

פרשת וירא Ramban Chabura Notes

Part I. מראת המלאכים

To Highlight:

Source #1:

- a) Style:

- Quotes רש"י (frequently starts with this; shows deference, even if will attack or disagree)
- Quotes מורה נבוכים in רמב"ם
 - far less frequent than רש"י or ראב"ע; however, often takes time to dispel theories at length
 - on occasion, agrees with רמב"ם though
 - one count I saw in terms of times he quotes him – 24 against and 16 for; just seems like more often attacking, since does it much more vehemently and at greater length
 - ספר הזכרון (from the school of רמב"ן) wrote ספר defending רמב"ם, called רמב"ם ספר הזכרון
 - רמב"ם (ריטב"א) shows deference here as well; refers to him as "הרב"
 - uncommon in those days, and afterward still as well
 - also, see that he not only read רמב"ם, but studied him at length and knew him well enough to reference
- cutting in his attacks, vicious almost
 - at end, suggests it is אסור to read or believe what רמב"ם wrote (uncharacteristic of רמב"ן; see above)
- raises proofs and disproofs from a) logic, b) textual problems, c) simple meaning of text, d) other פסוקים, e) statements of חז"ל
 - also raises counter arguments and deflects them; possible defenses, and deflects them
 - in studying what he attacks, one gains insights into what may have been reason to think like רמב"ם
- witness his brilliance in uncertain terms – biting analysis, marshalling of פסוקים and חז"ל; מאמרי חז"ל; clearly has broad knowledge of תורה and neat principles by which it works
 - compare as well to רמב"ן's השגות on רמב"ם's ספר המצוות; see full breadth of his mastery of תורה there as well
 - along with his deference to the greatness of the רמב"ם; a worthy opponent, need to unarm
- references to himself later, if ה' allows him to reach there
- references to secrets of the תורה (see in הקדמה), some of which he cannot elaborate on in this form

- b) Content:

Quotes רש"י

- without additional comment
- sets stage for רמב"ם to counter, and for רמב"ן to counter back
- subtly addresses two hidden questions, aside for defining who these "men" were:
 - a) The פסוק says "וירא" – but does ה' ever do anything or say anything here? – רש"י – was just there visiting the sick
 - b) How can the פסוק say the מלאכים ate – they aren't physical beings, and thus cannot eat! – רש"י – appeared to eat

Quotes רמב"ם

- ופרט (addresses both questions: this is the explanation of "וירא", and this explains how מלאכים could act physically)
 - other reasons for why he did this

Begins attack

- Four initial questions:
 - (textual) - א) if this was the whole vision, of the men eating/talking/etc., what does it mean "וירא ה'" – ה' isn't involved here!
 - (other) - ב) moreover, no precedent for such a terminology (referring to ה' and then involving מלאכים only) elsewhere
 - (simple) - ג) to say that all these detailed events didn't actually take place is far from the simple meaning of the פסוקים
 - (logic) - ד) the various, numerous details here are unnecessary – what would be the purpose in showing him all this?

Cites another example

- Brings a similar opinion of רמב"ם, by יעקב אבינו and fighting the stranger in פרשת וישלח
 - (רמב"ם had reasons to say that there as well; "how could one physically fight with an unphysical מלאך?", for example)
- Similarly attacks this opinion, with three questions:
 - (logic) - 1) if it was just a vision, then why was יעקב אבינו actually limping afterwards?
 - (textual) - 2) why would יעקב אבינו comment later that he escaped with his life – נביאים aren't generally afraid from their visions!
 - (simple) - 3) moreover, he had already seen many loftier visions than this one before [and accordingly, should have been more afraid of death from those ones]

Continues onslaught on main point here

- Two additional questions:
 - (simple) - ה) if so, then the vision should continue on by לויט, and all of that was only a vision too? [unlikely, since so lengthy, and also that לויט would attain the level required of a נביא]
 - (textual) - ו) even if לויט were worthy of seeing the מלאכים, surely the people of סדום weren't! [and פסוקים clearly indicate they did]

Continues by addressing some of רמב"ם's opinions

- Implicit reasons for why רמב"ם said what he said:

- a) physical senses cannot perceive a מלאך generally [רמב"ן agrees to this; see more below]
- b) one has to be on the level of a נביא to perceive a מלאך, since all נביאים other than משה רבינו had נבואה through a מלאך
 - מלאך attacks this – just because you see hear a message from a מלאך, doesn't mean you're a נביא!
 - (חז"ל) - 1) say דניאל wasn't a נביא [yet he perceived מלאכים]
 - (textual) - 2) His ספר isn't included in נביאים, but rather in כתובים [since through a מלאך; yet, not a נביא]
 - (And even though he was even able to speak to גבריאל when awake)
 - (חז"ל) - 3) הגר is definitely not included amongst the נביאות [listed by חז"ל, despite seeing מלאכים]
 - And that wasn't a בת קול [lower level] only (as רמב"ם says in מורה נבוכים)
 - (textual) - 4) פסוק says 'ה spoke to the אבות with the name קל שקי, which is one of His names [not a מלאך]
 - Rather, the correct distinction between משה רבינו and others is אספקלריא מצוחצחת versus not
 - (חז"ל) - 5) חז"ל never say that this is one of the distinctions between משה רבינו and others'
- c) proof - פסוק in 'א מלכים א' and the false נביא implies that one is a נביא if one saw a מלאך
 - רמב"ן explains how to read around that
 - (חז"ל) - 6) חז"ל say that 'ה speaks to a נביא directly, but then sometimes retracts through a מלאך [but see that 'ה spoke directly at first] (though these are different levels)
- d) proof - חז"ל say that 'ה spoke to אברהם אבינו only through a מלאך, unlike to רבינו משה
 - רמב"ן explains that they just mean that אברהם אבינו required preparation, whereas משה רבינו did not

Conclusion

- Ends off with a restatement of his theses, deflecting רמב"ם's – seeing מלאכים doesn't make you a נביא, but are rather just a vision
- How will רמב"ן deal with the questions on the story though?
 - מלאכים can somehow be perceived by people finely attuned in certain circumstances (though cannot explain more)
 - [compare to רמב"ן discussing similar idea by animals perceiving מלאכים by בלעם's donkey]
 - As for when it says 'ה and מלאכים switching off in a נבואה – he'll explain more elsewhere