

OBSERVATIONS ON CHAPTER I.

מלאך יהוה, THE ANGEL, OR MESSENGER OF THE LORD.

FROM Kimchi's commentary on the 8th and 12th verses of this chapter, it appears that he considered the person designated "The angel of the Lord," as nothing more than one of the many angels to whom he supposes that the governance and guidance of this lower world is committed. It has been repeatedly proved by Christian writers that this Being is none other than the Son of God. The latest writers in this country are Mr. Faber in his "*Horæ Mosaicæ*,"* and Dr. Pye Smith, in his work on the Messiah; but as their works were not written with a special reference to the Jewish controversy, and as the question is one of general importance, it may not be out of place to offer a few remarks on the character of the angel or messenger of the Lord.

Kimchi evidently took the word מלאך, as signifying "angel," and therefore decides that he is one of that class of heavenly beings commonly designated by that name. But the first and original meaning of the word is "messenger," in which sense it is frequently applied to men as well as to heavenly beings. In Gen. xxxii. 1. 3 (Heb. ii. 4) it occurs in both senses. "And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God, מלאכי אלהים, met him." "And Jacob sent messengers, מלאכים, before him to Esau his brother." The word itself, therefore, decides nothing as to the nature of the messenger; so far as that is concerned, he may be a man, or he may be a heavenly being, but if a heavenly being, it decides nothing as to the order to which he belongs, whether to the living creatures de-

* Not having access to this work, I cannot give the reference. Dr. Pye Smith treats this subject in vol. i. pp. 333.

scribed in Ezekiel, or to the Seraphim mentioned in Isaiah, or to others.

The next question is, How are the two words מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה, to be translated? Some Christians wish to translate "The angel Jehovah." But this is plainly against the punctuation, and if persons pretend to disregard the points, then we must add against the consonants also. If the two words are to be taken in apposition, without regard to the points, the translation must be "An angel or a messenger, Jehovah." If מַלְאָךְ were used in the absolute form with reference to THE LORD, we should expect that it would have the article ה' before it, as אֲדֹנָי has uniformly, so that the form הַאֲדֹנָי, the Lord, is never applied to any created being. Besides, the words do occur in Scripture elsewhere, where יְהוָה must be taken as the genitive case, as "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth, כִּי מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה-צְבָאוֹת הוּא, for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts." (Mal. iii. 7.)

The modern Jews, on the other hand, translate "An angel of the Lord," and in this our translators have occasionally followed them, as in Judges ii. 1, "An angel of the Lord, מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה, came up from Gilgal:" but there is nothing in the words to compel us to adopt this translation. As far as they are concerned, we may with equal propriety translate "The angel of the Lord." It cannot be urged that מַלְאָךְ has not got the article, for it is in regimen, and the general rule is, that nouns in regimen do not take the article, but are made definite by the following genitive, and the Jews themselves will admit that אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל must be translated "The God of Israel;" and הַר הַבַּיִת, "The mountain of the house;" הַיְכָל יְהוָה, "The temple of the Lord." It is true that in this case the general rule is, that the definite article should be prefixed to the genitive; but here that cannot be the case, for יְהוָה never, in any case, receives an

article. Suppose, then, that the sacred writers wished to express that מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה is to be translated definitely, "The angel of the Lord," what means could they have taken? They could not have put the article before מַלְאָךְ, for that would have made "The angel Jehovah." They could not prefix it to יְהוָה, for, as we have said, that does not admit of it. There remained one other course possible, and that was, never to use the expression in the plural of angels, but always in the singular, so as to indicate that one person, and one only, is intended. But have they done this? Yes, uniformly: in the whole Bible, and in the great variety of styles which occurs, we never once find the expression מַלְאָכֵי יְהוָה, "Angels of the Lord," but uniformly the singular, מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה, to point out that there is only one of heavenly beings to whom this title belongs. It would be folly, or something worse, to say that this is fortuitous. The uniformity of the practice by all the sacred writers implies design, and teaches that there is but one person thus called, and that therefore the true translation is, "The angel of the Lord."

The only plausible objection that can be urged is, that though we do not find in the plural "The angels of the Lord," we do find the expression, "Angels of God." We might urge in reply, that there is a great difference between the words אֱלֹהִים and יְהוָה, but this is not necessary, as this very objection will serve as an additional confirmation to the foregoing argument. We have already said, that a word governing a genitive case does not take the article, and that the rule therefore is, if the article is wanted, to prefix it to the genitive case, if the genitive be a word that admits of the article. Now אֱלֹהִים is a word that admits the article. When, therefore, the sacred writers wished to say definitely "The angel of God," they could express it by מַלְאָךְ הָאֱלֹהִים, and this they have done, as in Gen. xxxi. 11, "And the angel of God, מַלְאָךְ הָאֱלֹהִים, spake unto me in a dream." And again,

in Exod. xiv. 19, "And the angel of God, מַלְאֲכֵי הַיְהוָה, which went before the camp," &c.; and so in very many other cases. As, therefore, when they wished to use a definite expression, they had it in their power, it was not necessary to confine the expression, "Angel of God," to the singular. But now mark the care and accuracy of the sacred writers; when they use angels of God in the plural, they do not use the article before אֱלֹהִים: that is, they do not make it definite. It occurs only twice in the Bible, but each time without the article. First, in Jacob's dream of the ladder, "And, behold, angels of God מַלְאֲכֵי אֱלֹהִים, ascending and descending on it." (Genesis xxviii. 12.) And again in the instance quoted above, "And Jacob went on his way, and angels of God, מַלְאֲכֵי אֱלֹהִים, met him." (Genesis xxxii. 1, Hebrew 2.) This expression, therefore, "Angels of God," is so far from weakening our former argument, that it shows us that there is one peculiar being, who is distinguished from all other heavenly beings, by the title, "The angel of the Lord;" and that, therefore, the analogy of Scripture confirms us in the faith, that there is only one person who is called "The angel of the Lord."

It may be thought needful to prove that He who is called "The angel of the Lord," is identical with him who is named "The angel of God;" but this is easily done. In Judges vi. 20, 21, we find both expressions indifferently applied to one and the same person. "And *the angel of God* said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour the broth. And he did so. Then *the angel of the Lord* put forth the end of his staff," &c. And again, Judges xiii. 3—9, "And *the angel of the Lord* appeared unto the woman——And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah; and *the angel of God* came again unto the woman." Here the identity is fully proved, and we have got thus far in our inquiry, that there is but one heavenly

being who is called "The angel of the Lord" and "The angel of God," and consequently that He is some way peculiar from those other heavenly beings, who have not these titles, but are called "Angels of God." Wherein that peculiarity consists, we now proceed to inquire.

It is not possible in the limited space, to which we propose to extend these observations, to go through all the passages on this subject, we, therefore, select a few plain ones, sufficient to establish what is advanced. The first peculiarity, then, in the character of this personage is, that he is called by the proper name of God, יְהוָה. We read in the law, that He appeared to Hagar, when she fled from her mistress; and after relating the vision, the sacred history adds, "And she called the name of the LORD, יְהוָה, who spake with her," so that He who was before called the angel of the Lord, is here called Jehovah. Rashi, Aben Ezra, Solomon ben Melech, and Nachmanides, all pass this over in silence. Individual Jews to whom I have proposed the passage, have almost always replied, that Hagar was mistaken, and from ignorance applied the name Jehovah to the angel. But this is not the fact, Hagar did not call the angel Jehovah; she called him אֱלֹהֵי אֲנִי, or as our translation has it, "Thou God seest me." It is the historian, in the course of his narrative, who applies to the angel the name Jehovah, and this is acknowledged by Abarbanel, who says that this is an exceedingly difficult passage, particularly "Because the peculiar name of God is employed, 'She called the name of the LORD who spake with her;' and how can it possibly be, that the First Cause, blessed be He, should speak with Hagar; when the law itself testifies and says, that it was the angel of the Lord who appeared unto her, and not the Lord himself?" A little lower down He gives his solution of the difficulty thus; "The right answer here is, that all prophetic vision, whether mediate or immediate, is always attributed to God, blessed be He,

for it is from Him and by His will, and on this account also the Messenger is sometimes called by the name of Him that sends him. In this point of view it is that the Scripture here says, 'And she called the name of the LORD that spake to her.'" (Abarbanel in loc.)* His solution we shall consider presently, but now only remark that he admits that the angel of the Lord is here called Jehovah, and proceed

To take a similar instance from the historical books. In the Book of Judges, vi. 11, we read that the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon. At verse 14, we suddenly find this person called Jehovah the LORD. "And the LORD, יהוה, looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might." And again, verse 16, "And the LORD, יהוה said unto him, Surely I will be with thee." We refer to this passage, because the fact is admitted by the rabbies. Kimchi says, in his Commentary on the last quoted verse, "In the words, 'The LORD said unto him,' the angel is called by the name of the Lord, as is the case also with the angel who appeared to Joshua, of whom it is written, 'And the LORD, יהוה, said unto Joshua.'" (Josh. vi. 2.)† And in this passage of Joshua to which he refers, he says, "And the Lord said unto Joshua, that is, through the angel who appeared to him, and he is called by the name of the LORD who sent him. And we find a similar instance in the angel who appeared to Gideon, of whom it is written, 'And the Lord said unto him, Surely, I will be with thee.' Our rabbies of blessed memory have said, 'My name is in him.' R. Simeon ben Lakish says, 'This teaches us, that the Holy One, blessed be He, associates his name to each of the angels.'"‡ We

* Edit. Venice, 1584, fol. 61, col. 4.

† וזכה שאמר ויאמר אליו " קרא המלאך בשם " כמו שכתוב במלאך שנראה ליהושע ויאמר " ליהושע .

‡ ויאמר " אל יהושע ע' המלאך הנראה לו והוא נקרא בשם " השולה אותו וכן

have here the same admission made, and the same solution proposed, as in the former case by Abarbanel.

We now take a similar instance from the prophets. In the third chapter of Zechariah, Joshua the high-priest, is represented as standing before the angel of the Lord, and then it is added, "And the LORD, יְהוָה, said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan." The person called in the first verse the angel of the Lord, is in the second verse called the LORD, as Kimchi himself acknowledges; "This is said of the angel, who is called by the name of his master, and so in the history of Gideon, and other places."

From these three passages, selected from the law, the historical books, and the Prophets, it appears, that the Being designated by the title "The angel of the Lord," is also called יְהוָה, Jehovah, the proper name of God; and from the Rabbinical Commentaries it appears, that this inference is not peculiar to Christians, nor forced from the text in order to suit their doctrinal views, but that those rabbies who made it their peculiar care to overthrow every interpretation favourable to Christianity, were nevertheless constrained by the plainness and frequency of such passages, to come to the same conclusion. They did not make this admission in ignorance, they evidently foresaw the use that would be made of it, and, therefore, endeavour to guard against it by saying, "that the messenger is called by the name of Him that sends him." But this explanation, taken as a general assertion, is, in the first place, contrary to fact. In the eighth and ninth chapters of Daniel, an angel is sent to Daniel, but he is not called by the name of Him that sent him, but is called Gabriel. In the prophecies of Zechariah we read of many angels of whom it is said, "These are they

מצאנו במלאך שטראה לגרעון ויאמר אליו יי' כי אהיה עמך ויאמרו רז"ל כי שמי בקרבו
 אר" שבעת בן לקיש מלמד שהק"ב בה משתף שמו על כל מלאך ומלאך.

whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth," but they are not called by the name of their Lord. In like manner Isaiah saw an angel sent to him to remove his iniquity, but this angel is not called by the name of his master, but "one of the Seraphim." In the second place, if taken with special reference to the particular case of the angel of the Lord, this explanation is no explanation at all, but a mere identical proposition in somewhat different words. When I say the angel of the Lord is called Jehovah, what else is intended but this, "That the messenger is called by the name of Him that sends him?" This last sentence is, therefore, no explanation of the first, and still less a removal of the difficulty. The difficulty is, why, for what reasons is the Messenger called by the name of Him who sends him? If this were the universal practice, if every angel were called Jehovah, we might say, it is the style of Scripture to ascribe the peculiar name of God to all his messengers, but this cannot be pretended. There are many instances where the angels have no names, and others, where a peculiar name is ascribed; the question then is, Why is the angel of the Lord called by His name? And this question acquires double force from what we have proved above, that there is but one Being who is called the Angel of the Lord, or *The* Angel of God. Why, then, is this one individual called by that august name, Jehovah, and the others not? And, observe, that it has not only been proved from the Scripture that the name Jehovah is ascribed to only one angel, but that it can be proved also that this was the opinion of the ancient Jews. The Talmud has the following passage, "The same heretic said to Rav Idith, It is written, 'And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the LORD' (Exod. xxiv. 1), but it ought to have been written, 'Come up unto me.' The rabbi answered, The speaker here is Metatron, whose name

is the same as that of his master, for it is written, 'For my name is in him.' (Exod. xxiii. 21.)"* This passage is obviously the source whence Kimchi and Abarbanel borrowed the above explanation, but here the explanation is not general, applying to all angels, but only to one, whose name is Metatron. And the occasion of this reply plainly shows that the other opinion, that the name Jehovah is ascribed indiscriminately to all angels was then unknown, for, if it had been, it would have been a more plausible answer to the heretic's objection. The real difficulty, therefore, remains in all its force, why is the peculiar and proper name of God applied to the angel of the Lord?

That there is in the name יהוה, Jehovah, a peculiarity which distinguishes it from all the other names of God, is expressly asserted by God himself, and is the uniform doctrine both of Jews and Christians. God says,

אֲנִי יְהוָה הוּא שְׁמִי

"I am Jehovah; that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images" (Isaiah xlii. 8); which Kimchi thus paraphrases, "That is my name, which is appropriated to myself alone, not like the name of the graven images; for although their worshippers associate them with me in the application of the name אֱלֹהִים, God, they cannot associate them with me in this name; for I am Lord over all." † Again we read in Hosea xii. 5, (Heb. 6),

וַיִּתְּנָה אֱלֹהֵי הַצְּבָאוֹת יְהוָה זְכָרִי

"Even Jehovah the God of Hosts; Jehovah is his memorial." Upon which passage Kimchi speaks still more decidedly in the following words: "Although he

* אמר הווא מינא לרב אירית כתיב ואל משה אמר עלה אל ה' עלה אלי מיבעי ליה א"י דהו מספורן ששמו כשם רבו דכתיב כי שמי בקרבו:— Sanhedrim, fol. 38, col. 2.
 † הוא שמי המיוחד לי לא כשם הססילים אף על פי שעובדיהם ישחפיו אותם עמי בשם אלוהי ולא יוכלו לשחפם עמי הוה השם כי אני הווא ארון על הכל.

was revealed to your fathers in the name God Almighty, saying to him, 'I am God Almighty, increase and multiply' (Gen. xxxv. 11); yet to Moses he renewed his fearful name, and all this for your sakes, by means of it to renew signs and wonders, to bring you forth from slavery to liberty, and this new name is Jehovah, יהוה, and he is the God of Hosts. God of Hosts expresses that degree, in which stand the angels, and the orbs with their stars, for in the names אֱלֹהִים and אֵל, he (God) is associated with them; but in this name He is associated with none but himself.* These two passages show that Jehovah is the proper name of God, and that this was Kimchi's decided opinion. His Comment on the last passage shows, how little he believed in his own explanation, "that the messenger is called by the name of Him that sends him," for he plainly says, that in the name Jehovah God has no partner whatever. But this opinion is not peculiar to Kimchi, it is the ancient and received Jewish doctrine. In the first place, it is the opinion of the Talmud, where on the verse, "On this wise shall ye bless the children of Israel," it is said, that is, with the name Jehovah. If you object, that it may be with the name Jehovah, or it may not be, but with the cognomen Lord; the objection is answered by the following words, 'And they shall put my name.' (Numb. vi. 27.) My name, the name that is appropriated to me alone." †

In like manner the book of Kosri, "The Deity is called אֱלֹהִים in genere, but is called Jehovah in his individuality; for if any one should ask, What God ought we to worship? the sun, or the moon, or the heavens, or the constellations, or one of the stars, or the fire, or the

* אֵל מִי שֶׁנִּגְלָה לְאַבְרָהָם בְּאֵל שַׁדַּי לֵאמֹר לֹא אֲנִי אֵל שַׁדַּי וְרַבָּה עוֹד חָרַשׁ שְׁמוֹ וְהִכְבִּד לְמֹשֶׁה וְהִכֵּל בְּעִבְרֹתָם לְחַדֵּשׁ בּוֹ אֹתוֹת וּמוֹפְתִים לְהוֹצִיאֲכֶם מֵעֲבָדוֹת לְחַיִּיתָ וְהוּא יי"ד ה"א יי"ד ה"א וְהוּא אֱלֹהֵי הַצְּבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי צְבָאוֹת מַעֲלֵה שָׁדָם הַמַּלְאָכִים וְהַגְּלִילִים עִם כּוֹכְבֵיהֶם וְשֵׁם אֵל וְאֱלֹהֵי הוּא מִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה עִמָּהֶם אֲבָל בּוֹהַ הַשֵּׁם אֵינוֹ מִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה עִם וְלֹא הוּא

† כִּן הִבְרָחוּ אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשֵׁם מְפֹרָשׁ אֶתָּה אֹמֵר בְּשֵׁם מְפֹרָשׁ אוֹ אֵינוֹ אֵלָּא בְּבִטּוֹת ה' לְ

—Sotah. fol. 38. 1.

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wind, or the spiritual angels, for each of these has a certain work and dominion, and each of them is a cause in existence and in destruction? The answer would be, Jehovah, just as you call a certain person by a known name, as Reuben, Simeon, &c.* Maimonides devotes a whole chapter to the discussion of this one point, from which we quote as follows: "All the names of God which occur in Scripture are all derived from the works, as is well known, except one name, and that is, יהוה, which is the name appropriated to God alone. And this is called the plain name (Shem hammephorash), because it teaches plainly and unequivocally of the substance of God." † "The sum of the whole matter is, the dignity of this name, and the prohibition to read it, is to be ascribed to this, that it points directly to the substance of God, and on this account, not one of the creatures has a share in the teaching of this name, as our rabbies of blessed memory have said: 'My name, the name that is appropriated to me alone.'" The author of the Kosri and Maimonides were controversialists, and had the Christian controversy constantly in view, their testimony is, therefore, doubly valuable; and when we combine the admissions of opponents with the plain words of Scripture, there can be no doubt of these two things, first, that the name Jehovah is the peculiar name of God; and, secondly, that God has claimed it for himself, because it has reference to that substance and essence peculiar to himself. Why, then, is it communicated to the angel of the Lord? There can be but one answer: because He partakes of that substance and essence which makes the communication of the name suitable; or, in other words, because the angel of the Lord is very God. And this conclusion is confirmed

By the second peculiarity in the Scripture delineation of his character, and that is, that He not only has the

* Part iv. 1. Buxtorf's edition, page 257, 258.

† Part i. cap. 61.

incommunicable name of God, but is represented as having the divine nature, and as being the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The first proof to be adduced on this subject, is from the xxxist chapter of Genesis. The angel of God, מַלְאָךְ הָאֱלֹהִים, appeared to Jacob in a dream, and said to him, "I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me." (Gen. xxxi. 13.) Here this Being first says of himself, "I am the God of Bethel." Some modern Jews may and do quibble about the word אֱלֹהִים; we shall not, therefore, in this short Essay, enter into that question, and the rather as it is here unnecessary. The angel not only says that He is God, but that Jacob had worshipped him as such; "Where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst the vow TO ME." Then beyond all doubt He was God, the true object of worship, for if Jacob had made a mistake, neither the angel nor the sacred historian would have passed by the sin of idolatry unnoticed and un-reproved. Besides, if we turn to the passage relating to the circumstance of this vow, we find that it was made to the God of his fathers: "The Lord stood above the ladder, and said, I am the God of Abraham, thy father, and the God of Isaac." (Gen. xxviii. 13.) If, then, the Scripture is to be taken in its plain grammatical sense, this angel was the God of Bethel, the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and the God whom Jacob worshipped, and to whom he vowed the vow.

But now let us hear the rabbies. Rashi and Aben Ezra pass the passage without remarking on the nature of the angel. Ramban * says, "The angel speaks in the name of Him that sent him, but this angel might truly say, 'I am the God of Bethel;' for it is said in like manner, 'He called the place El Bethel, the God of

* R. Moses ben Nachman, commonly called by Christian writers Nachmanides.

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Bethel' (Gen. xxxv. 7), according as it is said, 'Zion, the Holy One of Israel.' (Isa. lx. 14.) But Jonathan, the son of Uzziel says, The Holy One, in the heavens of the highest height, the house of his Shechinah, and this is 'the angel the Redeemer;' and in like manner it is written, 'Who is faithful in all my house.' (Numb. xii. 7.) The wise will understand." * (Comment. in loc.) Nachmanides here gives two interpretations; first, he says, that he is called the God of Bethel, because He is the messenger of the God of Bethel, but this is a pure assertion, without any proof, as we have seen above. Secondly, he says, that he may have this title in truth, just as the place was called the God of Bethel, and as Zion is called the Holy One of Israel. If this be taken to mean, that this angel was no more God than Bethel itself was, this explanation will not solve the difficulty, for it is said, not only that He was called God, but that he was worshipped as God, which is not said either of Bethel or of Zion, so that the passages are not parallel; and further, the instance from Isaiah rests upon a false translation. Zion, צִיּוֹן, is feminine, as may be seen in Isaiah i. 2, so that צִיּוֹן קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל, cannot be translated otherwise than it is in the English translation. But it may well be doubted whether this was his meaning. Nachmanides was a cabbalist, and most probably alluded to the mystical interpretation of Beth (house) in the words, El Bethel, as he certainly does, when he quotes the words, "Who was faithful in all my house." He did not choose to speak plainly, and therefore says, "The wise will understand:" and this supposition will be much confirmed by the very similar comment of Bechai, which shall be given presently. But whether this supposition be founded or not, it is plain

* והמלאך ידבר בלשון שולחו ועל דרך האמת אמר המלאך הוה אנכי האל בית אל וכן ויקרא למקום אל בית אל כמו שאמר ציון קדוש ישראל ויונתן בן עוזיאל אמר קדוש בשמי ברומוא עילאה בית שכינתיה והוא מלאך הגואל. וכן בכל בתי נאמן הוא והמשכיל יבין.

that Nachmanides considered the words, "I am the God of Bethel, &c.," as applying to the angel.

Bechai says, "If interpreted literally, the words, 'I am the God of Bethel,' mean, The God that appeared to thee in Bethel. But according to cabbalistic interpretation, this angel who calls himself the God of Bethel, is the goodness spoken of in the words, 'I will make all my goodness pass before thee' (Exod. xxxiii. 19), and he is the house mentioned in the words, 'Who was faithful in all my house,' for a man's goodness is his house, and, therefore, he says of himself, I am the God of Bethel. And so it is said of Jacob, 'He called the place El Bethel.' But, behold, even according to the literal interpretation of the verse, it is certain that this angel is the God of Bethel, and understand this."* (Comment. in loc.) Bechai also fully agrees to the fact that the angel is called the God of Bethel, and the reasons which he assigns, evidently point to the Shechinah or habitation which he calls "The house;" and, further, "The goodness of the Lord;" so that from this Commentary it would appear that the Shechinah is the Being here alluded to.

In the Commentary of Menachem of Rekanata, the same opinion is expressed still more clearly. He says, "The angel mentioned above, said to him, I am the God of Bethel, by which is intended the Shechinah, who is called angel, for she † appeared to the fathers, and to her the vow was made, and, therefore, it is said, Where thou vowedst the vow to me, as is explained above. She is called angel, because the government of this world is by her mouth. And understand that she is called

* אנכי האל בית אל - ע"ד הפשט שנבגה לך בבי' אל - וע"ד הקבל' המלאך הזה שקרא עצמו אל הוא המושב שנא' אני אעביר כל טובי על פניך והוא הבית שנא' עליו בכל ביתי נאמן הוא כי טוב האדם ביתו - ועל כן אמר על עצמו אנכי האל בית אל - וכן ביעקב ויקרא למקו' אל בית אל והנה הכתוב הזה נכון כפשוטו כי המלאך הזה שהוא אל בית אל והבן זה -

† Sheclinah, which means habitation, is feminine, and, therefore, the pronouns and verbs are feminine.

לאך כי
מעלה
האלהים
אלהים
1523,
them,

מלאך האלהים, where האלהים is by Gematria equivalent to מלאך; and אלהים (God) is here used, because she proceeds from the sphaera, גבורה (might).”*

Here also it is plainly admitted that the angel calls himself the God of Bethel, and to this Being the vow was made. The fact therefore is not disputed, and therefore this one passage is sufficient to prove that this angel is very God. Indeed the commentators quoted do not deny the inference, for when they say that this Being was the Shechinah, or habitation, they employ the same language used in the New Testament, as for instance, “In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” (Coloss. ii. 9.) When the law of Moses sets before us a being who says of himself that He is the God of Bethel, and that He is the object of Jacob’s worship, what else can we conclude but that He is very God, especially as the great object of this law, throughout, is to enforce the unity of God? But it is to be observed that this passage does not stand alone, there are other similar assertions, equally plain and strong. In the third chapter of Exodus, this same Being is said to have appeared to Moses in the bush, and then without any intimation of a change of person, the text says, “And when the Lord, יהוה, saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses! And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover, he said, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.” (Exod. iii. 4—6.)

* המלאך הנזכר למעלה אמר לו אנכי האל בית אל • והרכבו לשכינה הנקראת מלאך כי היא הנראית לאבות ואליה היה הנזכר וע"כ אמר אשר נדרת לי שם נדר כמו שפי' למעלה • ונקראת מלאך יען היות הנהגת העולם הוה על סיה • והבן שקראה מלאך האלהים • האלהים בגמטריא מ'לאך בעבור יניקתה סן הגבורה אמר אלהים • Edit. Venice, 1523, fol. 45, col. 1. The folios are not numbered, but I have counted them, reckoning the title folio as fol. 1.

To a plain reader, abiding by the common rules of grammar and the usage of all languages, it would appear, that the angel of the Lord here calls himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But it has been said that this is a Trinitarian prejudice; let us see, then, how the Jews, who are supposed to be free from this prejudice, understood the passage:—

Aben Ezra expresses his opinion thus: “*And when the Lord saw.*”—“These are also the words of Moses, afterwards, and the angel is called by the glorious name in the same way as in the passage, ‘For my name is in him,’ and there I shall explain it. And this is also done with respect to the angel who appeared to Gideon, where it is written, ‘And the LORD said to him.’ Or the meaning may be thus, The Lord saw that he turned aside to see, and commanded the angel to call to him, and, therefore, the word אלהים (God) is used. [God called unto him out of the bush.] And this name [אלהים] is not a noun of substance, but a noun of quality, as I will explain: and it comprehends all holy beings, which are not corporeal, and whose power is not corporeal, as it is written, ‘The Gods, אלהין, whose dwelling is not with flesh,’ which is corporeal. And, behold, אלהים (God) in this passage, is the angel mentioned above.”* (Comment. in loc.) Aben Ezra here offers two ways of interpreting the fourth verse; according to the first, there is no change of person. The angel is, therefore, the only agent throughout, and consequently says, “I am the God of Abraham, &c.” According to the other interpretation there are two agents, Jehovah and the angel. The sense of the verse on this view would be, “When the Lord

* גם אלה דברי משה בסוף ונקרא המלאך בשם הנכבד כדרך כי שמי בקרבו ושם אשר שנו וכך המלאך שנראה לגדעון ושם כתוב ויאמר לו " או השם איננו שם העצם רק שם חאר באשר אשרש והוא כולל כל קדוש שאינו גוף ולא כח בנות ככתוב לק אלהין די מדרהון עם בשרא לא איתודי שהוא הגוף והנה אלהים במקום הזה הוא המלאך הנזכר :

saw that he turned aside to see, the angel called unto him out of the midst of the bush." We do not stop to show the untenableness of this interpretation at present, for it does not alter the argument. Aben Ezra grants that the angel is the speaker, and that is all that we require. We only wish at present to establish the fact, not to explain it.

R. Bechai testifies unreservedly to the fact, that the angel here calls himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. "Ask not," he says, "how Moses could hide his face before the angel, for the angel mentioned here is the angel, the Redeemer, of whom it is written, 'I am the God of Bethel.' And in like manner it is said here, 'I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,' and he it is of whom it is said, 'My name is in him.'" (Comment. in loc.)

R. Moses ben Nachman goes a step farther; he not only confirms the fact, but rejects the explanation, that the angel was speaking in the name of him that sent him. His words are, "The explanation, that in the words, 'I am the God of thy father,' the messenger spoke in the language of him that sent him is not correct, for Moses's degree in prophecy was too high for him to hide his face before the angel. Our rabbies have said in Bereshith Rabba, 'This angel is Michael. As in the case of R. Jose, the Patient, wherever he was seen, they said, There is our holy rabbi; so wherever Michael is seen, there is the glory of the Shechinah.' They meant to say, that at first Michael appeared to him, and that the glory of the Shechinah was there, but he did not see the glory, for he did not apply his mind to the prophetic vision; but, when he applied his mind and turned aside to see, then the appearance of the Shechinah was revealed

* ואל תחמה איך יסתר משה פניו מן המלאך כי המלאך הנזכר בבאן הוא המלאך הנזכר שכתוב בו אנכי האל בית אל וכן אמר בבאן אנכי אלהי אביך אלהי אברהם אלהי יצחק ואלהי יעקב והוא ש' עליו כי שמי בקרבנו :

unto him, and God called unto him out of the midst of the bush. And in the way of truth, this angel was the angel, the Redeemer, for it is said, 'My name is in him.' He it is who said to Jacob, 'I am the God of Bethel;' and of him it is said, 'And God called to him.' But he is called angel, מלאך, with reference to the government of the world; and thus it is written [in one place], 'And the LORD brought us out of Egypt' (Deut. vi. 21); and [in another place] it is written, 'And he sent an angel, and hath brought us forth out of Egypt.' (Numb. xx. 16.) Again, it is said, 'The angel of his presence saved them,' that is to say, The angel who is his presence. (Isaiah lxiii. 9.) For it is written, 'My presence shall go, and I will give thee rest.' (Exod. xxxiii. 14.) And this is what is said, 'The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come. (Mal. iii. 1.)' And thou wilt understand this further in other verses yet to come, which treat of the same matter."

We have here the confession of Jews, that that Being who is called the angel of the Lord says of himself, that he is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; that this is the plain meaning of the text, what, then, is the conclusion? What can it be, but that He is what he claimed to be? We have seen that there is but one being who is called the angel of the Lord. Secondly, That the name of this one Being is Jehovah, the incommunicable name of God: and, Thirdly, That this Being says of himself, distinctly and unequivocally, that He is the God whom Jacob worshipped, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and we have seen, Fourthly, That this is as plainly asserted by the Jews as by us. There is but one possible conclusion, and that is, that this Being is very God.

Enough, I trust, has been here said, to establish the

fact: it would take a volume to go through all the passages of the Bible, and more than one volume, to collate the passages of the rabbies. Schöttgen has given many more from more ancient books, but I have quoted commentators, who were almost cotemporary with Kimchi, to show what was the Jewish opinion of his time.