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The Vindication of the Jews
3: 24-27

The vindication of the Jews DIG: What is ironic about the Babylonian soldiers dying and the three Hebrew men living? Who was the fourth figure in the furnace? Where is the Angel of ADONAI found in the TaNaKh? What was Nebuchadnezzar's response to the miracle? How did it fulfill the prophecy by Isaiah?

REFLECT: Has there ever been a period in your life when you knew there was someone with you in the furnace? If you were to write about your adventures in faith, what would the title be? What is the most difficult place for you to maintain your identity as a believer? Who can you pray for this week?

**Every time *the* Angel of ADONAI is mentioned in the TaNaKh,
it is always a preincarnate appearance of the Messiah.**

Nebuchadnezzar was prepared to watch **Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego** disintegrate into **flames**, but **he** was not prepared for what **he** saw. When **the king** saw that **the three men** were unharmed by the raging flames, **his** rage quickly turned to bewilderment. **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?" They replied, "Certainly, Your Majesty" (3:24).**



Was there **a God** who could rescue **Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego** from the hands of such a powerful **ruler**? **Nebuchadnezzar himself** gives us the answer**. He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed,** with **their** ropes evidently burned away. The description reveals that **the three men** were in no hurry to escape from **the flames**, but were **walking around unharmed (3:25a). The majority of Jewish scholars have identified this fourth person as an angel. For example, Slotki remarks, "The Talmud asserts that it was the archangel Gabriel (Pes. 118a-b). The majority of rabbis believe that Nebuchadnezzar was permitted to see the angel even though he did not deserve it on his own merit.** Seeing **"the fourth man"** in **the fiery furnace** did not mean that **Nebuchadnezzar** attained any insight into prophecy as **Dani'el** did. **He** was simply permitted to see **"the fourth man"** because it served **God's** purposes.

But this was no ordinary **angel** because **"the fourth man" looked like the Son of God (3:25b).** Only **Yeshua** can **save**. Even a powerful **angel** like **Gabriel**, who makes announcements **(Dani'el 8:16, 9:21,** and **Luke 1:19)**, or like **Michael**, **the great prince** who fights with **the Adversary (Dani'el 10:13, 12:1, Jude 1:9** and **Revelation 12:7**) never **saved** anyone. From a Messianic perspective, every time ***the* Angel of ADONAI** is mentioned in the TaNaKh, it is always a preincarnate appearance of **Yeshua Messiah**. Therefore, **"the fourth man" in the fiery furnace** was **the Second Person of the Trinity.** It is certainly true that when believers go through **fiery trials**, **Messiah** is with us**. God** did not simply rescue **His** servants from **the fire**, **He** sent **His Son** to pass through **the fire** with **them**, a **Presence** that takes richer dimensions in the B'rit Chadashah when **YHVH** comes to dwell physically with us as **Immanuel (Matthew 1:23)**.

***The* Angel of ADONAI** is seen in many places in the TaNaKh, and each time points to the preincarnate **Messiah**. Here are **seven** examples. The **first** example of **the Angel of ADONAI** in the TaNaKh was with **Hagar** near a spring in the Negev desert. ***The* Angel of ADONAI** told **her** to go back to Sarah: **You are now with child and you will have a son. You shall name him Ishmael** (see the commentary on **Genesis Ej – Hagar and the Angel of the LORD**).

The **second** example of ***the* Angel of ADONAI** was with **Abraham**, and was told by **God, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love and sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about. Abraham was obedient,** and just as **he** raised the knife to sacrifice **his son**, ***the* Angel of ADONAI called out to him from heaven, saying: Abraham, Abraham! Do not lay a hand on your son. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld your son, your only son from Me** (see **Genesis Fo – Abraham Called that place The LORD Will Provide**).

Thirdly, when Moses was tending the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, he suddenly found **himself** confronted by a **burning** acacia **bush**. But there was something different about **it**; **Moshe** saw that though **the bush** was on **fire it** did not **burn** up. **There, within the burning bush, *the* Angel of ADONAI appeared to him** and said: **Do not come any closer. Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground** (see the commentary on **Exodus Aq – Flames of Fire from within a Burning Bush**).

The **fourth** example of ***the* Angel of ADONAI** was with **Balaam**. Going to meet **the rulers of Mo'ab, Balaam saddled his donkey. But God was very angry** with **him** because **the LORD** knew full well that despite **his** superficial piety, **Balaam** fully intended to **curse Isra'el**. Therefore, ***the* Angel of ADONAI blocked Balaam's path three times**. Finally, on **the third** attempt, **God opened Balaam's eyes, so that he could see *the* Angel of ADONAI standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand. Then Balaam bowed his head and fell on his face** (see the commentary on **Numbers Dr – Balaam and the Donkey**).

Fifthly, God raised up **Deborah** to be the fourth **judge** in **Isra'el's** cycle of judgment and deliverance. **The Canaanite kings** came into **Isra'el** looking for the spoils of battle, but **they** left empty handed, trusting in **their** chariots, which proved inadequate to save **them**. While retreating, **the Israelite** city of **Meroz** failed to do its duty. **They** sided with **the Canaanites** and let those fleeing through

Meroz escape when **they** should have blocked **their** path and put **them** to death. **“Curse Meroz!” said *the* Angel of ADONAI, “Curse the people living there with a bitter punishment for not coming to help ADONAI, to help ADONAI against the mighty warriors.” Their** sin wasn’t simply failing to assist **Isra’el**; **they** failed to **help ADONAI** (see **Judges Bb – The Defeat of the Canaanites**).

The **sixth** example of ***the* Angel of ADONAI** came after the **Israelite** victory over **the Canaanites**. But the passing years blurred the memory of the great deliverance and the next generation reverted to an easy-going syncretistic religion that once again threatened to obliterate **Isra’el’s** distinctive worship of **YHVH**. After being enslaved by **the Midianites**, **the people** cried out to **God**, and **He** raised up **Gideon** as a new **judge**. ***The* Angel of ADONAI came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. When *the* Angel of the ADONAI appeared to Gideon, He said, “You courageous hero! ADONAI is with you** (see **Judges Bf – The Call of Gideon**).

The **seventh** example of ***the* Angel of ADONAI** came on the heels of **the Assyrian** invasion **in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah’s reign,** when **Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them (Isaiah 36:1).** But then **he** went one step beyond where **God** permitted by sending a letter to **Hezekiah** saying that **ADONAI** could not help **the Jews**. When **Hezekiah received the letter from Sennacherib he went up to the Temple of LORD,** and **spread it out before ADONAI as a symbolic act, displaying the Assyrian’s blasphemies in the presence of God. And Hezekiah** prayed: **ADONAI-Tzva’ot, God of Isra’el . . . listen to all the words Sennacherib has sent to insult the living God (37:14b-15).** Then, **that night *the* Angel of ADONAI went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. When the people in Jerusalem got up the next morning, there were all the dead bodies in front of them** (see the commentary on **Isaiah Gw – Then the Angel of the LORD Put to Death a Hundred and Eighty-Five Thousand Men in the Assyrian Camp**)**.**



Continuing with the story, **then Nebuchadnezzar approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. The young men** were not merely unharmed, **their clothing** did not even **smell of smoke**. **They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them (3:26-27).** A powerful testimony to the extent of **their** salvation by **the Angel of ADONAI**.

This was the fulfillment of the words **the LORD** had spoken to **His people** through **Isaiah the prophet** two centuries later: **When you pass by the waters, I will be with you; when you pass through the rivers, they will not overwhelm you; when you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched . . . the flames will not burn you" (Isaiah 43:2).** Notice that **God** didn't promise to take **his people** *around* **the rivers** or to keep **the fire** *from* **them**. On the contrary, **trials** and **hardships** are the anticipated path for **the people of God**, then and now. **After preaching the Good News, Paul and Barnabas returned to Pisidian Antioch strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith, saying: We must go through many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God (Acts 14:21-22).**

Trials provide the context in which our **faith** shines with unmatched clarity before the eyes of a world. **Rejoice in this, even though for a little while you may have to experience grief of various trials. Even as gold is tested for genuineness by fire. The purpose of these trials is so that the genuineness of your trust, which is far more valuable than perishable gold, will be**

judged worthy of praise, glory and honor at the revealing of Yeshua Messiah (First Peter 1:6-7). It is precisely in **the furnace** that the reality of our **faith** is displayed most clearly. Yet, in the midst of those **trials** and difficulties, our **Lord** promises that we can count on **His Presence** to be with us, ensuring that our **trials** would not utterly overwhelm us. **ADONAI** doesn't stand far off from us when we need **His** help; **He** has promised to be **God with us, Immanuel.** As a result, **nothing in all of creation can separate us from God' love** (see the commentary on **Romans Cm – The Certainty of Redemption**).[145]