Review of Rabbi Hayyim Angel's New Book

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When exploring certain topics in the Talmud a discussion can be opened by use of a particular verse from which a principle that underlies an entire subject is learned. For example

> *…*
> *Rabbi Shmuel bar Na?mani introduced this passage with an introduction from here… (Megillah 10b).*

This approach came immediately to mind while reading Rabbi Hayyim Angel's new book, Keys To The Palace: Exploring the Reglioius Value of Reading Tanakh from Kodesh Press. This work consists of twenty essays from Rabbi Angel on a variety of topics ranging from academic Bible study, to the afterlife, to perspectives on several of the Psalms. What cuts across and unites the work is Rabbi Angel's mastery of Tanakh and his courageous pursuit of *pshat*.

Perhaps I should back up a bit to provide some context. Having been a product of more right-leaning Yeshivot, for years I had lamented my lack of having a good grasp of *nach.* Fortunately, I recently stumbled across what I would term a revolution in the teaching and learning of *Neviim* and *Ketuvim* in a serious way, for adults. One of the pillars at the center of this movement is Rabbi Angel.

The current work provides the reader with an entree into this world by offering numerous and variegated keys throughout these essays, which have been culled from a number of other works or scholarly publications, into parts of *Nach* and matters germane to academic Jewish studies today. Each chapter stands on its own, though several reference common topics, such as David's taking of Batsheva.

Each essay serves as a key to the topic at hand. In a few short pages Rabbi Angel poses powerful questions, covers the responses of many of the traditional and non-traditional sources, and provides a helpful summary and concise endnotes. The essays are too brief to be exhaustive of the topic, but instead whet the readers curiosity to learn and explore further.

In his even-handed presentation of how to approach and incorporate academic and non-Jewish sources into the traditional study of Tanakh, Rabbi Angel exposes the reader to some of the towering and influential work that has been generated in Israel and, outside of the scholarly community, may not be well known to the English speaking audience.

Perhaps as an inversion of Maimonides aphorism to accept the truth from whatever source it comes, Rabbi Angel rejects unconvincing solutions, no matter who proffers them. The author provides many viewpoints on a question and discusses the relative strengths and weakness so that the reader has a clear understanding of where the truth lies. In his search for *pshat* and the most reasonable explanation the author presents *Tanakh* unvarnished, and in so doing challenges the reader to think deeply, appreciate nuance, and continue to seek the "keys to encountering God in his Palace".

(Rabbi Hayyim Angel's book can be purchased through the online store at jewishideas.org)