

## And an Angel of Hashem said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her domination.” (16:9)

*Rashi* quotes the *Midrash* that, for each and every *amirah*, communication, Hashem sent another angel to speak with Hagar. There is a dispute among *Chazal* as to the number, whether there were four or five angels. What is the reason that a new angel was required for every pronouncement? **Horav Chaim Zaitchik, zl**, explains that a *malach*, angel, is an *omeid*, static, does not experience spiritual elevation. He is what he is and remains on that level. Unlike a human being, an angel cannot grow spiritually. His spiritual plateau has a limited parameter to which he adheres. His mission is in accordance with his specific level. Thus, once his *shlichus*, mission, has concluded, or the spiritual level of his mission has been altered, he is freed from it. Once the mission has been completed, the angel disappears and returns to his place.

A person is a *baal aliyah*, able to scale spiritual heights. Indeed, with every word, he grows spiritually. One moment is unlike the preceding moment, something which continues throughout one's life. We change – we grow. The spiritual plane which we enjoyed before reciting *Shema Yisrael* during *Shacharis*, Morning Prayer service, is altered once we have completed the prayer, applying the intention, feeling and direction that goes with it. One angel does not remain with us throughout our lives. We change almost constantly.

*Rav Zaitchik* focuses on Hagar's spiritual level when she conversed with the angel for the first time. She was suffering abuse and pain that she felt was unwarranted. She was a depressed, broken woman, alone in the wilderness, without protection. The angel began the conversation, “The maidservant of Sarah, from where did you come?” She replied, “I am fleeing from my mistress, Sarah.” The angel referred to her as a *shifchah*, maidservant, and she responded that it was true; she was running from her mistress. Most people fail to concede that they are slaves. Hagar had no problem with her position. Why? Normally, one does not like talking about a past that was miserable and filled with demeaning servitude. Why did Hagar respond to the angel with a sort of “pride” – “Yes, I am Sarah's maidservant?” Furthermore, why did the angel commence his questioning by referring to Hagar as a maidservant?

*Rav Zaitchik* explains that the dialogue between the angel and Hagar indicates a much deeper meaning than what appears on the surface. The angel's reference to Hagar's position had a dual implication. First, she was a slave, which was clearly not a prestigious position in life. Second, was the flipside. While her vocation was not something that warranted bragging rights, she was, at least, working for Sarah *Imeinu*. To be exposed to such an elevated spiritual source, to have the opportunity to be in the proximity of such a righteous and pure person, to imbibe from her fountain of inspiration, is truly fortuitous.

Hagar responded, in turn, with fierce pride. “Yes, I am a maidservant, but I am no ordinary maidservant; I am Sarah's maidservant. This grants me exposure to an unprecedented source of

inspiration.” Once Hagar responded with such depth of vision, she demonstrated that she was truly no ordinary maidservant. This warranted another angel, due to her elevated spiritual standing. The next step was the new angel instructing her to return to Sarah, which, when she complied, once again raised her degree, necessitating yet another angel. As the conversation progressed, Hagar’s acquiescence with faith and conviction added to her spiritual account.

A similar lesson is to be inferred from the commentary of the **Zohar HaKadosh** to the angel’s declaration to Avraham *Avinu* following the *Akeidah*. “And the angel called to him from Heaven. He said, “Avraham, Avraham!”” The *Zohar* comments, “There is a *psik taama*, grammatical interruption, between the two ‘Avraham’s,’ because the second Avraham is unlike the first.” The Avraham that had entered into the *Akeidah* was not on the same spiritual standing as was the Avraham that emerged from the *Akeidah*. Thus, the second address required a new angel, which is indicated by the interruption.

The lesson to be derived from the above is simple and practical: we must strive for continued growth, because, with every rung of the spiritual ladder which we scale, we are accorded greater and more profound spiritual exposure.