

# Michael According to the Conceptions of the Hebrew People

## The Creation of Adam

Out of eight parts did God fashion man. From the earth did He take the bones; from the ocean the blood; from the sun beauty; from the clouds the thoughts; from the wind the breath; from the stone mercy and strength; from love humility; from the spirit wisdom.

And when God had created man, there was for him no name.  
The Heavens' expanse is the Father,  
The round of the earth is the Son,  
The ocean's depth is the Holy Spirit.

But God's creature had as yet no name. And God called unto the four Angels: Michael - Gabriel - Uriel - Raphael. And God said unto the angels: "Go ye out and find a name for man."

Michael went Eastward and met the Star whose name is Anathos and took from it the 'A' and brought it unto God. And Gabriel went Westward and saw the Star whose name is Disis and took from it the 'D' and brought it unto God. And Uriel wended his way towards Midnight and saw the star whose name is Aratus and took from it the 'A' and brought it unto God. And Raphael wended his way towards the Meridian and saw the star whose name was Mebrie and took the 'M' and brought it unto God.

And God commanded unto Michael to pronounce the word that was the name of man.

And Michael spake: ADAM.  
And Adam was the first man on earth.

—Russian Legend

## **Michael as Guardian of the Word**

Thus the Two of them went forth and found Abel,  
Him who had been slain by his brother Cain.  
And God spake unto the Archangel Michael:  
“Tell this unto Adam:  
Reveal thou not unto thy son Cain  
The secret that thou knowest.  
For Cain is the son of wrath.  
Be not aggrieved!  
In place of Cain  
Another son unto thee will I give  
Who will reveal to thee  
All that thou shouldst do unto him.  
But thou mayest reveal nought to him!”  
Thus the Archangel spake unto Adam.  
And Adam sheltered the word in his heart,  
Together with Eva  
Who was grieving for Abel, her son.

– Hebrew Legend

## **Michael Tests Moses’ Willingness to Sacrifice**

One day a dove flew hastily to Moses, the great prophet, and implored him thus: “Mercy, thou prophet of God! I am threatened by a savage beast! Save me from its clutches!” Moses granted an asylum to the frightened bird by hiding it under his garment.

But now a hawk came flying after the dove and said to the prophet: “Oh, Moses! I am tortured by hunger. I and my brood are crying for nourishment. By depriving us of our food, thou hast done a grievous wrong unto us.”

Moses answered: “Oh hawk! Doest thou demand of me this dove or any kind of food? In the first case, I must tell thee that this innocent creature has sought out my protection and that under no circumstances will I let it perish. In the second case, however, I must endeavor to provide thee with food, lest thou return empty-handed.”

When the hawk answered that it would be satisfied with any kind of food, Moses cut off as much flesh from his holy limbs as equalled the weight of a dove. As he was handing it to the hawk, the bird of prey said unto him: “Oh prophet of God! I am Michael and what thou didst believe to be a dove was Gabriel. We came unto thee in such shape to test thy generosity and thy nobility of heart.” And with these words, both vanished.

– Hebrew Legend

## Michael as the Savior of Isaac

God desired to test Abraham. A potter testing his vessels does not choose the least solid which crumbles up when being struck. He chooses the best which will not break, be it struck ever so hard. Thus the Lord does not test the godless, but only the righteous, as it says in the Scriptures: “The Lord will test the righteous man.”

Abraham bethought himself concerning his own being and said: “I felt myself full of joy and made the others rejoice. But unto the Lord I have sacrificed not even a bull or a ram.”

Then spake the Lord: “Should I command thee to sacrifice thy son unto Me, thou shalt not tarry.” And the Lord spake unto Abraham: “Take thy only son and betake thyself to the land of Moriah and sacrifice him on one of the mounts that I will show unto thee.” And wherefore did not the Lord show unto him the place of the sacrifice? So that he would cherish it more and he might receive his reward for every word that had been spoken.

Abraham spake unto the Lord: “Almighty Lord! May there be a sacrifice without a priest?”

Then spake the Lord: “I have ordered that thou shalt be the priest.”

Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and carried it like unto a man carrying a cross on his shoulder. And when they were come unto the place whereof the Lord had spoken, Abraham began to build the altar and bound Isaac, his son. He stretched out his hand to grasp the knife and the tears of compassion streaming out of his eyes fell into Isaac’s eyes. And withal Abraham’s heart rejoiced for fulfilling the will of the Creator. And the serving angels gathered around them, crying: “Desolate are the paths.”

Thereupon said the Lord unto Michael: “Wherefore standest thou there? See to it that Abraham may not do it.”

Then Michael began to call unto Abraham, as a man cries out in fear: “What art thou doing?” And Abraham turned his countenance towards Michael who spake: “Take thy hand off the lad!”

In other books, the story is told in this fashion: In this hour, Abraham raised his eyes unto heaven and spake: “Lord of Lords! If ever my children should stand before Thee in tribulation, mayest Thou think of this hour in which I stand before Thee.”

– Hebrew Legend

## Moses' Death

The evil angel Semaël, the foremost of all accusers, could not wait for Moses to die and spake incessantly: "When will come his end? When will come the moment when he will have to die and I can dive down and fetch his soul?" It is Semaël whom David meant when he said: "The godless is on the watch for the righteous and tries to strangle him." There is no greater evil-doer than Semaël and none more righteous than Moses, who has stood before God's Countenance. Semaël was longing for Moses' death like unto a man who has been bidden to a wedding and awaits the feast full of impatience. And Semaël spake: "When will Michael shed tears and my mouth be full of laughter?"

Thereupon said Michael unto him: "Thou godless one rejoicest while I must weep? Mayest thou not rejoice, oh mine enemy, that I languish on the ground. I shall arise anew. Even though I am sitting in darkness, the Lord is my light. Even though I have been hurled down through Moses' death, I shall arise anew through Joshuah's might, who is going to slay thirty and one kings. Even though I shall sit in darkness at the time when the first and second Temples will be destroyed, the Lord shall be my light in the days of the Messiah."

And Moses spake unto the Lord: "Oh Ruler of the Universe! Even though Thou hast decreed that I may not come into the land of Israel, let me remain in the world and live."

Thereupon spake the Lord: "If I do not let thee die on earth, how should I resurrect thee in the Beyond? Doest thou want to turn into falsehood the word I have said: There is none who shall be saved from My hand!?"

And Moses went on, saying: "Oh Lord of Lords! If Thou wantest not that I should come into the land, let me abide like unto the savage beasts which feed on grass and drink water and live on in the world."

The Lord spake: "Let Me be!"

Moses said: "Then let me abide like unto a bird which flies in the air, searches for his food during the day, and finds peace in its nest at night."

But the Lord answered: "Enough of all this!"

And when Moses saw that he could not escape death, he said these words: "He is like unto a rock. All that He does is blameless."

When the hour of Moses' death was come, the Lord spake unto Gabriel: "Go down and fetch Me the soul of Moses."

The archangel said: "Oh Lord of Lords! Shall I look on at the death of one whose worth equals ten thousand others?"

Then said the Lord unto Michael: "Go down and fetch Moses' soul."

Michael answered: "Oh Lord! I was his teacher and he was my pupil. I cannot be witness to his death."

Thereupon said the Lord to Semaël, the evil-doer: “Fly down and grasp Moses’ soul.” And the fearful one girded himself with his sword, covered himself with grimness and cruelty, and came unto Moses. But Moses sat there, writing the Holy Name into his scroll and his countenance gleamed like unto that of the sun, and he seemed withal like unto an angel.

Thereupon Semaël was beset by fear and said unto himself: “Never can the angels catch the soul of this man.”

Moses knew that Semaël was approaching ere the evil-doer had come nigh unto him. The evil one was grasped by fear and shuddering like unto a woman about to give birth to a child. He ventured not to accost Moses. But Moses said unto him: “The godless, sayeth the Lord, know not peace. What art thou seeking here?”

Semaël answered: “I am come to fetch thy soul.”

Said Moses: “Who has sent thee?”

The angel of death answered: “I am the messenger of Him Who has created all that liveth in the world.”

Yet Moses refused to deliver his soul unto Semaël and said: “My might is greater than that of all other creatures.” When Semaël asked of what this might consisted, Moses answered: “I am the son of Amram and have come into the world from my mother’s womb without foreskin. It was not needful to circumcise my flesh. On the day that I was born, I opened my mouth and spake. I walked upright on my feet. And I was no nursling sucking milk. When I was three years old, I prophesied that I would receive the Thora out of the fire. And then I invaded the palace of a king, took the crown from his head, and placed it upon mine. When I grew up, I performed miracles in Egypt. I led a people numbering six hundred thousand out of the land of the Egyptians. I tore the ocean into twelve parts. I sweetened the bitter water and dug footpaths in the ocean. I interfered in the battles between the angels. I dwelled underneath the throne of God. And my roof was the pillar of fire. I talked with God from countenance to countenance. I defeated the heavenly hosts and revealed their secrets to mankind. I wrought warfare against Sihon and Og, the two giants, whose ankles are washed by the waters of the great flood. I commanded the sun and the moon to stand still and, while they did so, slew the enemies. Who among the living has done likewise? Get thee hence, thou evil-doer! Demand not my soul, for thou shalt not get it.”

Thus departed Semaël and told the Almighty what Moses had said. But the Lord said unto Semaël: “Thou must catch Moses’ soul.” Thereupon Semaël unsheathed a sword and rushed up to Moses. But Moses grasped his staff on which was inscribed the Ineffable Name and struck the evil-doer with all his might. When Semaël fled, Moses pursued him after taking the rayed horn placed between his eyes into his hand. With this horn he pierced the nefarious one’s eyes and blinded him. Moses succeeded in doing such deeds.

Then resounded a voice, saying: “Thy life is concluded. Death is come!”

Moses spake unto the Lord: “Ruler of the earth! Think of the day on which Thou didst appear to me in the burning bush and didst say to me: Go hence! I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that he may let the people of Israel depart from Egypt. Think of the time when I dwelled on Mount Sinai. Think of the forty days and forty nights. Grant my prayer and do not deliver me unto death.”

And the Lord answered: “Fear not! I Myself will provide for thy death and thy burial.”

Then arose Moses and became pure like unto a Seraphim. But the Lord came down from heaven to take Moses’ soul to Himself. Three serving angels accompanied Him: Michael, Gabriel and Zagzagael. Michael set down a bier for Moses. Gabriel spread a byssos cloth thereon, and Zagzagael stood at the head of the bier. Then spake the Lord unto His servant: “Oh Moses! Look with one of thine eyes across the other.” Moses did so. Then spake God: “Place thy hand on thy breast.” Moses followed the command. Then the Lord went on: “Put one of thy feet on top of the other.” This too was done. Then the Lord called unto Moses’ soul, which was still in the body, and said: “My daughter! I gave thee a hundred and twenty years to dwell in the body of Moses. Now is come the hour when thou shalt forsake it. Come forth and tarry not.”

But the soul answered: “Lord of Lords! I know that Thou art the God of all the spirits and all the souls. The souls of the living and the dead are in Thy hand. Thou didst create me and hast let me dwell in Moses’ body for a hundred and twenty years. But is there a body purer than his? A body not pestered with a bad smell? A body that will not be devoured by worms and maggots? Therefore I love him and will not forsake his body.”

But the Lord spake: “Thou soul of Moses! Go forth from the body. No longer dwell therein. I will lift thee up to the highest of all the Heavens and will let thee dwell, underneath the Throne of My Glory, together with the Cherubim, the Seraphim, and the other heavenly hosts.”

But the soul went on: “Lord of Lords! Once upon a time two of Thine angels, Aza and Azael, came down from heaven to earth. They desired the daughters of men and ruined their path on earth. And for this Thou didst let them be suspended between heaven and earth. But this son of Amram has not known his wife since Thou didst appear to him in the burning bush. I implore thee: Let me abide in his body.” In this hour, the Lord pressed a kiss on Moses’ lips and took away his soul with the kiss of His Mouth.

And God wept and said: “Who will help me against the godless and stand by My Side against the evil-doers?”

The Holy Spirit cried: “No prophet like unto Moses has arisen.”

The Heavens wept and said: “No more pious men are in the land.”

Joshuah looked for his teacher and found him not. Thereupon he wept, saying: “The Saints have dwindled and there are but few of the faithful among men.”

The hosts said: “He has done justice.”

And Israel said: “He has protected the rights of Israel.”

And the ones and others said: “Those who walk before Thee in righteousness, they will attain peace and rest on their couches.”

The memory of the righteous is a blessing and to their souls life eternal will be granted.

– Hebrew Legend

## **The Four Winds**

Four winds are wafted all the days. From the world’s four corners they come. The East wind blows from morning to noon, bringing with it three thousand and seventy five winds salubrious to the world. They spring forth from a treasure house lying high up in the Eastern gates and called the treasure house of joy. By whatever sufferings and diseases someone may be beset, he never will falter during the morning. But the messenger commanding, from morning to noon, over this wind of the East is called Michael. It is the same Michael of whom it is said: Behold, my messenger goes before thee.

When the morning wind arises and goes out into the world, it will bless the one going in the same direction. Such a one will receive all the blessings and he will rejoice the whole day long.

The West wind blows from noon to evening, bringing with it four hundred and sixty five winds, which cause the flowering of all the grasses, the trees, and the plants. The angel commanding, from noon to evening, over this wind is called Raphael.

The South wind blows from the beginning of evening to midnight, bringing with it from the treasure house of joy two hundred and seventy five winds, which give firmness to the earth and allay the cold. The angel commanding over this wind is called Uriel. This wind lies heavy on the ailing, who feel its pressure. But it brings benefit to the world.

The North wind blows from midnight to morning, together with three hundred thousand other winds. It is the most frigid of all, but helps those whose body is ailing.

– Hebrew Legend

## The Rainbow

We read the Book of Illumination: Abraham raised his eyes and, behold, three men stood before him. These were three angels who had been sent unto him. They had veiled themselves in air, and came down to the world, and appeared in human shape.

Just as the rainbow above rises in three colors, so the three messengers appeared in the colors white, red, and green. Of white color was Michael, who stands at the right of God's Majesty; of red color was Gabriel, who stands at the left of God's Majesty; of green color was Raphael. Therefore it is said: The Lord appeared unto him. For the glory of God was revealed in these three colors.

All the three messengers had to come. One came to heal Abraham after having been circumcised. This was Raphael, who commands over all the remedies. The second came to announce unto Sarah that she would give birth to a child. This was Michael, who stands at the right of God's glory. All the good and all the blessings come from the right side. The third angel came to make Sodom renounce its wickedness. This was Gabriel, who stands at the left of God's glory. He is the highest of all the judges, who all come from the left side.

– Hebrew Legend

## The Bowl of the World

And so the angel took me and brought me into the fifth heaven. And the gate was closed. And I said: "Oh Lord! Will not this gate be opened, so that we may enter?"

And the angel said unto me: "We may not enter therein, ere Michael, who guards the keys of heaven, will come nigh. But wait awhile, and thou wilt behold the glory of God." And there arose a fearful roaring like unto thunder.

And I said: "Oh Lord! What roaring is this?"

And He spake unto me: "Now descends Michael, the prince of the angels, to accept the prayers of men."

And, behold, a voice was heard: "The gates shall be opened." And as they were opened, there arose a roaring like unto thunder. And there came Michael.

And the angel who was attending me advanced towards Michael and knelt down before him, saying: "Hail to thee, my archangel and leader of us all."

And Michael, prince of the angels, said: "Thou too mayest rejoice, O my brother, who interpretest the revelation to those whose life is well spent."

And after greeting one another, they stood still. And I beheld how Michael, prince of the angels, held a gigantic bowl, whose depth equaled the distance



between heaven and earth. And its width was as broad as the distance between North and South. And I said: “O Lord! What is the archangel Michael holding?”

And He said unto me: “Into this bowl are placed all the virtues of the righteous and all the good works that they do. And these are brought unto the Lord of the Heavens.”

And while I thus talked unto Him, behold, there came angels carrying baskets with flowers. And they presented them unto Michael. And I asked the angel: “O Lord! Who are these and what are they bringing hither?”

And he answered: “These are the angels that abide with the righteous.” And the archangel took the baskets and threw them in the bowl.

And the angel said unto me: “These flowers are the virtues of the righteous.” And I beheld how other angels carried empty baskets not filled with flowers. And they seemed sorrowful and ventured not to come nigh. For they lacked the reward of the struggle.

But Michael cried out and said: “Draw nigh, ye angels! Show me what ye have brought.” And Michael too was most sorrowful and so was the angel nigh to me, because they had not filled the bowl.

And then came likewise other angels, weeping and sorrowing and timidly asking: “Behold, how deeply we are grieving, O Lord, because we have been directed towards evil men. And therefore we want to withdraw from them.”

And Michael spake: “Ye may in no wise withdraw from them, lest the enemy gain ascendance. But tell me, what ye are pleading for?”

And they said: “We pray thee, O Michael, our prince of angels, remove us from them. For we can no longer endure to be with evil and imprudent men, where nothing good can be found and naught but injustice and greed. For we never see them go to church nor to the priestly fathers, nor to perform a good deed. But wherever a murder is committed, they are in the midst of it; and wherever there are quarrels, jealousy, adultery, theft, calumny, perjury, envy, drunkenness, grumbling, slander, idolatry, sooth-saying and similar things, there they are in the thick of it all. They perpetrate these vices and even worse things. Therefore we pray thee that thou wouldst permit us to withdraw from such men.”

And Michael said unto the angels: “Tarry awhile, so that I may hear from the Lord what is to be done.” And Michael went away at this very hour and the gates were closed.

And there was a roaring like unto thunder. And I asked the angel: “What is this roaring?”

And he answered: “Michael is presenting the virtues of men unto God.”

And at this very hour, Michael descended and the gates were opened. And he carried oil, with which he filled those baskets that had been filled with flowers, saying: “Carry them hence. Reward a hundredfold our friends and those who have toiled to do good deeds. For those sowing the good will reap the good.”

And he said unto those who had brought the half-filled baskets: “Come nigh and receive the reward befitting that which ye have brought and deliver it unto the children of men.” And then he spake thus unto the angels with the full baskets and those with the half-filled ones: “Go forth and bless our friends and say unto them: Thus says the Lord: Ye are faithful in little things and therefore will I entrust you with great things. Enter into the Joy of the Lord.”

And then, turning around, he said unto those who had brought empty baskets: “Thus says the Lord: Be not mournful and weep not. Neither shall ye withdraw from the children of men. But since they have angered Me with their deeds, ye shall go forth and make them jealous and angry and bitter against an ignorant people. Furthermore, send against them caterpillars and locusts and mildew and hailstones together with the fury of lightning. And cut them in two with the sword and slay them with the plague and let their children be killed by demons. For they have not hearkened unto My Voice nor have they fulfilled My Commandments. But they have despised My Commandments and abused the priests proclaiming to them My Words.

– Hebrew Legend

## **The Book of the Seventy-Two Signs**

The sacred book with seventy-two signs was given unto Michael, the highest prince, who is ruler over the seven princes serving the King of Kings. And Michael gave out of this book to Adam, the first man, the foundation of knowledge. And Adam became wise and knew how to give names to all the beasts and also to all the birds, all the fish, and all the worms. He plunged down into the book, and his wisdom became greater than that of all other creatures, which the Lord had created in the six days.

And from the hour when Adam first read the book and pronounced the sacred writing, he learned to reverence it with all his might and all his holiness and practiced purity and chastity and humility. And thus he penetrated into the spirit of wisdom and understood the book’s golden words and inflamed them twice with fire and wrote, in holiness and purity, the signs of the books into the fire. And then he concealed the book in a chasm to the East of the Garden of Eden, for the earth was in no wise able to carry the weight of the book. And whenever Adam took out the book and read therefrom, the earth trembled and shook like unto a ship riding the waves. If he read from the book in front of a mountain, the mountain melted like unto wax. Did he read therefrom at the shore of the ocean, then the ocean flooded the shore, as if a bowl full of water were overflowing. When he read out of the book in front of a fire, the fire sank down into ashes. And when he read out of the book in front of savage beasts like lions, panthers,

and bears, they stood still and became silent. Did he read out of the book in front of serpents and poisonous vermin, he could play with them as though they were birds. Did he read out of the book in front of the heavens and pronounced, in front of sun, moon, Orion, and all the stars, the sacred name in all its signs and all its holiness, he became their ruler, just as the righteous man rules because of his piety. And Adam also had power over the spirits, the demons, the adversaries, and Satan himself. He separated them into male and female, pronounced before them the sacred name, and they did according to his will and desire. Did he read out of the book in front of a high tower or the walls of a fortress, the walls collapsed. Did he read out of the book in war, the enemies fled. Did he read out of the book in front of a tree, the tree yielded its fruit prematurely. All things were known to Adam and he understood all by means of the book's Holy Spirit. He knew life and death, good and evil. He knew the secret of the hours, the moments, and the times, as well as the number of all days. He grasped the teachings concerning the divisions of time and all the jubilee years until the end of the world.

– Hebrew Legend

## **Michael as Guardian of Paradise**

In the course of his adventures, Emperor Alexander comes to the river Physon. Its waters are mixed of gold and precious stones and flow, in purity and beauty, across sand out of the garden of Paradise. The Emperor follows the water until he comes to a city enclosed by a sky-high wall fashioned out of a single stone. He and his knights ride along this stone wall. Finally they behold a wonderful gate, above which an angel with fiery sword is sitting. Alexander kneels down before him asking if he were a god. But the angel says that he is Michael, the Lord's servant and messenger. He bids the Emperor turn back. For here was Paradise and all the fighting were useless.

They ride along the wall so high,  
A beauteous gate at last they find.  
An angel sits above it high  
And in his hand a sword he holds  
Which mightily in fire glows.  
And when the Emperor draweth nigh,  
He kneels down on the ground and says:  
"Tell me, my Lord, art thou a god?  
By what name dost thou call this spot?"

And then the angel spake and said:  
“My name is that of Michael.  
No god am I, but one who serves  
The highest Lord of all the gods.  
At all times do I serve the One  
Who hath created heaven and earth.”  
And then the angel speaketh thus:  
“O Alexander, hear my words.  
Turn back at once upon thy path.  
For warfare here availeth not.”

And then said the angel: “I will give thee a sign to prove that thou hast been in this place.” He broke a small stone from the wall and bid the Emperor to weigh it: All that he might possess would not equal the stone’s weight. And it was the same with the might of God. All the works of Alexander could not be compared with God’s most insignificant deed. Alexander departs and tries to weigh the stone. But, with all his force, he cannot lift it from the ground.

Now an old master approaches, covers the stone with earth, and lifts it up as if it were as light as a feather. “The stone, O Alexander,” says the old master, “means the following: As long as thou livest, none may equal thee. But after thy death, the least of men living after thee will be better off than thou.”

– Medieval Tale