

Here we will consider some of the angelic interactions with the prophets of the Old Testament.

### **Elisha and The Angelic Army**

In 2 Kings 6, the king of Aram is waging war on Israel. God was telling the prophet Elisha about each military action the king of Aram was about to take. The king of Aram hears about this and sends soldiers to kidnap Elisha. They surround Elisha's camp during the night. Elisha's servant is terrified in the morning, but Elisha asks God to open his eyes, and the servant sees the hill covered in fiery chariots and horses.

When they attack Elisha asks God to blind them all, and they are blinded. Elisha takes them to the king of Israel. They are fed well and sent home to the king of Aram. That was the last attack from Aram.

There is an invisible war going on around us, and those who serve God are usually well protected. Some people can see the angels. It seems Elisha always could, and his servant was given this sight temporarily.

### **Ezekiel and the Cherubim**

In 597 BC Jerusalem fell to Babylon. About 7000 of the educated and elite Jews were taken to Babylon in exile. Ezekiel was among those taken, but he was not yet appointed prophet. Five years later Ezekiel was appointed as a prophet. The opening of the book of Ezekiel has his vision of the Cherubim, or, "four living creatures." These are angels that serve as the living throne of God. Here is a summary of what Ezekiel saw while standing by a river:

He sees a storm roll in with fire and lightning and a glow around it. Something like polished metal gleamed at the center of the storm. Four unusual creatures appear. They were human, but with four faces. One human, one lion, one oxen, and one eagle. They had four wings, one covering their body and the other raised up. They had human hands visible under their wings. Their legs were human, but with gleaming hooves of a bull instead of feet. Fire and lightning shone around them. The faces always stared straight ahead. They had arched backs completely covered in eyes. Above them an awesome sky was visible. One yellow wheel was on the ground by each creature, perhaps like wheels on the corners of the throne. Everything moved together as one. It also could rise up off the ground. When they moved their wings rose and moved, when they stopped, their wings stopped and lowered.

He then sees a sapphire throne above them with a man on it. There was fire and light around him. When Ezekiel saw this he fell on his face and heard a voice speak:

"Son of man, stand up! I wish to speak to you."

"Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, a nation of rebels who have rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have been in revolt against me to this very day. Their children are bold of face and stubborn of heart – to them I am sending you. You shall say to them: Thus says the Lord God."

God then gives Ezekiel instructions for his mission.

Ezekiel would see the vision of the Cherubim and the throne repeated again in a vision of the Temple in Jerusalem and the people there, recorded in Ezekiel 10. The second vision is the same, except the throne is seen in the Temple in Jerusalem. This is not our modern idea of cherubim as babies with wings. There is rich symbolism here, any ideas what it may mean?<sup>1</sup>

Don't Be Afraid!

Daniel was also taken into captivity in Babylon, around 605 BC. He rose to be a prominent official in the city. He also had a vision by a river:

He looked up and saw a man dressed in linen with a belt of gold. His body was like peridot crystal (olive green crystal). His arms and feet looked like polished bronze. His face shown like lightening, his eyes like fire. When he spoke his voice was loud like the sound of a multitude speaking. Daniel was the only one who saw the man, but the people nearby felt something. A great terror seized them and they fled to hide themselves. Daniel felt weak, and powerless. Then the man spoke, and Daniel immediately fell on his face "as if dead."

The man touched Daniel and helped him get up, saying,

"Daniel beloved, understand the words which I am speaking to you; stand up, for my mission now is to you. Do not fear, Daniel, from the first day you made up your mind to acquire understanding and humble yourself before God, your prayer was heard. Because of it I started out, but the prince of the kingdom of Persia stood in my way for twenty-one days, until finally Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me. I left him there with the prince of the kingdom of Persia, and came to make you understand what shall happen to your people in the last days; for there is yet a vision concerning those days."

Daniel collapsed forward, and could not speak. The man touched his lips, and he received the strength to speak. Daniel said, "My lord, I was seized with pangs at the vision and I was powerless. How can my lord's servant speak with you, my lord? For now no strength or even breath is left in me."

The man touched Daniel again, and Daniel felt more strength enter him.

The man asked, "Do you know why I have come to you? Soon I must fight the prince of Persia again. When I leave, the prince of Greece will come; but I shall tell you what is written in the book of truth. No one supports me against these except Michael, your prince."

Here we get a detailed description of the overwhelming impact of the visible presence of angels. Even the men that could not see it, fled. The angel who appeared to the shepherds near Jesus' birth caused them to be struck with great fear, and the first thing that angel said was "Do not be afraid."

When Mary Magdalene and the other Mary arrived at Jesus' tomb an angel descended from heaven, causing an earthquake and looking like lightning. The guards were struck with such fear they fell to the ground "like dead men." The first thing that angel said to the women was "Do not be afraid!" When Gabriel meets Mary he says, "Do not be afraid."

We get a clear statement that angels fight fallen angels in some way, and how Michael had to help this angel overcome a “prince” level fallen angel. We know from Revelations 12 that the holy angels in the war in heaven won by the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony: grace and will. How did this conflict play out? We see that there are ranks of angels. Michael is a prince, the ‘Prince of Persia’ has that title also.

## **Flaming Serpents**

Isaiah lived in the mid 700s BC. He was called to be a prophet in 742 BC. His call also came in the form of a vision, likely in the Temple in Jerusalem: God was seated on a high throne. There were angels, called Seraphim, above God. Each had six wings: two covered their faces, two their feet, and two were used to fly. The wings covering their face is interpreted as showing that no created being can directly gaze upon God. The ones covering their feet shows respect. The third set they fly with.

One Seraphim cried, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts! All the earth is filled with his glory!”

A Seraphim took a hot coal from the altar and touched Isaiah's mouth, saying that Isaiah's sin was now purged. God asked whom he should send as a prophet. Isaiah said, “Here I am, send me!”

Seraphim is the plural of the word seraph. The word seraph means a specific species of snake whose venom caused burning. Sometimes seraphim is translated to “burning ones” or “bright shining ones.” This type of snake is referenced in Numbers 21:6-9. There the Israelites complain against God and Moses, causing God to send seraph snakes among to the people to bite and kill them. There seraphim means “fiery serpents.” Moses had a bronze serpent raised on a pole, upon which the people would gaze and be cured.

In the ancient Near East serpents were thought of as guardians or gatekeepers to sacred places. They could also represent divine messengers and intermediaries between God and men. Finally, they were also associated with purification and atonement. With this context it makes sense that Isaiah would use such a name for these angels he saw, even though they did not look like serpents.