

“Shaliah”

An Introduction to the Law of Agency

Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.

-The Apostle Paul, Galatians 3:19 NASB

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Reading with the Hebrew Mindset

A common mistake made today by Christians and others who study and read the Hebrew Scriptures is a tendency to read them as if they were written in modern English. We know from the manuscripts discovered, the Old Testament scriptures were written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. The Old Testament scriptures can be referred to as the Hebrew Bible, for they were written by Hebrews. So when the scriptures are read by someone not of Hebrew descent, they should constantly remind themselves this is a Hebrew collection of writings inspired by *YHWH*, the one God of Israel.¹ If we read the Hebrew Bible in the modern English translations as if they were written in modern English; we will read them completely wrong and will develop erroneous understandings of the information presented. The key to understanding the Hebrew writings is to investigate the Hebrew language in all of its forms. The titles, customs, practices, sarcasms, literature, descriptions, poetry, and language are sometimes foreign to the average reader. Difficult scriptures can be understood in their proper context if we devote some time investigating, only to understanding what the Hebrew writers were trying to convey to their readers.

The Principle

One of the many customs and practices I will be addressing is a principle which is essential to understanding the Hebrew Scriptures as they are to be understood. This principle is common knowledge to those who have thoroughly investigated the Hebrew Scriptures, and to the Jews. For others, this will be an introduction to the principle; one which will not be discovered unless you thoroughly study the scriptures for yourself. If one approaches the Hebrew Scriptures with presuppositions or have been told how to interpret them beforehand, this principle will remain undiscovered. This principle is known by the Jews in the Hebrew as *Shaliah*, the Jewish law of agency. A common feature of the Hebrew Scriptures is the concept (some even call it the “law”) of Jewish agency. Old Testament scholars and commentators recognize the Jewish custom whenever a superior commissioned an agent to act on his behalf; the agent was regarded as the person himself.² This is well expressed in *The Encyclopedia of the Jewish Religion: Agent* (Heb. *Shaliah*): The main point of the Jewish law of agency is expressed in the dictum, “**a person’s agent is regarded as the person himself**” (Ned. 72B; Kidd, 41b). **Therefore any act committed by a duly appointed agent is regarded as having been committed by the principle;** who therefore bears full responsibility for it with consequent complete absence of liability on the part of the agent.³

Jesus and Joseph

In two parallel passages of scripture, we find this principle being applied between Pharaoh to Joseph, and from God to Jesus. In Genesis 41:40-44, Pharaoh tells Joseph, “**You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.** I hereby put you charge of the whole land of Egypt.” Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph’s finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and men shouted before him, “Make way!” **Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt.** Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “**I am Pharaoh, but without your word no one will lift hand or foot in Egypt.**”⁴ We read in 1 Corinthians 15:27-28, a similar pattern. For he “has put everything under his feet” Now when it says “everything” has been put under him, it is clear this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. In Ephesians 1:22 **And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,** which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.⁵

The parallel between the two are obviously not in the same capacity. Pharaoh granted Joseph authority over all his land, which was the land of Egypt while Jesus was granted authority over all God’s creation. Joseph was a representation of Pharaoh and Jesus was the ultimate representation of God. In both passages, Jesus and Joseph are given positions of supreme authority. However, the authority is not above the one who gave it to them. Pharaoh tells Joseph, “**Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.**” Paul writes, “Now when it says, “everything” has been put under him, it is clear this does not include God himself.” Pharaoh “put him (Joseph) in charge of the whole land of Egypt.” God “appointed him (Jesus) to be head over everything for the church.”⁶ These are examples of agency at work where roles of authority and power are given in another’s name. As we read with the Pharaoh and Joseph, the principle can be applied by men just as it is by God.

The Roles of God’s Agents

The principle of agency is applied throughout scripture, whereas God used men, angels, and his one and only Son, our Lord Messiah Jesus, in order to accomplish his will. God used them as mouthpieces by speaking through them to deliver messages, warnings, and promises.⁷ Other than speaking, they were also utilized to carry out work in His name.⁸ Agents of God were used to destroy

cities,⁹ enemies of God,¹⁰ to save his people,¹¹ and will be used again when God pours out his wrath on mankind.¹² Angels play a role in carrying out commands from God Almighty and acting on his behalf.¹³ According to the definition, an agent whether a man or angel, can be addressed as God, while not being God himself. An equivalent in our culture to the Jewish custom of agency would be one who is authorized to act as Power of Attorney, or more strongly, one who is given Enduring Power of Attorney.¹⁴ Such an agent has virtually unlimited powers to act on behalf of the one who appointed him.¹⁵ We read this of Jesus in John 3:34, *for the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit.*¹⁶

God's Representatives

We read how God utilized angels and men to accomplish certain tasks and also read how the *LORD* was the one who accomplished the task.¹⁷ Is this a contradiction or an error on the writer's part? Not at all! This is perfectly in line with the principle being put into effect. Any time an angel or man appears to someone and speaks on behalf of God; even if it's in the first person, then the person is being used as an agent of God. The scriptures are absolutely clear no one has ever seen God Himself (John 1:18, 1 Timothy 6:16, 1 John 4:12).¹⁸ The scriptures also state God spoke to Moses face to face.¹⁹ At face value, this can cause confusion, how can one passage say Moses spoke with God face to face and another declare no one has seen God without it being a contradiction? The principle of agency which declares how some angels, men, and even our Lord Jesus spoke on behalf of God brings clarity. In Hebrew eyes it is perfectly natural to consider the agent as the person himself.²⁰ In Hebrew thought, homage given to God's agent or representative is homage ultimately given to God Himself.²¹ In other words, the way one treats any servant, messenger, prophet, king, or savior of God is treating God the same way.

The Angel of the Lord

Considering the agent as the person himself, the concept which needs to be understood is the operating agent is not the principle being represented. Much speculation surrounds the identity about the *angel of the Lord*. Some suggest the *angel of the Lord* is actually Jesus, as the second member of the trinity in his pre-human existence. This suggestion arises from passages of scripture where this angel makes statements which only God would make. If one believes Jesus to be *YHWH*, the one God of Israel, then this idea of the *angel of the Lord*'s identity as Jesus is a solution to various passages; because if Jesus is *YHWH*, then he *would* make statements which only *YHWH* could make. Before adopting this solution, we need to step back and dig into the Jewish culture for their understanding

about the angel's identity. We know from scripture Jesus is our monotheistic Jewish Messiah who identifies *YHWH as the Only True God*.²² According to the Jewish law of agency, if **the one sent is regarded as the person himself**,²³ then it is perfectly in line with the *angel of the Lord* making statements which only *YHWH* could make. Additionally, it is more sensible an angel spoke on God's behalf since man cannot stand in the presence of God in our sinful state. Some would even argue our Lord Jesus did not even stand in God's presence until after he accomplished his Father's will on earth.²⁴

The one who spoke with Moses

If asked who spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai and in the burning bush, the majority without any hesitation would probably reply it was God. Who else but God can make statements such as "*I am the God of your Father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*"?²⁵ A continued reading of Exodus chapter 3 verses 11-15 all begin with either *God said* or *Moses said to God*. So one would ask, how can anyone else be speaking except for God himself? When we read scripture, it is important to pay attention to the narration of the text as to who is speaking at what time. In Exodus 3, before Moses speaks to the burning bush, it states who exactly is speaking from the beginning. Verse 2 states, "*There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in the flames of fire from within the bush.*"²⁶ Moses speaking to the angel representing God is ultimately speaking to God himself. Depending on what perspective the Hebrew Scriptures are read from will determine how the reader will interpret the narrative. Reading Exodus 3 with a Hebrew understanding of a Hebrew narrative will eliminate any difficulty within. In Hebrew eyes it is perfectly natural to consider the agent as the person himself.²⁷ Stephen, the first martyr for Jesus, reaffirms this biblical truth in his speech to the Sanhedrin in Acts 7. While speaking, he says, "*After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai.*"²⁸ Again he says, "*....He was sent to be their ruler and deliverer by God himself, through the angel who appeared to him in the bush.*"²⁹ *He was in the assembly in the desert, with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers; and he received living words to pass on to us.*"³⁰

Sodom and Gomorrah

Who destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, two angels or God? Genesis 19 begins with two angels arriving in Sodom,³¹ who were recognized as men³² sent to destroy the cities in the plain.³³ The angels tell Lot, "*The outcry to the LORD against its people is so great he has sent us to destroy it.*"³⁴ Lot tells his family, "*Hurry and get out of this place, because the LORD is about to destroy the*

*city!“³⁵ Then the LORD rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah-from the LORD out of the heavens. Thus **he** overthrew those cities and the entire plain.³⁶* The narrative ends with Abraham looking at the destruction and the statement of *when God destroyed the cities of the plain.*³⁷ Again, who destroyed the cities, God, or angels? This narrative of God’s judgment is an illustration of agency at work. God ultimately is the one who destroyed the cities in the plain. The angels are the means by which God destroyed the cities; *for they are God’s servants, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.*³⁸ Another way of illustrating this concept is one who has committed murder with a firearm. The firearm is the means by which the murderer killed the victim. Or the electric chair is the means by which the death penalty was executed. In this case, the firearms or electric chair were the angels.

Administering Punishment

In 2 Samuel, King David sins against the *LORD* by taking his own census, feeling conscience-stricken, confessed his foolishness and asked God to take away his guilt. God told David **through** Gad the Prophet (agency) his three options for the *LORD* to carry out against him.³⁹ Of his three options, David chose to fall into the hands of the *LORD*.⁴⁰ *So the Lord sent a plague on Israel from the morning until the end of the time designated, and seventy thousand of the people from Dan to Beersheba died. When the angel of the LORD stretched out his hand to destroy Jerusalem, the LORD was grieved because of the calamity and said to the angel who was afflicting the people, “Enough! Withdraw your hand.” The angel of the LORD was then at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. When David saw the angel who was striking down the people, he said to the LORD, “I am the one who has sinned...let your hand fall upon me and my family.”⁴¹* A more detailed account of this narrative is found in 1 Chronicles 21. Both narratives state God sent an angel to destroy Jerusalem and then *told the angel* to withdraw his hand. The angel of the *LORD* actually orders Gad to tell David to build an altar to the *LORD*. *So David went up in obedience to the word Gad had spoken in the name of the LORD.*⁴² David obeys the command coming from the mouth of Gad because he had spoken in the name of the *LORD*, which is equivalent to God speaking to David directly.

In Exodus 23, God commissioned an angel to prepare the way and to lead the Israelites into the land He had prepared for them. God says, *“I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared. Pay attention to him and listen to what he says. Do not rebel against him; he will not forgive your rebellion, since my Name is in him. If*

*you listen carefully to what **he says** and do all **I say**, I will be an enemy to your enemies and will oppose those who oppose you. My angel will go ahead of you and bring you into the land...⁴³* In verse 22 agency is greatly demonstrated when God says, “*If you listen carefully to what **he says** and do all **I say**.*” This statement is no error on the writer’s part, but a clear declaration of God speaking through the angel. The angel will instruct and chastise the people on God’s behalf since God’s Name is in him; in other words, God’s presence and authority are manifested in him.⁴⁴ Here the angel of the LORD bears YHWH’s name: “**My name is in him.**”⁴⁵ In Hebrew thought, *an agent may bear the name or title of his principle,*⁴⁶ in this incident, the angel was playing the role of God. When God said his Name was in the angel, *it meant God’s authority was invested in the angel.*⁴⁷ Whatever the angel said and did was in reality what God Himself said and did.⁴⁸ In obeying the angel, the Israelites were obeying God.⁴⁹

Moses and Aaron acting as God

Is addressing someone else as God other than YHWH idolatry? Maybe, maybe not; it depends on the context and if the one being addressed as God has been given the authority or not. The Hebrew word for God, *elohim*, has a wide range of possible meanings.⁵⁰ *Depending on context*, it can mean the Supreme Deity, or “a god” or “gods” or even “angels” or human “judges.”⁵¹ Moses is addressed as God (*elohim*) in Exodus 7 before he is sent to address Pharaoh. Moses tries to escape the task God wants him to do by complaining of a speech impediment.⁵² Verse 1 states, *the LORD said to Moses, “See, I have made you like God to Pharaoh.”*⁵³ Or, “*I place you in the role of God to Pharaoh, with your brother Aaron as your prophet.*”⁵⁴ Moses is given the role of God along with his own prophet, his brother. Whatever Pharaoh says or does to Moses, he is doing the same to God Himself.

The LORD tells Moses Pharaoh’s heart is hard and he refuses to release his people.⁵⁵ God commissions Moses as his spokesman to give Pharaoh this warning: “*The LORD, the God of the Hebrews has sent me to say to you: Let my people go, so they may worship me in the desert. But up until now you have not listened. This is what the LORD says: By this you will know I am the LORD: With the staff in my hand I will strike the water of the Nile, and it will be changed into blood.*”⁵⁶ The reader must be reminded of who the speaker is here. This warning appears as if God Himself is speaking, however these words were spoken by Moses. Moses was commissioned as an agent; his task here was to speak on God’s behalf. Earlier we read how God was going to strike the Nile with the staff in his hand. *The LORD says to Moses, “Tell Aaron, ‘Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt...and they will turn into blood.’*⁵⁷ Moses and Aaron did just as the

*LORD had commanded. **He (Aaron) raised his staff** in the presence of Pharaoh and his officials **and struck the waters of the Nile**, and all the waters were changed into blood.⁵⁸* Aaron is told by Moses on multiple accounts to stretch out the staff in his hand.⁵⁹ God says *He Himself* will strike the waters with the *staff in his own hand*.⁶⁰ Yet it was *Aaron's hand* which actually held the rod; it was *Aaron who struck the Nile*.⁶¹ Aaron was standing as God's agent, *in the very place of God Himself*.⁶² As agents of God, *Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh*.⁶³

Angelic Agency

Much of the divine intervention was performed by God through angelic agency. For the Passover, God wanted the tops and sides of the doorframes of the Israelites to be marked with the blood of lambs.⁶⁴ In Exodus 12 God says, “*During the night, I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you.*”⁶⁵ When Moses summons the elders of Israel, he tells them, “*When the LORD goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over the doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down.*”⁶⁶ God told Moses *He Himself* was going to pass through Egypt at midnight. Moses understood God Himself would not literally pass through, rather an angel acting on God's behalf would. It is understood the angel known as **the destroyer**, was regarded as God Himself. The tradition of an angelic figure serving as God's agent in the exodus and subsequent events⁶⁷ is found throughout the scriptures.

In Joshua 5, Joshua had an encounter with a superior angelic agent.⁶⁸ *When Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing before him, drawn sword in hand. Joshua asked him, “Are you one of us or of our enemies?” He replied, “No, I am captain of the LORD'S host.”⁶⁹ Now I have come!* **Joshua threw himself face down to the ground and, prostrating himself**, said to him, “*What does my lord command his servant?*” *The captain of the LORD'S host answered, “Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy.”⁷⁰ And Joshua did so.⁷¹* Joshua treated this highly commissioned angelic agent as God Himself. Why would Joshua prostrate himself before an angel and remove his sandals at the angel's request? In prostrating himself, Joshua acknowledges this is a messenger from God.⁷² Angels are always nameless until the postexilic period, though this unidentified *man standing* is identified as the archangel Michael according to Jewish tradition.⁷³ The man identifies himself as *captain of the LORD'S host*, a military figure which partakes of the imagery of the *LORD* as a divine warrior with commanding officers of the heavenly hosts.⁷⁴

Joshua was not committing idolatry because he understood this angel was appearing to him on God's behalf. In Hebrew thought, *homage given to God's agent or representative is homage ultimately given to God Himself.*⁷⁵

In Acts 12 we read, *suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in his cell. He struck Peter on his side and woke him up and the chains fell off his wrists. Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt the Lord sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were anticipating." He went to the house of Mary and they let him in. Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison.*⁷⁶ Who rescued Peter from his jail cell, an angel, or God? The passage says both did; but we know the *LORD* sent an angel to do the actual work.⁷⁷ To the Hebrew mind, it was really the *LORD* who rescued Peter.⁷⁸

In Daniel 3, Nebuchadnezzar is furious at Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego for not serving his gods. Nebuchadnezzar threatens the three Jewish men with a fiery furnace if they refuse to worship his gods. He asked the three, "*What god will be able to rescue you from my hand?*" They replied, "*O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king.*"⁷⁹ Nebuchadnezzar orders the furnace be hotter than usual and had Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego thrown into the furnace. Nebuchadnezzar is amazed to see a fourth person in the furnace who looks like a son of the gods (or divine being⁸⁰). He orders them out and they are unharmed. Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "*Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants!*"⁸¹ Notice, in verse 17 the three tell Nebuchadnezzar how the God they serve will save them, but in verses 25 and 28 we read *an angel* was sent to the rescue. God rescued his faithful servants *through the means of an angel*, so glory may be given to God.

According to the Genesis 32 account, Jacob wrestled with a man later identified as God. During the struggle, Jacob refuses to release the man from his grasp unless he is blessed. *The man then says to Jacob, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel*⁸², because you have struggled with God⁸³ and with men and have overcome."⁸⁴ Jacob's mysterious adversary is surely supernatural, and most traditional Jewish commentators have taken him to be angelic.⁸⁵ This traditional understanding is Jacob wrestled with an angelic or divine being is affirmed in Hosea 12. *The LORD has a charge to bring against Judah; he will punish Jacob according to his ways and repay him*

*according to his deeds. In the womb he grasped his brother's heel; as a man he struggled with God. He struggled with the angel and overcame him;*⁸⁶ *and wept and begged for his favor.*⁸⁷ Some may suggest this event when God appeared to Jacob as a man would qualify as a theophany;⁸⁸ this is not the case according to Hosea 12:3-4.⁸⁹ So the one who is called both "a man" and "God" in Genesis is identified as an angel in Hosea.⁹⁰ *The man refuses to give Jacob his name but blesses him. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face,"*⁹¹ *and yet my life was spared.*"⁹²

The same language is exchanged in the narrative regarding Moses in Numbers 12. *The LORD calls Moses, Aaron and Miriam out from the Tent of Meeting, and the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud; he stood at the entrance and summoned Aaron and Miriam. The LORD said, "Listen to my words: When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face,*⁹³ *clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD. Why then are you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"*⁹⁴ There are a few factors to consider in this passage: who is speaking and is it possible to see God's face? From the narrative, it states the *LORD* came down in a pillar of cloud. This is also expressed in Exodus 13:21; *By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of the cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so they could travel by day or night.*⁹⁵ The pillar of cloud described as the *LORD* is later identified as an angelic agent. Exodus 14:19-20 states, *then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel's army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel.*⁹⁶ In Exodus 33, before the glory of the *LORD* passes over Moses, He tells him, "*You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.*" *The LORD then hides Moses in the cleft of a rock and covers him with his hand telling him, "I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.*"⁹⁷ God makes it clear his face must not be seen, so there has to be an explanation as to how God speaks to Moses face to face without contradicting Scripture. God distinguishes Moses' prophetic privileges from those accorded to any other prophet.⁹⁸ Moses can speak to God directly, in live dialogue rather than in dreams or visions; God is at his most *anthropomorphic*⁹⁹ in these verses.¹⁰⁰ The book of Acts tells us *an angel* was on Mount Sinai speaking on God's behalf and manifesting His glory. Even though it was an angel, Moses was still not permitted to see the angel's face. Why the angel was manifested is such a manner *meant God's authority was invested in the angel.*¹⁰¹ This allowed the angel to play the role of God without being the one true God. In these passages of Scripture we read how God rescued

Peter from prison, wrestled with Jacob, spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, and led the Israelites through the desert as the pillar of cloud.¹⁰² Further examinations of these passages unveil the means by which God acted, through the agency of angels.¹⁰³ These are perfect examples of Jewish agency where *the agent is considered as the principle.*¹⁰⁴

Human Agency

In Judges 6, Gideon was visited by the angel of the *LORD* who said to him, “*The LORD is with you, mighty warrior.*”¹⁰⁵ Angels or messengers of God tend to appear as adult human beings; therefore Gideon does not know he is confronted by an angel.¹⁰⁶ This explains why Gideon rather than bowing down or trembling with fear inquires further. *Gideon replies,* “*But sir, if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Now the LORD has abandoned us and put in the hand of Midian. The LORD turned to him and said, “Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?”* “*But LORD,*” *Gideon asked,* “*How can I save Israel?*” *The LORD answers,* “*I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Medianites together.*” *Gideon replied,* “*If now I have found favor in your eyes, give me a sign it is really you speaking to me.*” Gideon goes onto prepare an offering of meat and unleavened bread and places it on a rock. The angel of the *LORD* touch the offering with a staff and fire flared from the rock consuming the offering; *and the angel of the LORD disappeared.* When Gideon realized it was the angel of the *LORD*, he exclaimed, “*Ah Sovereign LORD! I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face!*”¹⁰⁷ Gideon is not confused as to who spoke with him; He exclaimed, “I have seen the angel of the *LORD* face to face” (v.22).¹⁰⁸ We know the angel of the *LORD* is the agent, and not literally God, because the Scriptures are absolutely clear no one has ever seen God Himself (John 1:18, 1 Timothy 6:16, 1 John 4:12).¹⁰⁹

Many scholars have failed to take this Hebrew way of looking at things into account and have literally identified the angel of the *LORD* with God Himself.¹¹⁰ All confusion is dissipated when we understand the Jewish law of agency: “*a person’s agent is regarded as the person himself.*”¹¹¹ The key word in the definition is *regarded as the person himself.* If one were to make the claim as to whether anybody who speaks on God’s behalf in the first person can be none other than God Himself; then scripture would leave us no choice but to conclude *Moses was God.* In Deuteronomy 29 when Moses is speaking to the Israelites, he says, “*You ate no bread and drank no wine or fermented drink. I did this so you might know I am the LORD your God.*”¹¹² It is obvious God Himself is not personally speaking to the people, Moses is.¹¹³ Moses as an agent of God can speak *as though he is*

the *LORD* Himself. God is speaking through His man, His appointed representative.¹¹⁴ Another example of one speaking on God's behalf in the first person is found in Zachariah 3.

The scriptures declare Gideon was used as an agent of God. *Gideon said to God, "If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised."*¹¹⁵ Scripture could not be clearer as to how God saved Israel by *Gideon's hand*. God used Moses in the same way to carry out his vengeance on the Medianites in Numbers 31. *The LORD said to Moses, "Take vengeance on the Medianites for the Israelites, afterwards, you will be gathered to your people."* So Moses said to the people, "Arm some of your men to go to war against the Medianites and **to carry out the LORD's vengeance** on them."¹¹⁶ This passage is in unity with what the prophet Isaiah declared in Isaiah 34. *The LORD is angry with all nations; his wrath is upon all armies. He will totally destroy¹¹⁷ them; he will give them over to slaughter.*¹¹⁸ Though Isaiah was speaking of Edom in particular, he addressed the surrounding nations as well. God gave Edom over to slaughter just as He did with the Medianites.

The Word “Agent” in Scripture

The principle of agency is applied throughout Scripture. The actual Greek word for agent, *ekdikos*,¹¹⁹ is applied only twice. It is defined as *an avenger, one who inflicts punishment;*¹²⁰ (*1. without law, unjust; 2. exacting penalty from; a legal representative.*)¹²¹ In Romans 13:4 Paul is addressing the submission to authorities and rebellion against what God has established. He writes, *for he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent (ekdikos) of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.*¹²² In 1 Thessalonians 4:6 Paul is instructing the church to live lives pleasing to God. He writes, *and in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish (ekdikos) men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you.*¹²³ In both passages the word *ekdikos* is used to describe an avenger or one who will inflict punishment. The passage in Romans 13:4 is clear God will avenge *through his appointed agents*. The way Paul uses *ekdikos* in his letter to the Romans was to describe God's representatives on earth. These representatives would avenge the wrongdoer as his agents of wrath; similar to when Moses carried out the *LORD'S* vengeance on the Medianites. In modern times, this may apply to military and law enforcement personnel. The judges of Israel had roles as God's representatives on earth to administer justice. The Hebrew word *elohim, depending on context*, can mean the Supreme Deity, or “a god” or “gods” or even “angels” or human “judges.”¹²⁴ In Exodus 21:6 we read, if a Hebrew servant does not want to be free from his master, *his master must take him before the judges (or before God)*. Our

Lord Messiah Jesus reaffirms this truth in John 10:34 when he is accused of blasphemy, “*Is it not written in your law, I have said you are gods?*” Thessalonians 4 does not clearly state God will punish through the means of agents; however, we find in Scripture this appears to be God’s modus operandi. Paul states this truth in Galatians 3:19, “*Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator (Moses), until the seed (Jesus) would come to whom the promise had been made (NASB).*” Whether God avenges the wicked exclusively by Himself or through agents, God will restore all things and His justice will be vindicated.

Jesus our Lord Messiah, God’s Ultimate Revelation to Man

“*And you are the heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, ‘Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.’ When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.*”¹²⁵ “*Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.*”¹²⁶ “*For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the spirit without limit. The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands.*”¹²⁷ “*For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.*”¹²⁸ “*For as the Father has life in Himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself, and he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.*”¹²⁹ Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son.¹³⁰ Jesus our Lord Messiah, who is the Son of God, was given all authority on heaven and earth.¹³¹ This authority included forgiving sins¹³² and speaking the words of the only true God, the Father.¹³³ Jesus did, of course, claim to *function* for God as his agent.¹³⁴ His words *are the words of God*, his acts *are the acts of God*; and the Father has conferred on him the right to forgive sins, judge the world, and even raise the dead.¹³⁵ He is not YHWH, but ***His supremely elevated representative***; Jesus’ equality of function with his Father *does not mean* Jesus is God.¹³⁶ The significance of all this is the principle of agency has huge ramifications for our understanding of who Jesus is and what his purpose and claims were.¹³⁷ Jesus claimed to represent God like no one else before him, to be the unique spokesman for God his Father and to *speak the ultimate words of God; he who hears the Son hears the words of God Himself.*¹³⁸ The opening verses in Hebrews identify the principle of agency as God’s way of revealing Himself to mankind

throughout our existence. *In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.*¹³⁹

So what has God done exclusively on His own and not through the means of agency? The original creation, *in the beginning God created the heavens and earth.*¹⁴⁰ If God created the world through the means of an agent, it would be declared in scripture. The scriptures make it clear God did not create the heavens and the earth through the means of agents. He asked Job, *Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation... while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?*¹⁴¹ This passage clearly states the angels were not laying the earth's foundations, rather they were celebrating. The prophet Isaiah declared the same message, *this is what God the Lord says- he who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and all which comes out of it.*¹⁴² *I am the LORD, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself.*¹⁴³ Jesus, who speaks the words of God, also affirms this biblical truth. When speaking on divorce, he tells the Pharisees, *in the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female.'*¹⁴⁴ Jesus is not claiming credit for creation by referring to his Father as *the Creator*. Paul writes, *yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live.*¹⁴⁵

Knowing the One True God

*Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the Only True God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*¹⁴⁶ According to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, *in him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.*¹⁴⁷ For *through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.*¹⁴⁸ Our heavenly Father is awesome, He chose to repair the relationship mankind chose to break. He loves us in our rebellion, anger, and fallen state. God desires to have a relationship with those who turn their back on Him, reject Him, and even doubt His very existence. Scriptures tell us God, from the beginning, puts his plan of redemption into affect with the first messianic prophecy in Genesis 3:15. Why does He want us to know Him, the only true God by revealing Himself through prophets, Scripture, His Son, and by His spirit? Who are we and why should God care for us to reign on the earth with His Son, who is our King? There are not enough words to express my gratitude for our Father, who gave up His Son for our sake. I find it rather interesting when people speak of how horrible their suffering is or have gone through, no doubt people do suffer. God told Abraham to sacrifice his son for Him, but before a drop of blood was shed he was interrupted to hear he would not have to follow through. Our heavenly

Father did just the opposite; He followed through, unlike Abraham who only prepared his son for slaughter. Our heavenly Father suffered more than we could ever know by watching his innocent Son suffer a criminal's death. There was no other substitute. Our Lord, our King, and our Messiah Jesus, was led like a lamb to his slaughter and our Father allowed it, **for us**. For you, for me, and for anyone who will call on the name of His Son. Knowing the one true God as a child of His through the blood of His Son is so overwhelming and nothing can measure the depth of His love. I look forward to when our Heavenly Father will no longer dwell in unapproachable light, but will dwell with us on earth and we will reign with His Son. *Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.*¹⁴⁹

¹ 2 Peter 1:16-21; 2 Timothy 3:16-17

² Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 65)

³ Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 65)

⁴ Zondervan, Bible: New International Version (Emphasis mine)

⁵ Zondervan, Bible: New International Version (Emphasis mine)

⁶ Ephesians 1:22

⁷ Hebrews 1:1-2

⁸ Exodus 23:21, John 5:43

⁹ Genesis 19

¹⁰ Romans 13:4, Numbers 31:1-3

¹¹ Numbers 20:16, Daniel 3:28

¹² Revelation 8

¹³ Hebrews 1:14

¹⁴ Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 66)

¹⁵ Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 66)

¹⁶ Zondervan, Bible: New International Version (Emphasis mine)

¹⁷ Exodus 3:2-6, 2 Samuel 24:15-17

¹⁸ Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 69)

¹⁹ Numbers 12:8, Deuteronomy 5:4

²⁰ Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 66)

²¹ Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 66)

²² John 17:3 (Emphasis mine)

²³ Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 65)

²⁴ Hebrews 9:24

²⁵ Exodus 3:6 (Emphasis mine)

²⁶ Zondervan, Bible: New International Version (Emphasis mine)

²⁷ Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 66)

²⁸ Acts 7:30 (Emphasis mine)

²⁹ Acts 7:35 (Emphasis mine)

³⁰ Acts 7:38 (Emphasis mine)

³¹ Genesis 19:1

³² Genesis 19: 5, 8, 10, 12

³³ Genesis 19:13-14

³⁴ Genesis 19:13 (Emphasis mine)

³⁵ Genesis 19:14 (Emphasis mine)

³⁶ Genesis 19:24-25 (Emphasis mine)

³⁷ Genesis 19:29 (Emphasis mine)

³⁸ Romans 13:4 (Emphasis mine)

³⁹ 2 Samuel 24:10-12

⁴⁰ 2 Samuel 24:14

⁴¹ 2 Samuel 24:15-17 (Emphasis mine)

⁴² 1 Chronicles 21:14-15, 18-19 (Emphasis mine)

⁴³ Exodus 23:20-23 (Emphasis mine)

⁴⁴ Oxford, The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation: Torah, Nevi'im, Kethuvim (2004, pg. 160)

footnote

⁴⁵ Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 67) (Emphasis mine)

⁴⁶ Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 67) (Emphasis mine)

⁴⁷ Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 67-68) (Emphasis mine)

⁴⁸ Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 68) (Emphasis mine)

⁴⁹ Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 68)

⁵⁰ Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 68)

⁵¹ Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 68) (Emphasis mine)

⁵² Exodus 6:30

⁵³ Zondervan, Bible: New International Version (Emphasis mine)

⁵⁴ Oxford, The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation: Torah, Nevi'im, Kethuvim (2004, pg. 117) (Emphasis mine)

⁵⁵ Exodus 7:14 (Emphasis mine)

⁵⁶ Exodus 7:16-17 (Emphasis mine)

⁵⁷ Exodus 7:19 (Emphasis mine)

⁵⁸ Exodus 7:20 (Emphasis mine)

⁵⁹ Exodus 7:9-10; 8:5-6, 8:16-17; 9:22-23; 10:12-13, 10:21-22

⁶⁰ Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 67) (Emphasis mine)

⁶¹ Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 67) (Emphasis mine)

⁶² Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 67) (Emphasis mine)

⁶³ Exodus 11:10 (Emphasis mine)

⁶⁴ Exodus 12:7

⁶⁵ Exodus 12:12-13 (Emphasis mine)

⁶⁶ Exodus 12:23 (Emphasis mine)

⁶⁷ Oxford, The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation: Torah, Nevi'im, Kethuvim (2004, pg. 128)

⁶⁸ Joshua 5:13-15

⁶⁹ I Kings 22:19 “*I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the host of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left.*” Zondervan, Bible: New International Version (Emphasis mine)

⁷⁰ Exodus 3:5 “Do not come any closer,” God said. “**Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.**” Zondervan, Bible: New International Version (Emphasis mine)

⁷¹ Oxford, The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation: Torah, Nevi'im, Kethuvim (2004, pgs. 472-473)

⁷² Oxford, The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation: Torah, Nevi'im, Kethuvim (2004, pg. 473)

footnote

⁷³ Oxford, The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation: Torah, Nevi'im, Kethuvim (2004, pg. 472)

footnote

⁷⁴ Oxford, The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation: Torah, Nevi'im, Kethuvim (2004, pg. 472)

footnote

⁷⁵ Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 66) (Emphasis mine)

⁷⁶ Acts 12:6-19 (Emphasis mine)

⁷⁷ Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 71)

⁷⁸ Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 71) (Emphasis mine)

⁷⁹Daniel 3:15-17 (Emphasis mine)

⁸⁰Oxford, The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation: Torah, Nevi'im, Kethuvim (2004, pg. 1648) *footnote*

⁸¹Daniel 3:19-29 (Emphasis mine)

⁸²In Hebrew means, “*he struggles with God*” Zondervan, Bible: New International Version (Emphasis mine) *footnote*

⁸³“*Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with beings divine and human, and have prevailed.*” Oxford, The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation: Torah, Nevi'im, Kethuvim (2004, pg. 68) (Emphasis mine)

⁸⁴Genesis 32:23-33 (Emphasis mine)

⁸⁵Oxford, The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation: Torah, Nevi'im, Kethuvim (2004, pg. 67) *footnote*

⁸⁶“*Grown to manhood, he strove with a divine being, he strove with an angel prevailed.*” Oxford, The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation: Torah, Nevi'im, Kethuvim (2004, pg. 1162) (Emphasis mine)

⁸⁷Hosea 12:2-4 (Emphasis mine)

⁸⁸Gr. **theophaneia**, *a visible appearance of God or a god to man*. David B. Guralnik, Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language (1980, pg. 1475)

⁸⁹Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 67) (Emphasis mine)

⁹⁰Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 67) (Emphasis mine)

⁹¹“*I have seen a divine being face to face, yet my life has been preserved.*” Oxford, The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation: Torah, Nevi'im, Kethuvim (2004, pg. 68) (Emphasis mine)

⁹²Genesis 32:31 (Emphasis mine)

⁹³“*With him I speak mouth to mouth, plainly and not in riddles, and he beholds the likeness of the LORD.*” Oxford, The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation: Torah, Nevi'im, Kethuvim (2004, pg. 309) (Emphasis mine)

⁹⁴Numbers 12:1-8 (Emphasis mine)

⁹⁵Zondervan, Bible: New International Version (Emphasis mine)

⁹⁶Zondervan, Bible: New International Version (Emphasis mine)

⁹⁷Exodus 33:19-23 (Emphasis mine)

⁹⁸Oxford, The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation: Torah, Nevi'im, Kethuvim (2004, pg. 308) *footnote*

⁹⁹“*the attributing of human shape or characteristics to a god, animal, or inanimate thing.*” David B. Guralnik, Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language (1980, pg. 59)

¹⁰⁰Oxford, The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation: Torah, Nevi'im, Kethuvim (2004, pg. 308) *footnote*

¹⁰¹Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 67-68) (Emphasis mine)

¹⁰²Genesis 32:22-32; Exodus 19,33; Exodus 13:21

¹⁰³Hosea 12:3-4; Exodus 3:2, Acts 7:30-38; Exodus 14:19-20

¹⁰⁴Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 67) (Emphasis mine)

¹⁰⁵Judges 6:11-12 (Emphasis mine)

¹⁰⁶Oxford, The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation: Torah, Nevi'im, Kethuvim (2004, pg. 523) *footnote*

¹⁰⁷Judges 6:13-22 (Emphasis mine)

¹⁰⁸Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 69)

¹⁰⁹Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 69)

¹¹⁰Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 69)

¹¹¹Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 69)

¹¹²Deuteronomy 29:6 (Emphasis mine)

¹¹³Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 69)

¹¹⁴Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 69)

¹¹⁵Judges 6:36 (Emphasis mine)

¹¹⁶Numbers 31:1-3 (Emphasis mine)

¹¹⁷The Hebrew term *refers to the irrevocable giving over of things or persons to the LORD, often by totally destroying them.* Zondervan, Bible: New International Version (Emphasis mine) *footnote*

¹¹⁸Isaiah 34:2 (Emphasis mine)

¹¹⁹William D. Mounce, Interlinear for the rest of us, Strong's Number [1558] (2006, pg. 821)

¹²⁰William D. Mounce, Interlinear for the rest of us, Strong's Number [1558] (2006, pg. 821)

¹²¹G. Abbott-Smith, A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament (1936, pg. 137)

¹²²Zondervan, Bible: New International Version (Emphasis mine)

¹²³Zondervan, Bible: New International Version (Emphasis mine)

¹²⁴Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 68)

¹²⁵Acts 3:25-26 (Emphasis mine)

¹²⁶Acts 2:22 (Emphasis mine)

¹²⁷John 3:34-35 (Emphasis mine)

¹²⁸Acts 17:31 (Emphasis mine)

¹²⁹John 5:27 (Emphasis mine)

¹³⁰John 5:22 (Emphasis mine)

¹³¹Matthew 9:8, 28:18; Luke 10:19; John 3:35, 5:27

¹³²Matthew 9:6; Mark 2:10; Luke 5:20-24, 10:22;

¹³³Luke 10:21-22; John 5:43-44, 6:57, 8:54, 10:29-30, 17:3; 1 Corinthians 8:6

¹³⁴Anthony F. Buzzard & Charles F. Hunting , The Doctrine of the Trinity: Christianity's Self-Inflicted Wound, (1998, pg. 324) (Emphasis mine)

¹³⁵Anthony F. Buzzard & Charles F. Hunting , The Doctrine of the Trinity: Christianity's Self-Inflicted Wound, (1998, pg. 324) (Emphasis mine)

¹³⁶Anthony F. Buzzard & Charles F. Hunting , The Doctrine of the Trinity: Christianity's Self-Inflicted Wound, (1998, pg. 324) (Emphasis mine)

¹³⁷Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 71)

¹³⁸Greg S. Deuble, They never told me THIS in church (2006, pg. 71-72) (Emphasis mine)

¹³⁹Hebrews 1:1-2 (Emphasis mine)

¹⁴⁰Genesis 1:1 (Emphasis mine)

¹⁴¹Job 38:4-7 (Emphasis mine)

¹⁴²Isaiah 42:5 (Emphasis mine)

¹⁴³Isaiah 44:24; 45:12, 45:18 (Emphasis mine)

¹⁴⁴Matthew 19:4 (Emphasis mine)

¹⁴⁵1 Corinthians 8:6 (Emphasis mine)

¹⁴⁶John 17:3 (Emphasis mine)

¹⁴⁷Ephesians 3:11-12 (Emphasis mine)

¹⁴⁸Ephesians 2:18 (Emphasis mine)

¹⁴⁹1 Timothy 1:17 (Emphasis mine)