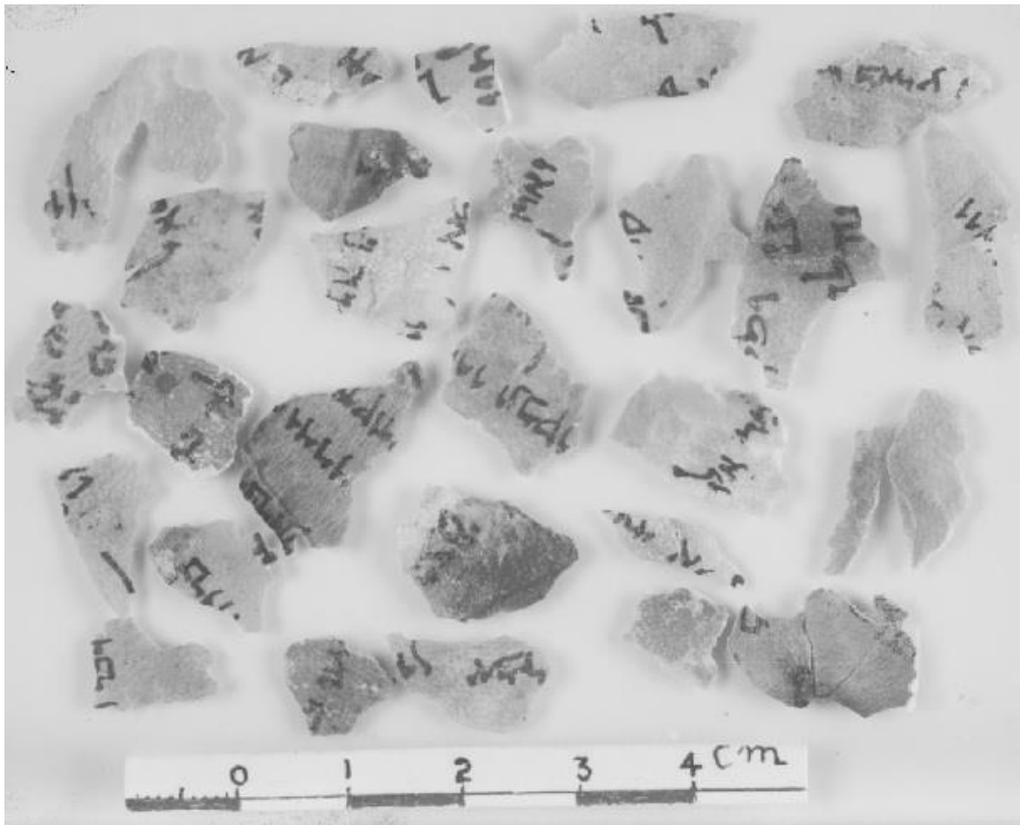


Does God represent Himself in human physical form?

'God is not a man and is incorporeal'



Fragments from Genesis

'God is not a man'

(Numbers 23:19; 1 Samuel 16:29; Psalms 146:3; Hosea 11:9)

The primary purpose of these proof texts is to establish beyond doubt that God being God and not at all prone to human frailties is wholly worthy of our faith.

The assertion is based on His perfect Divine nature.

Christians also believe that 'God is not a man', to deny this is to set up a straw man, easily destroyed but unhelpful to either party.

Ordinary Christians have always held that these two natures, Divine and human are distinct and may not be confused, mingled or mixed.

Three propositions summarise more accurately Christian teaching on the Deity of the Messiah: though the Word is God, God is not the Word alone; the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Father, the Son has His being from the Father, so that they are One in Being; and the Son of God was eternally in the bosom of the Father, long before He assumed human soul and flesh in conjunction to His Divine Nature.

Here we address a simpler and more immediate challenge to rabbinic Judaism: in the Tenach did God choose to manifest Himself physically as a man?

Angels and The Angel

Jacob tells us plainly and directly at Peniel that He saw God face to face (Gen.32.30).

כִּי-רָאִיתִי אֱלֹהִים פָּנִים אֶל-פָּנִים

How could the experienced patriarch make such a serious mistake? After all, we understand that actually this was just an encounter with God's power and an experience with Divine intervention mediated through the hands of a mere angel? Has he then at the hour of darkest need slipped into Rachel's idolatry and started to attribute Divinity to the mysteriously unnamed Agent? Should he not

have come clean, as he did when he saw Esau, bowing to the earth seven times, confessing that it was *as though* he had seen God, when he received Divine mercy through him?

כִּי עַל-כֵּן רָאִיתִי פְּנֵי, כְּרָאֵת פְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים

Should he not have clarified his statement?

Instead he later compounds his error grievously by attributing the the same Angel, the power to 'redeem from all evil', a kinsman-redeemer (הַגָּאֵל) and unique power to bless his progeny (Gen. 48.16). He does this alongside His blessing of the most High, his Shepherd and the Guardian of his fathers, implying a highly dangerous similarity. Doesn't Jacob need to spend some more time in the Yishuv?

Immediately after the circumcision of the whole nation, as **Jehoshua** enters the Promised Land, The Captain of the Lord's host encounters him outside Jericho.

Upon identifying his interlocutor, Jehoshua falls to his face on the ground, and worships this mysterious figure (Josh.5.14).

יִפֹּל יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֶל-פְּנֵי אֲרֻצָּה, וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה

Has Jehoshua still not learned the first principles of the 10 commandments?

לֹא-תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לָהֶם

Doesn't he recognise the intense danger of paying such strong reverence to a mere creature?

Just after cleansing the nation, is he about to set an example that will lead to its defilement, as it falls into apostasy after his death in precisely the way he is now demonstrating? Instead of reproving Jehoshua, as occurs when ordinary angels or holy messengers are worshipped in the New Testament, this man reiterates the sacred words spoken to Moses at the foundation of the Exodus, at the thornbush. 'Take off your shoes from off your feet, for the ground on which you stand is sacred ground'. He then waited for Jehoshua's compliance before continuing.

Then through this man's mouth, 'the LORD said unto Joshua', telling him, 'I have given Jericho into thine hand', giving him detailed instructions on the very first conquest.

Shouldn't someone have told the Captain of the Host not to play God?

When **Gideon** reasons with the Angel of the LORD, HaShem looks at him.

וַיִּפֶן אֵלָיו יְהוָה

Then the Angel says to Gideon, as Divine spokesman, 'have not I sent thee?'

The rehearsing the root of the sacred Name, out of the Angel's mouth come the words,

'Surely I will be with thee'

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יְהוָה, כִּי אֶהְיֶה עִמָּךְ

Had no one explained to Gideon's instructor how dangerous it is to worship angels?

Gideon begins to be lead astray, forgetting his rabbinic instruction, and taking the Angel himself as the interlocutor, he says,

'And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me.'

Gideon plainly confuses the Angel with the One Who speaks through him - what a rookie!

He goes on to pile error on error.

'Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before thee.'

Has He really been induced to think a created being should receive an offering?

To our astonishment and horror, without any qualification, the Angel encourages this apparent idolatry, 'I will tarry until thou come again.'

Is this an angel of light or of darkness?

Then after miraculously endorsing the offering, the angel of the LORD departed out of his sight.

Not only had the angel sat by an oak, Gideon only then perceives he was indeed not just an extraordinary man.

Why did the Angel speak as God, allow Gideon to conflate Him with Deity, to offer sacrifices *before* him and then sanction them?

Manoah's wife and then both together met with a 'man of God' with a very terrible countenance.

He commands them that Samson be a lifelong Nazarite.

He warns Manoah to dedicate his sacrifice to no other than HaShem.

'Thou must offer it unto the 'LORD. For Manoah knew not that he was an angel of the LORD. He properly distinguishes himself from the LORD and refuses to disclose his name, when Manoah proposes to honour him.

Why then when the offering is made, does the angel spoil everything?

'The angel of the LORD ascended *in the flame* of the altar' not as an observer, but not as a participant.

Manoah and his wife look on, both fall on their faces to the ground.

Then Manoah draw the wholly inappropriate, idolatrous and completely needless conclusion, 'We have *seen* God', or more emphatically, '**God** we have seen'.

אֱלֹהִים רָאִינוּ

Will someone please give this troubled man a copy of Moreh Nebuchim?

Visions of the Most High - as a man.

'I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.'

The Messiah too is brought before this human form, albeit in a vision.

'I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.'

Daniel 7.9, 13-4

God chooses to manifest Himself to Daniel in the night visions in human form. The Messiah presented before Him, the very human 'Son of man' (but *after* his assuming human nature), is designated to receive all glory, authority and everlasting dominion.

'And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.' v.27
After the judgement of the Usurper, the most High assumes uncontested and absolute rule.

Here is the Lord who holds the plumbline of humanity, as a man.

'Thus He showed me; and, behold, the Lord stood beside/upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in His hand.'

Amos 7.7

Visions of the Third Temple

'I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.'

Isa.6. 1b-3

The One seated on the throne, between the burning Seraphim, is worshipped as HaShem. In Ezekiel's opening vision four cherubim, angels of the presence, also surround a throne,

'And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.

And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about.'

Ezek. 1.26-7

Upon the throne is an unmistakably human figure, which Ezekiel identifies,
'This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.' v.28

הוא מראה דמות כבוד-יהוה

Who else is entitled to sit on the only seat in the Temple?

The High Priest of Aaron's line - a King?

'Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne;
and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.'
Zech. 6:13

Who is the King then? One Lord or two?

'Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.
In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.'
Jer.23. 5-6

What is the Name of the Holy One to Whom alone the everlasting gates of glory will bow?

'Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.'
Ps 24:8

'For the LORD is our defence; and the Holy One of Israel is our king.'

Ps 89:18

*'So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Spirit Lord;
And yet they are not three Lords but one Lord.'*

The patriarchs had many experiences when HaShem 'appeared' to them. some were or may have been in visions (Ge 12.7; 15; Ge 26.2; Gen. 28.13, Ge 48.3).

In them HaShem seems to manifest Himself in human form:

'LORD stood above the ladder at Bethel'

Gen. 28.13

However most significantly of all, there were other more immediate experiences of God.

Real time personal experiences of HaShem in human form

The nobles of Israel were privileged to have a glimpse of God's glory, from 'under His feet'. This was not a communal trance, but a communal banquet.

'And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness.

And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.'

Ex. 24.10-1

'And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

...And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him'

Gen. 17.1,3

The chapter that follows contains a detailed, intimate and vital dialogue between the Most High and His friend (2Ch 20.7, Isa 41.8).

There are multiple strong indications that the interaction between Abraham and God was via a human manifestation,
Abraham falls on his face before Him twice, laughs, pleads and reasons with his interlocutor as an

intimate, and receives direct replies and responses all in the first person, all in the most sensitive and significant of affairs,
'I will establish..
I have heard thee..
I have blessed him, [I] will make him fruitful, [I] will multiply him exceedingly..
I will make him a great nation..
I establish with Isaac..'

Finally the physical presence of God departs from Abraham, which lifts away from him.

'And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.'

וַיִּכַּל לְדַבֵּר אֵתוֹ; וַיַּעַל אֱלֹהִים, מֵעַל אַבְרָהָם

However the most significant and protracted contact with a human manifestation of HaShem is detailed immediately after this in Genesis 18, and it is this episode, [which we consider separately](#).

[7 Reasons why Maimonides' solitary Simplex is abhorrent to Torah](#)

[Does God choose visible manifestation?](#)

[Has HaShem chosen to manifest Himself as a man?](#)

[There is only One Who must be worshipped.](#)

[7 species of Hellenic leaven in the Rambam's writing](#)