Righteous Human Beings are Better than Angels! Sanhedrin 92b-93a

It's a short declaration on Sanhedrin 93a, but it exposes a thread within the rabbinic imagination about what makes humans worthy of Torah. In this shiur, we will examine the development of rabbinic thought about the similarities and dissimilarities between humans and angels revealing a rabbinic take on the meaning of life!

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1. בבלי סנהדרין צב:-צג.

אמר ר' יוחנן גְּדוֹלִים צַדִּיקִים יוֹתֵר מִמַּלְאֲכֵי הַשָּׁרֵת, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: ״עָנֵה וְאָמַר הָא אֲנָא חָזֵי גֻּבְרִין אַרְבְּעָה שְׁרַיִּן מַהְלְכִין בְּגוֹ נוּרָא וַחָבָל לָא אִיתַי בְּהוֹן וְרֵוֵהּ דִּי רְבִיעָאָה דָּמֵה לְבַר אֱלָהִין״.

R. Yohanan said: The righteous are greater than the ministering angels, as it is stated: "He answered and said: I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods" (Daniel 3:25). (Nebuchadnezzar saw three righteous people and an angel in the fire of the furnace and noted the presence of the righteous people before noting the presence of the angel.)

2. ירושלמי שבת ו:י

ְרָבִּי בֶּרֶכְיָה בְשֵׁם רְבִּי אַבָּא בַּר כַּהֲנָא. עָתִיד הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוךְ הוּא לַעֲשׂוֹת מְחִיצָתָן שֶׁלַּצַדִּיקִים לְפְנִים מִמְחִיצָתָן שְׁלְמֻלְאֲכֵי הַשָּׁרֵת. וּמַלְאֲכֵי הַשָּׁרֶת שׁוֹאֲלִין אוֹתָן וְאוֹמְרִים לָהֶן. מַה־פָּעַל אֵל: מַה הוֹרָה לָכֶם הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוךְ הוּא. אָמֵר רְבִּי לֵוִי בַּר חַיוּתָא. וְלֹא כְבָר עָשָׂה כֵן בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה. הַהוּא דְכְתִיב עָנֵה נְבוּכַדְנָצֵר וְאָמֵׁר הָא־אֲנָא הוּא. אָמֵר רְבִּי לֵוִי בַּר חַיוּתָא. וְלֹא כְבָר עָשָׂה כֵן בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה. הַהוּא דְכְתִיב עָנֵה נְבוּכִּרְנָצֵר וְאָמֵׁר הָא־הְלָין בְּגְוֹנוּלָא זְחֲבָל לֻא־אִיתַי בְּהֶוֹן. וּמַה תַּלְמוּד לוֹמַר וְחָבֻל לֻא־אִיתַי בְּהָוֹן. אֶלָא מְלַמֵּד שָׁהָיוּ סְרִיסִים וְנִתְרַפּוּ. וְרֵיוֵיהּ דִּי קַדְמִיתָה אֵין כָּתוּב כָּאן. אֶלָּא וְרֵיוֵיהּ דִּי רְבִיעָאָה. הֵן הָיוּ מְכַבְּשִׁין לֵפָנִיו אֶת הַאוֹר...

Rebbi Berekhiah in the name of Rebbi Abba bar Cahana: In the future the Holy One, praise to Him, will make place for the Just inside the place of the Angels of Service; the Angels of Service will ask them and say to them, what did God do? What did the Holy One, praise to Him, teach you? Rebbi Levi bar Ḥayta said, did He not already do this in this world? That is what is written *Daniel.3.25">Dan. 3:25., Nebuchadnezzar started and said, but I am seeing four free men walking in the fire and no blemish is on them. Why does the verse say, and no blemish is on them? This teaches that they were eunuchs but were healed. It is not written "and the looks of the first", but and the looks of the fourth; they were suppressing the fire before him...

Try to be like angels!

3. ספרי במדבר, קרח קיט

חביבים ישראל כשהוא מכנן אין מכנן אלא בכהנים, שנאמר "וְאַנֶּים כֹּהֲנֵי ה' תִּקֶּבֵּאוּ מְשָׁרְתֵּי אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ יֵאָמֵר לַכֵם חֵיל גּוֹיָם ׁתֹאכֵלוּ וּבִּכָבוֹדֶם תִּתִיַמֵּרוּ:" (ישעיהו סא:ו).

חביבין כהנים כשהוא מכנן אין מכנן אלא במלאכי השרת שנא' כי שפתי כהן ישמרו דעת ותורה יבקשו מפיהו כי מלאך ה' צב-אות הוא" (מלאכי ב:ז): בזמן שהתורה יוצאה מפיו הרי הוא כמלאכי השרת ואם לאו הרי הוא כחיה וכבהמה שאינה מכרת את קונה. חביבה תורה שכששאל דוד מלך ישראל לא שאל אלא תורה, שנאמר טוב אתה ומטיב למדני חקיך (תהילים קיט:סח)

Beloved are [the people] Israel for when God gives them a nickname, God names them priests as it says "And you shall be called the priests of the Lord" (Isa 61:6). Beloved are [the priests] Israel for when God gives them a nickname, God names them none other than ministering angels, as it says "For the lips of the priest keep knowledge and they seek teaching at his mouth for he is the angel of the Lord" (Mal. 2:7) At the time that Torah comes from his mouth he is like an angel, when [it does] not, he is like a beast and an animal that knows not its creator Beloved is Torah, for when David the King of Israel asked, he asked only Torah Thus it says "You are good and do good, teach me your laws" (Ps 119:68) Your good has been ample to all who come into the world, let your good be ample to me and teach me your laws.

4. ירושלמי ברכות א:א

זֶה שֶׁעוֹמֵד לְהִתְפַּלֵּל צָרִיךְ לְהַשְּׁוּוֹת אֶת רַגְלֶיוּ. תְּרֵין אֲמוֹרַיִּן ר׳ לֵוִי וְר׳ סִימוֹן חַד אָמַר כְּמַלְאָכִים וְחַד אָמַר כְּכֹהְנִים. מַאן דְּאָמַר כְּכֹהֲנִים לֹא תַעֻלֶה בְמַעֲלוֹת עַל מִזְבְּחִי. שֶׁהָיוּ מְהַלְּכִין עֵקֶב בְּצַד גּוֹדֶל וְגוֹדֶל בְּצַד עֵקֶב. וּמַאן דְּאָמַר כְּמַלְאָכִים וְרַגְלֵיהֶם רֶגֶל יִשָּׁרָה. ר׳ חָנִינָא בַר אַנְדְּרֵיי בְּשֵׁם ר׳ שְׁמוּאֵל בַּר סוֹטָר הַמַּלְאָכִים אֵין לָהֵן קִפִּיצִין וּמַה טַעַמַא קָרְבֶת אַל חַד מִן קִמִייָא קִייַמַּיָא.

He who prepares to pray must equalize his feet. Two Amoraim, Rebbi Levi and Rebbi Simon; one of them says like angels and one of them says like priests. He who says like priests, (*Ex.* 20:23): "You shall not ascend my alter by stairs;" that means that they were walking with their heel next to the great toe and great toe next to the heel. He who says like angels (Ezekiel.1.7">Ez. 1:7)" "Their feet were a straight foot." Rebbi Ḥanina bar Andrei in the name of R. Samuel ben Soṭar: angels have no moving joints. What is the reason? (Daniel.7.16">Dan. 7:16) "I approached one of those standing," the fixed ones.

5. בבלי ברכות י:

ָוּאָמַר רַבִּי יוֹסֵי בְּרַבִּי חֲנִינָא מִשׁוּם רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר בֶּן יַעֲקֹב: הַמִּתְפַּלֵל צָרִיךְ שֶׁיְכַוֵּין אֶת רַגְלָיו, שֶׁנֶּאֶמַר: ״ורגליהם רגל יִשׁרה״.

And Rabbi Yosei, son of Rabbi Ḥanina, said in the name of Rabbi Eliezer ben Ya'akov: When praying, one should align his feet next to each other, as a single foot, in order to

model oneself after the angels, with regard to whom it is stated: "And their feet were a straight foot" (Ezekiel 1:7).

Humans are fundamentally different from angels

6. מכילתא דר' שמעון בר יוחאי יד:כט

דרש ר' פפיוס הן האדם היה כאחד ממנו (בראשית ג' כ"ב) כאחד ממלאכי השרת אמר לו ר' עקיבה דייך פפיוס מה אתה מקיים הן האדם היה כאחד מלמד שנתן הקב"ה לפניו שני דרכים דרך חיים ודרך מות ובחר לו הוא דרך המות:

R. Pappias also expounded: "'Behold the man has become like one of us' (Gen. 3:22) means [he has become] like one of the ministering angels.

R. Akiba said to him: "Enough, Pappias!"

He [Pappias] said to him: "Then how do you interpret 'Behold the man has become like one of us'?"

He [Akiba] answered him: "Not like one of the ministering angels, but rather [it means] that God set before him two paths—the path of life and the path of death and he chose for himself the path of death."

7. בבלי יומא ל.

אָמַר רַב פָּפָּא: צוֹאָה בִּמְקוֹמָהּ, אָסוּר לִקְרוֹת קְרִיאַת שְׁמַע. הֵיכִי דָמֵי? אִי דְּנִרְאֵית — פְּשִׁיטָא. אִי דְּלֹא נָרְאֵית — לֹא נִיתְּנָה תּוֹרָה לְמַלְאָכֵי הַשְּׁרֵת!

Apropos the above discussion the Gemara cites that Rav Pappa said: For one with excrement in its place, in the anus, it is prohibited to recite *Shema* until he removes it. What are the circumstances? If it is excrement that is visible, it is obvious that he cannot recite *Shema*, as there is excrement on his skin. If it is excrement that is not visible, and it is inside his body, how can Rav Pappa rule that he may not recite *Shema*? The Torah was not given to the ministering angels, and one's body cannot be totally free of excrement.

8. בבלי ברכות כה:

where his heel sees his nakedness. Abaye said: It is prohibited, and Rava said: It is permitted; the Torah was not given to the ministering angels, and a person, who, as opposed to a ministering angel, has genitals, cannot avoid this. And the *halakha* is that if his heel touches his nakedness it is prohibited, but if it merely sees his nakedness, it is permitted.

Humans can be better than angels!

9. בבלי שבת פח:-פט.

וְאָמֵר רַבִּי יְהוֹשֵׁעַ כֶּן לֵוִי: בְּשָׁעָה שֶׁעָלָה מֹשֶׁה לַמָּרוֹם אָמְרוּ מַלְאֲכֵי הַשָּׁרֵת לִפְנֵי הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא: רְבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, מַה לִילוּד אִשָּׁה בֵּינִינוּ? אָמַר לָהֶן: לְקַבֵּל תּוֹרָה בָּא. אָמְרוּ לְפָנָיו: חֶמְדָּה גָּנוּזָה שֶׁגְנוּזָה לָךְ תְּשַׁע מֵאוֹת וְשִׁבְעִים וְאַרְבָּעָה דּוֹרוֹת קוֹדֶם שֶׁנְּבְרָא הָעוֹלָם, אַתָּה מְבַקֵּשׁ לִיתְּנָהּ לְבָשֶׂר וָדָם? ״מָה אֱנוֹשׁ כִּי תִזְכְּרֶנוּ וּבֶן אָדָם כִּי תִפְקְדֶנּוּ״? ״ה׳ אֲדֹנֵינוּ מַה אַדִּיר שִׁמְךְ בָּכָל הַאָרֵץ אֲשֶׁר תָּנָה הוֹדְךָ עַל הַשְּׁמִים״!

And Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: When Moses ascended on High to receive the Torah, the ministering angels said before the Holy Blessed One: Sovereign of the Universe, what is one born of a woman doing here among us? The Holy Blessed One said to them: He came to receive the Torah. The angels said before God: The Torah is a hidden treasure that was concealed by You 974 generations before the creation of the world, and You seek to give it to flesh and blood? As it is stated: "The word which He commanded to a thousand generations" (Psalms 105:8). Since the Torah, the word of God, was given to the twenty-sixth generation after Adam, the first man, the remaining 974 generations must have preceded the creation of the world. "what are human beings that You have been mindful of them, mortals that You have taken note of them?" (Psalms 8:5). Rather, "God our Lord, how glorious is Your name in all the earth that Your majesty is placed above the heavens" (Psalms 8:2). The rightful place of God's majesty, the Torah, is in the heavens.

אָמֵר לוֹ הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא לְמֹשֶׁה: הַחְזֵיר לָהֶן תְּשׁוּבָה. אָמֵר לְפָנָיו: רְבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, מְתְיָיֵרֵא אֲנִי שֶׁמָּא יִשְׂרְפּוּנִי בַּהֶבֶל שְׁבְּפִיהֶם. אָמֵר לוֹ: אֱחוֹז בְּכְסֵּא כְבוֹדִי וַחְזוֹר לָהֶן תְּשׁוּבָה. שֶׁנֶּאֱמֵר: ״מְאַחֵז פְּנֵי כְּסֵא פַּרְשֵׁז עָלָיו עֲנָנוֹ״, וְאָמֵר רַבִּי נַחוּם: מְלַמֵּד שֶׁפֵּירָשׁ שַׁדַּי מִזְּיו שְׁכִינָתוֹ וַעֲנָנוֹ עָלָיו. אָמֵר לְפָנָיו: רְבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, תּוֹרָה שֶׁאַתָּה נוֹתֵן לִי מָה כְּתִיב בָּהּ? ״אָנֹכִי ה׳ אֱלֹהֶיךְ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךְ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם״. אָמֵר לְהֶן: לְמִצְרַיִם יְרַדְתֶּם? לְפַּרְעֹה הִשְׁתַּעְבַּדְתָּם? תּוֹרָה לָמָה תְּהֵא לָכָם! שׁוּב: מָה כְּתִיב בָּהּ? ״לֹא יִהְיֶה לְךְ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֶרִים״. בֵּין הַגֹּוֹיִם אֲתֶּם שְׁרוּיִין, שֶׁעוֹבְּדִין

The Holy Blessed One said to Moses: Provide them with an answer as to why the Torah should be given to the people. Moses said before God: Master of the Universe, I am afraid lest they burn me with the breath of their mouths. God said to him: Grasp My throne of glory for strength and protection, and provide them with an answer. And from where is this derived? As it is stated: "God causes him to grasp the front of the throne, and spreads God's cloud over it" (Job 26:9), and Rabbi Naḥum said: This verse teaches that God spread the radiance of the Divine presence and Divine cloud over Moses. Moses said before God: Sovereign of the Universe, the Torah that You are giving me, what is written in it? God said to him: "I am the Lord your God Who brought you out of Egypt from the house of bondage" (Exodus 20:2). Moses said to the angels: Did you descend to Egypt? Were you enslaved to Pharaoh? Why should the Torah be yours? Again Moses asked: What else is written in it? God said to him: "You shall have no other

gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3). Moses said to the angels: Do you dwell among the nations who worship

עֲבוֹדָה זָרָה? שוּב: מָה פְּתִיב בָּהּ? ״זָכוֹר אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ״ — כְּלוּם אַתֶּם עוֹשִּׁים מְלָאכָה, שֶׁאַתֶּם צְרִיכִין שְׁבוּת? שׁוּב: מָה כְּתִיב בָּהּ? ״לֹא תִשָּׂא״ — מַשָּׁא וּמַתָּן יֵשׁ בֵּינֵיכֶם? שׁוּב: מָה כְּתִיב בָּהּ? ״לֹא תִּשָּׁא״ - מַשָּׁא וּמַתָּן יֵשׁ בֵּינֵיכֶם? שׁוּב: מָה כְּתִיב בָּהּ? ״לֹא תִּרְצָח״, ״לֹא תִּנְאָף״, ״לֹא תִּגְבֹב״. קִנְאָה יֵשׁ בֵּינֵיכֶם? יֵצֶר הָרְע יֵשׁ בִּינֵיכֶם? מִיָּד הוֹדוּ לוֹ לְהַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: ״ה׳ אֲדֹנֵינוּ מָה אַדִּיר שִׁמְךְ וְגוֹי״, וְאִילּוּ ״תְּנָה הוֹדְךְ עַל הַשְּׁמִיִם״ לָא כְּתִיב.

idols that you require this special warning? Again Moses asked: What else is written in it? The Holy Blessed One said to him: "Remember the Shabbat day to sanctify it" (Exodus 20:8). Moses asked the angels: Do you perform labor that you require rest from it? Again Moses asked: What else is written in it? "Do not take the name of the Lord your God in vain" (Exodus 20:7), meaning that it is prohibited to swear falsely. Moses asked the angels: Do you conduct business with one another that may lead you to swear falsely? Again Moses asked: What else is written in it? The Holy Blessed One said to him: "Honor your father and your mother" (Exodus 20:12). Moses asked the angels: Do you have a father or a mother that would render the commandment to honor them relevant to you? Again Moses asked: What else is written in it? God said to him: "You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal" (Exodus 20:13) Moses asked the angels: Is there jealousy among you, or is there an evil inclination within you that would render these commandments relevant? Immediately they agreed with the Holy Blessed One that God made the right decision to give the Torah to the people, and as it is stated: "God our Lord, how glorious is Your name in all the earth" (Psalms 8:10), while "that Your majesty is placed above the heavens" is not written because the angels agreed with God that it is appropriate to give the Torah to the people on earth.

מִיָּד כְּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד נַעֲשָׂה לוֹ אוֹהֵב וּמָסַר לוֹ דָּבָר, שֶׁנֶּאֱמֵר: ״עָלִיתָ לַמָּרוֹם שָׁבִיתְ שֶׁבִי לָקַחְתָּ מַתָּנוֹת בָּאָדָם״ — בִּשְׂכַר שָׁקְּרָאוּךְ ״אָדָם״, לָקַחְתָּ מַתָּנוֹת. אַף מַלְאַךְ הַמָּוֶת מָסַר לוֹ דָּבָר, שֶׁנֶאֱמַר: ״וַיִּתֵּן אֶת הַקְּטֹרֶת וַיְּכַפֵּר עַל הָעָם״, וְאוֹמֵר: ״וַיִּעֲמֹד בֵּין הַמֵּתִים וּבֵין הַחַיִּים וְגוֹ״ — אִי לָאו דַּאֲמַר לֵיהּ מִי הָוָה יָדַע?

Immediately, each and every one of the angels became an admirer of Moses and passed something to him, as it is stated: "You ascended on high, you took a captive, you took gifts on account of man, and even among the rebellious also that the Lord God might dwell there" (Psalms 68:19). The meaning of the verse is: In reward for the fact that they called you mortal, you are not an angel and the Torah is applicable to you, you took gifts from the angels. And even the Angel of Death gave him something, as Moses told Aaron how to stop the plague, as it is stated: "And he placed the incense, and he atoned for the people" (Numbers 17:12). And the verse says: "And he stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stopped" (Numbers 17:13). If it were not that the Angel of Death told him this remedy, would he have known it?

10.מדרש תנאים על דברים

בנים אתם לה' א-להיכם ר' מאיר אומר חביבין ישראל בין שעושים רצונו של מקום ובין שאין עושין רצונו של מקום הרי הן קרואין בנים שנ' (דב' לב יט) וירא ה' וינאץ מכעס בניו ובנותיו ויאמר אסתירה פני מהם אלא שהפרש בין עושין רצונו של מקום ובין שאין עושין רצונו שכשהן עושין רצונו של מקום הרי הוא מיחד שמו עליהן וקורא אותן בנים שנ' בנים אתם לה' א-להיכם:

בני ישראל נקראו בנים שנ' בנים אתם לה' א-להיכם:

מלאכי השרת נקראו בנים שנ' (איו' א ו) ויהי היום ויבואו בני הא-להים להתיצב על ה': אבל איני יודע איזה מהן חביב ת״ל (שמות ד' כב) ואמרת אל פרעה כה אמר ה' בני בכורי ישראל:

ישראל נקראו עבדים כי עבדי הם (ויק' כה מב) ומלאכי שרת נקראו עבדים הן בעבדיו לא יאמין ובמלאכיו ישים תהלה (איו' ד יח) אבל איני יודע איזה מהן חביב ת״ל (ויק' כה נה) כי לי בני ישראל עבדים:

ישראל נקראו מזמרים זמרו א-להים זמרו (תה' מז ז) ומלאכי שרת נקראו מזמרים ברן יחד כוכבי בקר ואחר כך ויריעו כל בני א-להים (איו' לח ז) ואיני יודע איזה מהן חביב ת״ל (ש״ב כג א) ונעים זמירות ישראל:

ישראל מזכירין את השם אחר שני דברים שמע ישראל ה' אל" ה' אחד (דב' ו ד) ומלאכי השרת מזכירין את השם אחר שלשה דברים וקרא זה אל זה ואמר קק״ק ה' (ישע' ו ג) יתיר עליהן הכהנים עוד אחת שנ' (במ' ו כד) יברכך ה':

"You are children to the Lord your God. Rabbi Meir says: The people of Israel are beloved, whether they do the will of the Holy One or whether they do not do the will of the Holy One. They are still called children, as it is written (Deuteronomy 32:19), 'And the Lord saw and rejected them, in anger with their children and daughters,' and God said, 'I will hide My face from them.' But there is a distinction between those who do the will of the Holy One and those who do not. When they do the will of the Holy One, God specially designates the Divine name upon them and calls them children, as it is written, 'You are children to the Lord your God.'

The people of Israel are called children, as it is written, 'You are children to the Lord your God.'

The ministering angels are called children, as it is written (Job 1:6), 'And it was the day, and the sons of God came to stand before the Lord.'

But I do not know which of them is more beloved. It is taught (Exodus 4:22), 'And you shall say to Pharaoh: 'Thus says the Lord: Israel is My firstborn child."

Israel is called servants, because they are My servants (Leviticus 25:42). The ministering angels are also called servants, as it says, 'He does not trust His servants' (Job 4:18), and 'In His servants He places glory' (Psalm 104:4). But I do not know which of them is more beloved. It is taught (Leviticus 25:55), 'For the people of Israel are My servants.'

Israel is called singers, as it says, 'Sing to God, sing praises to His name' (Psalm 68:4). The ministering angels are also called singers, as it says, 'The stars of the morning sang together' (Job 38:7), and afterward, 'And all the sons of God shouted for joy.' (Job

38:7). But I do not know which of them is more beloved. It is taught (II Samuel 23:1), 'And the pleasant songs of Israel.'

Israel mentions the name of God after two things: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord is One' (Deuteronomy 6:4). The ministering angels mention the name of God after three things, as it says, 'And they called to one another, and said, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts' (Isaiah 6:3).

Priests are even great, as it says (Numbers 6:24), 'The Lord bless you."

11. מדרש דברים רבה פרשה ז' פיסקא ט'

ד"א ויקרא משה וגו' הה"ד בְּנִי אִם־תִּקַּח אֲמֶרֶי וּתִּצְוֹתַׁי תִּצְפָּן אִתָּרָ (משלי ב:א):. מהו אם תקח אמרי? אמר רב הונא בשם ר' אחא: אמר קב"ה לישראל, בני, אל תהי תורתי עליכם כאדם שיש לו בת בוגרות והוא מבקש לכנוס אותה אצל מי שמוצא. מהו אם תקח אמרי? אם יהא לכם זכות אתם מקבלים תורתי שמלאכי השרת נתאוו לה ולא נתתי אותה להם. מנין? שנאמר מַלְכֵי צְבֶאוֹת יִדֹּדְוּן יִדֹּדְוּן שִׁלֹּלֵ: (תהילים סח:יג). אמרו לפניו רבש"ע הנוה שיש לך בעליונים אתה מחלק אותה לתחתונים? הוי אם תקח אמרי: אם יהא זכות לכם...

Another explanation: "And Moses called"... this is as it is written (Proverbs 2:1), 'My child, if you take My words and treasure My commandments with you.' What does 'if you take My words' mean? Rav Huna said in the name of Rabbi Acha: The blessed Holy One said to Israel, 'My children, do not let My Torah be upon you like a person who has a grown daughter and seeks to marry her off to someone he finds.' What does 'if you take My words' mean? If you have merit, you will accept My Torah, which the ministering angels desired but I did not give to them. From where do we know this? As it is written (Psalms 68:13), 'Kings of armies flee, they flee, and the woman at home divides the spoil.' They said before God, 'Master of the Universe, the treasure that You have in the upper realms, You divide it with the lower realms?' This is the meaning of 'if you take My words': If you have merit..."

12. מדרש דברים רבה פרשה ח' פיסקא ב'

כי המצוה הזאת...אמר הקב"ה אם תאמרו שמא לרעתכם את התורה נתתי לכם, לא נתתיה אלא לטובתכם שמלאכי השרת כמה נתאוו לה ונתעלמה מהם. שנאמר "וְנֶעֶלְמָה מֵעֵינֵי כָּל־חֵי" (איוב כח:כא) אלו החיות, "וּמֵעֻוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם נִסְתָּרָה" אלו מלאכי השרת, שנאמר "וַיָּעֶף אֵלֵי אֶחָד מוּן־הַשְּׂרָפִים" (ישעיהו אלו החיות, "וּמֵעֻוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם נִסְתָּרָה" אלו מלאכי השרת היא נפלאת אבל מכם אינה נפלאת. מנין? ממה שקראו בענין "כֵּי ווֹ): אמר להם , בני ממלאכי השרת היא נפלאת אבל מכם אינה נפלאת. מנין? ממה שקראו בענין "כִּי הַמִּצְוְה הַזֹּיֹאת (אְשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ הַיִּוֹם) לֹא־נִפְלֵּאת הָוּא מְמְּלְּ (וְלָא רְחֹקֶה הְוּא)" (דברים ל:יִא)
"For this commandment (Deut. 30:11): The Holy Blessed One said: If you think that perhaps I gave you the Torah to your detriment, I did not give it to you except for your benefit, as the ministering angels desired it but it was hidden from them. As it is written,

'It is hidden from the eyes of all living' (Job 28:21), referring to angels known as *hayot*, 'And from the birds of the sky it is concealed,' referring to the ministering angels, as it is written, 'And one of the seraphim flew to me' (Isaiah 6:6). The Holy One said to them, 'My children, it is wondrous to the ministering angels, but it is not wondrous to you.' From where do we know this? From the verse, 'For this commandment that I command you today is not too wondrous for you, nor is it far off' (Deuteronomy 30:11)."

13. Dr. Mika Ahuvia, ISRAEL AMONG THE ANGELS: A STUDY OF ANGELS IN JEWISH TEXTS FROM THE FOURTH TO EIGHTH CENTURY CE (doctoral dissertation, 2014) p74

I have argued that R. Akiva's foundational statement about humanity's creation in the image of God may have played a significant role in the sages' attitudes toward the angels. The rabbis ultimately model their self-conception and self-understanding on God, not the angels, and this principle impacts their treatment of His divine servants.