

Torat Imecha

NACH YOMI B'IYUN



Sefer Shoftim

Retroactive Recognition: Gideon's Encounter with an Angel

שופטים ו'יא-יב, יז-יח, כא-כב

וַיָּבֹא מַלְאָךְ ה' וַיֵּשֶׁב תַּחַת הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר בְּעַפְרָה אֲשֶׁר לְיוֹאָשׁ אֲבִי הַעֲזָרִי וּגְדֵעוֹן בֶּנוֹ חֲבֵט חֲטִיט בָּגֶת לְהִנִּיס מִפְּנֵי מִדְיָן: וַיָּרָא אֵלָיו מַלְאָךְ ה' וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו ה' עִמָּךְ גִּבּוֹר הַחֵיִל... וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אִם-נָא מִצְאֵתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ וְעָשִׂיתָ לִּי אוֹת שְׂאֵתָהּ מִדְּבַר עָמִי: אֵל-נָא תִמַּשׁ מִזֶּה עַד-בָּאִי אֵלֶיךָ וְהִצַּאתִי אֶת-מִנְחָתִי וְהִנַּחְתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנֹכִי אֲשֶׁב עַד שׁוֹבְךָ... וַיִּשְׁלַח מַלְאָךְ ה' אֶת-קֶצֶה הַמִּשְׁעָנָה אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדוֹ וַיַּגֵּעַ בַּבָּשָׂר וּבִמְצוֹת וַתַּעַל הָאֵשׁ מִן-הַצּוֹר וְתֹאכַל אֶת-הַבָּשָׂר וְאֶת-הַמְצוֹת וּמַלְאָךְ ה' הָלַךְ מֵעֵינָיו: וַיָּרָא גְדֵעוֹן כִּי-מַלְאָךְ ה' הוּא וַיֹּאמֶר גְּדֵעוֹן אֵהָא אֲדֹנָי ה' כִּי-עַל-כֵּן רָאִיתִי מַלְאָךְ ה' פְּנִים אֶל-פְּנִים:

An angel of God came and sat under the terebinth at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite. His son Gideon was then beating out wheat inside a winepress in order to keep it safe from the Midianites. The angel of God appeared to him and said to him, "God is with you, valiant warrior...And he said to him, "If I have gained Your favor, give me a sign that it is You who are speaking to me. Do not leave this place until I come back to you and bring out my offering and place it before you." And he answered, "I will stay until you return."

The angel of God held out the staff that he carried, and touched the meat and the unleavened bread with its tip. A fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. And the angel of God vanished from his sight. Then Gideon realized that indeed it was an angel of God; and Gideon said, Alas, O Sovereign God! For I have seen an angel of God face to face

Throughout Tanach, we see many other examples of humans encountering angels, and only realizing the angel's true identity retroactively. Among these are Avraham Avinu, Yaakov Avinu, and Yehoshua.

בראשית יח:א-ח- אברהם אבינו

וַיָּרָא אֵלָיו ה' בְּאֵלְנֵי מַמְרֵה וְהוּא יֹשֵׁב פֶּתַח-הָאֵהָל כְּהֵם הַיּוֹם: וַיֵּשֶׁא עֵינָיו וַיָּרָא וְהִנֵּה שְׁלֹשָׁה אַנְשִׁים נֹצְרִים עָלָיו: וַיָּרָא וַיָּרֶץ לִקְרָאתָם מִפֶּתַח הָאֵהָל וַיִּשְׁתָּחוּ אַרְצָה: וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי אִם-נָא מִצְאֵתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֵל-נָא תַעֲבֹר מֵעַל עַבְדְּךָ: יִקַּח-נָא מֵעֵט-מִים וְרִחָצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם וְהִשְׁעֵנוּ תַּחַת הָעֵץ: וְאִקְחָה פֶתֶלֶם וְסַעֲדוּ לְבַכְּכֶם אֲחֵר תַּעֲבֹרוּ: כִּי-עַל-כֵּן עָבַרְתֶּם עַל-עַבְדְּכֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ כֵן תַּעֲשֶׂה כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ... וַיִּקַּח חֲמָאָה וְחֵלֶב וּבֶן-הַבֶּקֶר אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּתֵּן לִפְנֵיהֶם וְהוּא עֹמֵד עֲלֵיהֶם תַּחַת הָעֵץ וַיֹּאמְרוּ:

Hashem appeared to him by the plains of Mamre; he was sitting at the entrance of the tent as the day

grew hot. Looking up, he saw three figures standing near him. Perceiving this, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them and, bowing to the ground, he said, “My lords! If it please you, do not go on past your servant. Let a little water be brought; bathe your feet and recline under the tree. And let me fetch a morsel of bread that you may refresh yourselves; then go on—seeing that you have come your servant’s way.” They replied, “Do as you have said” ...He took curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared and set these before them; and he waited on them under the tree as they ate.

רש"י על בראשית יט:

המלאכים. ולהלן קראם אנשים? כשהיתה שכינה עמם קראם אנשים; דבר אחר אצל אברהם שזכרו גדול והיו המלאכים תדירין אצלו כאנשים קראם אנשים, ואצל לוט קראם מלאכים (בראשית רבה):

Angels — But elsewhere (Genesis 18:2) Scripture calls them men! When the Divine Presence was with them, it speaks of them as men. Another explanation is: in connection with Abraham whose power to receive heavenly visitors was great and whom angels visited as regularly as men, it calls them men, but in connection with Lot it calls them angels- Genesis Rabbah 50:2

בראשית לב: כה-לא- יעקב אבינו

וַיֵּתֶר יַעֲקֹב לְבַדּוֹ וַיֵּאָבֶק אִישׁ עִמּוֹ עַד עֲלֹת הַשָּׁחַר. וַיֵּרָא כִּי לֹא יָכֹל לָלוֹ וַיִּגַע בְּכַף-יָרְכוֹ וַתִּקַּע כַּף-יָרְכוֹ יַעֲקֹב בְּהֶאָבֶקוֹ עִמּוֹ: וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁלַחֲנִי כִּי עָלָה הַשָּׁחַר וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא אֶשְׁלַחְךָ כִּי אִם-בִּרְכָתִנִּי: וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו מִה-שָּׁמַךְ וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב: וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא יַעֲקֹב יֹאמֶר עוֹד שָׁמַךְ כִּי אִם-יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי-שָׁרִית עִם-אֱלֹהִים וְעִם-אֲנָשִׁים וַתּוֹכַל: וַיִּשְׁאַל יַעֲקֹב וַיֹּאמֶר הִגִּידָה-נָּא שָׁמַךְ וַיֹּאמֶר לָמָּה זֶה תִּשְׁאַל לְשִׁמִּי וַיַּבְרֶךְ אֹתוֹ שָׁם: וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם פְּנִיָּאל כִּי-רָאִיתִי אֱלֹהִים פָּנִים אֶל-פָּנִים וַתִּנָּצַל נַפְשִׁי:

Jacob was left alone. And a figure wrestled with him until the break of dawn. When he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he wrenched Jacob’s hip at its socket, so that the socket of his hip was strained as he wrestled with him. Then he said, “Let me go, for dawn is breaking.” But he answered, “I will not let you go, unless you bless me.” Said the other, “What is your name?” He replied, “Jacob.” Said he, “Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with beings divine and human, and have prevailed Jacob asked, “Pray tell me your name.” But he said, “You must not ask my name!” And he took leave of him there. So Jacob named the place Peniel, meaning, I have seen a divine being face to face, yet my life has been preserved

יהושע ה:יג-טו

וַיְהִי בַּהַיּוֹת יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בִּירִיחוֹ וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיֵּרָא וְהָנָה-אִישׁ עֹמֵד לִנְגֹדוֹ וְחָרְבּוֹ שְׁלוֹפָה בְּיָדוֹ וַיֵּלֶךְ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֵלָיו וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ לֹא כִּי אֲנִי שַׂר-צָבָא-יְהוָה עִתָּה בָּאתִי וַיַּפֵּל יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֶל-פָּנָיו אֶרְצָה וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ וְהִלַּנּוּ אֶתָּה אִם-לְצָרִינוּ: וַיֹּאמֶר מָה אֲדִנִּי מִדְּבַר אֶל-עַבְדִּי: וַיֹּאמֶר שַׂר-צָבָא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי-יְהוֹשֻׁעַ שְׁלֵכְךָ מֵעַל רִגְלֶךָ כִּי הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אֲתָה עֹמֵד עָלָיו קֹדֶשׁ הוּא וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ כֵּן:

Once, when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a figure standing before him, drawn sword in hand. Joshua went up to him and asked him, “Are you one of us or of our enemies?” He replied, “No, I am captain of God’s host. Now I have come!” Joshua threw himself face down to the ground and, prostrating himself, said to him, “What does my lord command his servant?” The captain of God’s host answered Joshua, “Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy.” And Joshua did so.

Questions

- What is the common denominator between these encounters?
- What differences do you notice between the different encounters and what might that tell you about the varying levels of kedusha of each individual? See Rashi on Bereshit 19:1
- Focus on the moment of realization in the different stories- what reactions are triggered? How, if at all, does the encounter change the perspective of the person involved?
- What is a moment in your life where you recognized the hand of Hashem involved, but perhaps only retroactively?
- *Bonus question*- how does Gideon's encounter with an angel compare to Eshet Manoach's (the wife of Manoach, Shimshon's mother) encounter with an angel, later in Shoftim (Ch. 13)