

CHAPTER 2: THE SPIRITUAL WORLD □ PART 5

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

As to angels, for one thing, they aren't what people think they are. They're not embodied (except in those few instances recorded in the Torah); nor are they the winged, fairy-like things soaring about in the air shooting arrows at young couples or hurling down lightning-bolts that many think they are. And what has come to be known as "guiding angels" are never cited in our holy books.

Instead, angels are incorporeal, absolutely invisible agents of G-d's will who carry out all His wishes and could be said to be stealth and subtle catalysts for change. Each one is charged with dominion over a particular and distinct province of its own; and they differ from each other both by kind and function.

In fact, as Ramchal puts it, "everything that comes about in the world -- both good and bad -- takes place with the input of angels". So there are both "good" and "bad" angels; or better yet, angels that focus upon beneficial outcomes and others that concentrate on harmful ones (known as "angels of destruction"). Thus, angels are the most common albeit invisible and unobtrusive Divinely-commissioned, fully-engaged and active participants in everything that happens in the universe.

Now, while Ramchal doesn't touch upon this here, it's important to know other things about them. The most exalted of them are termed "Archangels" and are known as Michael, Raphael, Gabriel, and Uriel. Angels have often appeared prophetically to certain rare individuals to announce portentous events, either good or bad. They told Abraham about the forthcoming birth of Isaac and informed Manoah and his wife of the birth of Samson, for example. G-d has sent them to protect us, as happened after the Exodus from Egypt when one was sent to lead us to the Land of Israel and to destroy the antagonistic peoples in our way, to mention only one instance among many others.

And finally, it's important to know that angels existed before the Creation of the universe, they sit as judges in G-d's court, they accompany Him when He appears to man, and they often "walk to and fro through the earth" to report back to G-d about mankind's actions.

Rabbi Yaakov Feldman has translated and commented upon "The Gates of Repentance", "The Path of the Just", and "The Duties of the Heart" (Jason Aronson Publishers). His works are available in bookstores and in various locations on the Web.