



*Jacob Wrestling with the Angel – Rembrandt (From Wikimedia Commons)*

### **1. Midrash Bereishit Rabbah 8:5**

R. Simon said: When the Holy One was about to create the first human, the ministering angels formed themselves into factions and groups. Some of them said: “Let him be created.” Some of them said: Let him not be created.” This is why it is written, “Loving kindness and truth meet; justice and peace kiss” (Psalm 85:11). Loving kindness said, “Let him be created because he will perform acts of loving kindness.” Truth said, “Let him not be created because he will all falsehood.” Justice said, “Let him be created because he will do deeds of justice.” Peace said, “Let him not be created because he will be all conflict.” What did the Holy One do? He took Truth and cast him to the ground, as is written said: “You cast truth to the ground” (Daniel 8:12). The ministering angels said to the Holy One: “Master of the Universe: Why do You humiliate Your seal, lift Truth up from the earth.” Hence it is written: “Truth springs up from the earth” (Psalm 85:12). The Rabbis said in the name of R. Hanina, while R. Phinehas and R. Hilkiyah said in the name of R. Simon: “very” is “Adam” (the human) as it is written, “And G-d saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). Behold the human is very good. R. Huna, the elder, of Tzipori said: “While the ministering angels were debating each other, and conferring with each, the Holy One created the human and said to them: “What are you debating, the human is already made.”

### **2. Talmud Sanhedrin 38b**

Rab Judah said in Rab's name: When the Holy One, blessed be He, wished to create man, He [first] created a company of ministering angels and said to them: Is it your desire that we make a man in our image? They answered: Sovereign of the Universe, what will be his deeds? Such and such will be his deeds, He replied. Thereupon they exclaimed: Sovereign of the Universe, What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou thinkest of him? Thereupon He stretched out His little finger among them and consumed them with fire. The same thing happened with a second company. The third company said to Him: Sovereign of the Universe, what did it avail the former [angels] that they spoke to Thee [as they did]? the whole world is Thine, and whatsoever that Thou wishest to do therein, do it. When He came to the men of the Age of the flood and of the division [of tongues] whose deeds were corrupt, they said to Him: Lord of the Universe, did not the first [company of angels] speak aright? Even to old age I am the same, and even to hoar hairs will I carry, He retorted.

### **3. Talmud Shabbat 88b-89a**

R. Joshua b. Levi also said: When Moses ascended on high, the ministering angels spake before the Holy One, blessed be He, 'Sovereign of the Universe! What business has one born of woman amongst us?' 'He has come to receive the Torah,' answered He to them. Said they to Him, 'That secret treasure, which has been hidden by Thee for nine hundred and seventy-four generations before the world was created. Thou desirest to give to flesh and blood! What is man, that thou art mindful of him, And the son of man, that thou visitest him? O Lord our G-d, How excellent is thy name in all the earth! Who hast set thy glory [the Torah] upon the Heavens!' 'Return them an answer,' bade the Holy One, blessed be He, to Moses. 'Sovereign of the Universe' replied he, 'I fear lest they consume me with the [fiery] breath of their mouths.' 'Hold on to the Throne of Glory,' said He to him, 'and return them an answer,' as it is said, He maketh him to hold on to the face of his throne, And spreadeth [PaRSHeZ] his cloud over him, whereon R. Nahman observed: This teaches that the Almighty [SHaddai] spread [Pirash] the

lustre [Ziw] of His Shechinah and cast it as a protection over him. He [then] spake before Him: Sovereign of the Universe! The Torah which Thou givest me, what is written therein? I am the Lord thy G-d, which brought thee out of the Land of Egypt. Said he to them [the angels], 'Did ye go down to Egypt; were ye enslaved to Pharaoh: why then should the Torah be yours? Again, What is written therein? Thou shalt have none other G-ds: do ye dwell among peoples that engage in idol worship? Again what is written therein? Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy: do ye then perform work, that ye need to rest? Again what is written therein? Thou shalt not take [tissa] [the name ... in vain]: is there any business [massa] dealings among you? Again what is written therein, Honour thy father and thy mother; have ye fathers and mothers? Again what is written therein? Thou shalt not murder. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou Shall not steal; is there jealousy among you; is the Evil Tempter among you? Straightway they conceded [right] to the Holy One, blessed be He, for it is said, O Lord, our Lord, How excellent is thy name, etc. whereas 'Who has set thy glory upon the heavens' is not written. Immediately each one was moved to love him [Moses] and transmitted something to him, for it is said, Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast taken spoils [the Torah]; Thou hast received gifts on account of man: as a recompense for their calling thee man [adam] thou didst receive gifts.

#### **4. Talmud Berachot 61b**

Our Rabbis taught: Once the wicked Government issued a decree forbidding the Jews to study and practise the Torah. Pappus b. Judah came and found R. Akiba publicly bringing gatherings together and occupying himself with the Torah. He said to him: Akiba, are you not afraid of the Government? He replied: I will explain to you with a parable. A fox was once walking alongside of a river, and he saw fishes going in swarms from one place to another. He said to them: From what are you fleeing? They replied: From the nets cast for us by men. He said to them: Would you like to come up on to the dry land so that you and I can live together in the way that my ancestors lived with your ancestors? They replied: Art thou the one that they call the cleverest of animals? Thou art not clever but foolish. If we are afraid in the element in which we live, how much more in the element in which we would die! So it is with us. If such is our condition when we sit and study the Torah, of which it is written, For that is thy life and the length of thy days, if we go and neglect it how much worse off we shall be! It is related that soon afterwards R. Akiba was arrested and thrown into prison... When R. Akiba was taken out for execution, it was the hour for the recital of the Shema', and while they combed his flesh with iron combs, he was accepting upon himself the kingship of heaven. His disciples said to him: Our teacher, even to this point? He said to them: All my days I have been troubled by this verse, 'with all thy soul', [which I interpret,] 'even if He takes thy soul'. I said: When shall I have the opportunity of fulfilling this? Now that I have the opportunity shall I not fulfil it? He prolonged the word ehad until he expired while saying it. A bath kol went forth and proclaimed: Happy art thou, Akiba, that thy soul has departed with the word ehad! The ministering angels said before the Holy One, blessed be He: Such Torah, and such a reward? [He should have been] from them that die by Thy hand, O Lord. He replied to them: Their portion is in life. A bath kol went forth and proclaimed, Happy art thou, R. Akiba, that thou art destined for the life of the world to come.

#### **5. Talmud Menachot 29b**

Rab Judah said in the name of Rab, When Moses ascended on high he found the Holy One, blessed be He, engaged in affixing coronets to the letters. Said Moses, 'Lord of the Universe, Who stays Thy hand?' He answered, 'There will arise a man, at the end of many generations, Akiba b. Joseph by name, who will expound upon each tittle heaps and heaps of laws'. 'Lord of the Universe', said Moses; 'permit me to see him'. He replied, 'Turn thee round'. Moses went and sat down behind eight rows [and listened to the discourses upon the law]. Not being able to follow their arguments he was ill at ease, but when they came to a certain subject and the disciples said to the master 'Whence do you know it?' and the latter replied 'It is a law given unto Moses at Sinai' he was comforted. Thereupon he returned to the Holy One, blessed be He, and said, 'Lord of the Universe, Thou hast such a man and Thou givest the Torah by me!' He replied, 'Be silent, for such is My decree'. Then said Moses, 'Lord of the Universe, Thou hast shown me his Torah, show me his reward'. 'Turn thee round', said He; and Moses turned round and saw them weighing out his flesh at the market-stalls. 'Lord of the Universe', cried Moses, 'such Torah, and such a reward!' He replied, 'Be silent, for such is My decree'.

#### **6. Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer, The Binding of Isaac**

The Ministering Angels said, "Master of the World! You are called Merciful, Gracious, whose mercy is on Your creations. Have mercy on Isaac who is a person and the son of a person, and is being bound before you like an animal!"