Esav
- 2) The man who wrestles with Yaakov the night before the brothers meet

This morning I hope to spend a few minutes discussing angels, types of angels, and how they work.

What are angels? Our view is informed by Tanach, Talmud, Midrash, Jewish Liturgy:

Have wings - See Ezekiel and Isaiah

Know things before they happen -- Angels who come to Avraham and Sarar in Vayera

Powerful: Gabriel destroys Sodom in Vayera and the Adversary messes up Job's life

God sends them to complete a task. When finished, they return to Heaven. Example, 3 angels come to visit Avraham, but only 2 continue to Sodom

If you say their name, they might come to visit you.

Maimonides explains that all angels fall under one of ten ranks. These ranks refer to the degree of the angel's comprehension of G - d

1	Chayot Hakodesh
2	Ophanim
3	Erelim
4	Chashmalim
5	Seraphim
6	Malachim
7	Elokim
8	Bene Elokim
9	Cheruvim
10	Ishim

Four ideas for who the Ish was whom Yaakov wrestled in this week's parsha

- 1) Rashi says he was the guardian angel of Esav

Makes sense that he kicked Yaakov in the groin

He had to follow God's commandment to fight Yaakov, but had leeway in how to do it

There have been 108B people since the beginning of time. Do we really think each person has his own angel?

- 2) Louis Ginzberg brings a Midrash that it was Michael

Makes sense that God sent Michael to help Yaakov since he is designated to help the Jews

He had to leave at daybreak to lead morning praises of Hashem

Why did he kick Yaakov in the groin?

- 3) Maybe Yaakov was struggling with himself

It was an Ish

Torah says Yaakov was alone

But How or why did Yaakov kick himself?

4) Maybe it was another person

But how would he have known that Yaakov's name will change to Yisrael?

First, let me tell you a story, then I'll explain how this concept might work

This happened about 8 years ago. My wife Alla was outside next to the house, tripped on a step and bumped her head into the house.

She went to Urgent care, where they told her it was a concussion.

A few days later it wasn't getting better, she went to see her naturpathic doctor.

He said what happened to you was not an accident. You're doing too much, your body is trying to tell you to slow down. You can't keep going at the current pace

On her way to work from his office, she stopped at a coffee shop. As she was exiting, a man came out the door with her.

He said, I hope you don't mind, I have a message for you. Every once in awhile God sends me a message for people.

I am not sure what it's supposed to mean, but hopefully you understand it.

He then repeated verbatim some of the words the naturpathic doctor had said.

You're doing too much, your body is trying to tell you to slow down. You can't keep going at the current pace

Alla was shocked, didn't pay attention to where the man went.

She returned to her car and drove to work. Hearing the message a second time led her to take it more seriously.

My hypothesis: powerful angels with wings may exist, but the angels in Vayishlach are people

God will ask you to do what you're capable of. You might start out delivering messages and work your way up to wrestling and beyond

Our takeaways:

- 1) The person who comes to help you might be God's agent. Be ready to accept that assistance
- 2) Be aware. God might put you in a position to help someone without you realizing it. Be ready to help, to be a messenger