Angelic Hierarchies
Wikibook
Hierarchies of angels

A Hierarchy of Angels is a belief or tradition found in the angelology of different religions, which holds that there are different levels or ranks of angels. Higher ranks may be asserted to have greater power or authority over lower ranks, and with different ranks having differences in appearance, such as varying numbers of wings or faces.

Abrahamic faiths

The Jewish angelic hierarchy is established in the Hebrew Bible, Talmud, Rabbinic literature, and traditional Jewish liturgy. They are categorized in different hierarchies proposed by various theologians. For example, Maimonides, in his Mishneh Torah or Yad ha-Chazakah: Yesodei ha-Torah, counts ten ranks of angels.

The most influential Christian angelic hierarchy was that put forward by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite in the 4th or 5th century in his book De Coelesti Hierarchia (On the Celestial Hierarchy). During the Middle Ages, many schemes were proposed, some drawing on and expanding on Pseudo-Dionysius, others suggesting completely different classifications. According to medieval Christian theologians, the angels are organized into several orders, or "Angelic Choirs".

Pseudo-Dionysius (On the Celestial Hierarchy) and Thomas Aquinas (Summa Theologica) drew on passages from the New Testament, specifically Ephesians 1:21 and Colossians 1:16, to develop a schema of three Hierarchies, Spheres or Triads of angels, with each Hierarchy containing three Orders or Choirs.

There is no standard hierarchical organization in Islam that parallels the Christian division into different "choirs" or spheres, and the topic is not directly addressed in the Quran. However, it is clear that there is a set order or hierarchy that exists between angels, defined by the assigned jobs and various tasks to which angels are commanded by God.
Some scholars suggest that Islamic angels can be grouped into fourteen categories, with some of the higher orders being considered archangels.

There is also an informal Zoroastrian angelic hierarchy, with specific angelic beings called yazatas having key positions in the day-name dedications on the Zoroastrian calendar.

**Role-playing games**

Angels are occasionally presented in role-playing games as having ordered hierarchies, within which higher level angels have more power and the ability to cast more spells or exercise other magical abilities. For example, Angels in *Dungeons & Dragons*, a subgroup of the beings called Celestials, coming in three different types, the progressively more powerful Astral Deva, Planetar, and Solar.

**References**

**Christian angelic hierarchy**

*For other angelic hierarchies, see Hierarchy of angels.*

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First Sphere

The **first sphere** angels serve as the heavenly counselors.

Seraphim

Seraphim (singular "Seraph"), mentioned in Isaiah 6:1-7[^1] are the highest angelic class and serve as the caretakers of God's throne and continuously shout praises: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" According to Isaiah 6:2[^2], the Seraphim have six wings: "with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew".

[^1]: Isaiah 6:1-7
[^2]: Isaiah 6:2
Cherubim

Cherubim have four faces: one of a man, an ox, a lion, and an eagle. They have four conjoined wings covered with eyes, a lion's body figure, and they have ox's feet. Cherubim guard the way to the tree of life in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:24) and the throne of God (Ezekiel 28:14–16).


Modern English usage has blurred the distinction between cherubim and putti. Putti are the winged human baby/toddler-like beings traditionally used in figurative art.

St. Thomas Aquinas imagined Satan as a fallen Cherub.

Thrones or Ophanim

The "Thrones" (Greek: thronoi, pl. of thronos) or Elders, also known as the Erelim or Ophanim, [citation needed] are a class of celestial beings mentioned by Paul of Tarsus in Colossians 1:16 [3] (New Testament). They are living symbols of God's justice and authority, and have as one of their symbols the throne. These high celestial beings appear to be mentioned again in Revelation 11:16 [4].

The Ophanim (Heb. ofanim: Wheels, also known as Thrones, from the vision of Daniel 7:9 [5]) are unusual looking even compared to the other celestial beings; They appear as a beryl-coloured wheel-within-a-wheel, their rims covered with hundreds of eyes.

They are closely connected with the Cherubim: "When they moved, the others moved; when they stopped, the others stopped; and when they rose from the earth, the wheels rose along with them; for the spirit of the living creatures [Cherubim] was in the wheels." Ezekiel 10:17 NRSV.
**Second Sphere**

Angels of the Second Sphere work as heavenly governors.

**Dominions or Lordships**

The "Dominions" (Eph. 1:21; Col. 1:16) (lat. *dominatio*, plural *dominationes*, also translated from the Greek term *kyriotetes*, pl. of *kyriotes*, as "Lordships") or "Dominations" are presented as the hierarchy of celestial beings "Lordships" in the *De Coelesti Hierarchia*. The Dominions, also known as the *Hashmallim*, regulate the duties of lower angels. It is only with extreme rarity that the angelic lords make themselves physically known to humans. They are also the angels who preside over nations.

The Dominions are believed to look like divinely beautiful humans with a pair of feathered wings, much like the common representation of angels, but they may be distinguished from other groups by wielding orbs of light fastened to the heads of their scepters or on the pommel of their swords.

**Virtues or Strongholds**

The "Virtues" or "Strongholds" lay beyond the *ophanim* ( Thrones/Wheels). Their primary duty is to supervise the movements of the heavenly bodies in order to ensure that the cosmos remains in order.

The term appears to be linked to the attribute "might", from the Greek root *dynamis* (pl. *dynamis*) in Ephesians 1:21 [6], which is also translated as "Virtue". They are presented as the celestial Choir "Virtues", in the *Summa Theologica*. Traditional theological conceptions of the Virtues might appear to describe the same Order called the Thrones (in which case the Ophanim may not be the same thing as "Thrones").

From Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite's *De Coelesti Hierarchia*:

"The name of the holy Virtues signifies a certain powerful and unshakable virility welling forth into all their Godlike energies; not being weak and feeble for any reception of the divine Illuminations granted to it; mounting upwards in fullness of power to an assimilation with God; never falling away from the Divine Life through its own weakness, but ascending unwaveringly to the superessential Virtue which is the Source of virtue: fashioning itself, as far as it may, in virtue; perfectly turned towards the Source of virtue, and flowing forth providentially to those below it, abundantly filling them with virtue."

**Powers or Authorities**

The "Powers" (lat. *potestas* (f), pl. *potestates*), or "Authorities", from the Greek *exousiai*, pl. of *exousia* (see Greek root in Eph 3:10 [7]), appear to collaborate, in power and authority, with the Principalities (Rulers).

The Powers are the bearers of conscience and the keepers of history. They are also the warrior angels created to be completely loyal to God. Some believe that no Power has ever fallen from grace, but another theory states that Satan was the Chief of the Powers before he Fell (see also Ephesians 6:12 [8]). Their duty is to oversee the distribution of power among humankind, hence their name.

Paul used the term *rule* and *authority* in Ephesians 1:21, and *rulers* and *authorities* in Ephesians 3:10. He may have been referring to the rulers and authorities of humanity, instead of referring to angels. [citation needed]
Third Sphere

Angels who function as heavenly messengers and soldiers.

Principalities or Rulers

The "Principalities" (lat. principatus, pl. principatūs) also translated as "Princedoms" and "Rulers", from the Greek archai, pl. of arche (see Greek root in Eph 3:10 [7]), appear to collaborate, in power and authority, with the Powers (Authorities).

The Principalities are shown wearing a crown and carrying a sceptre. Their duty also is said to be to carry out the orders given to them by the Dominions and bequeath blessings to the material world. Their task is to oversee groups of people. They are the educators and guardians of the realm of earth. Like beings related to the world of the germinial ideas, they are said to inspire living things to many things such as art or science.

Paul used the term rule and authority in Ephesians 1:21, and rulers and authorities in Ephesians 3:10.

Archangels

The word "archangel" comes from the Greek ἀρχάγγελος (archangēlōs), meaning chief angel, a translation of the Hebrew רב¬מלאך (rav-mal’ākh) [9] It derives from the Greek archē, meaning to be first in rank or power; and angelōs which means messenger or envoy. The word is only used twice in the New Testament: 1 Thessalonians 4:16 [10] and Jude 1:9 [11]. Only Archangels Gabriel and Michael are mentioned by name in the New Testament.

In most Christian traditions Gabriel is also considered an archangel, but there is no direct literal support for this assumption. It is also worth noting that the term 'archangel' appears only in the singular, never plural, and only in specific reference to Michael. Some Christian faiths take this to mean that Michael is, in fact, the only archangel.

The name of the archangel Raphael appears only in the Book of Tobit (Tobias). Tobit is considered Deuterocanonical by Roman Catholics (both Eastern and Western Rites) and Eastern Orthodox Christians. The Book of Tobit is also read by Anglicans and Lutherans, but not by Reformed Christians or Baptists. Raphael said to Tobias that he was "one of the seven who stand before the Lord", and it is generally believed that Michael and Gabriel are two of the other six.

A fourth Archangel is Uriel whose name literally means "Light of God." Uriel's name is the only one not mentioned in the Lutheran Bible, but plays, however, a prominent role in an apocryphon read by Anglican and Russian Orthodox Christians: The second Book of Esdras (fourth Books of Esdras in the Latin Vulgate). In the book he unveils seven prophecies to the prophet Ezra, after whom the book is named. He also plays a role in the apocryphal Book of Enoch, which is considered canonical by both the Ethiopian Orthodox and Eritrean Orthodox Church.

Another possible interpretation of the seven archangels is that these seven are the seven spirits of God that stand before the throne described in the Book of Enoch, and in the Book of Revelation.[12]

The Seven Archangels are said to be the guardian angels of nations and countries, and are concerned with the issues and events surrounding these, including politics, military matters, commerce and trade: e.g. Archangel Michael is traditionally seen as the protector of Israel and of the ecclesia (Gr. root ekklesia from the New Testament passages), theologically equated as the Church, the forerunner of the spiritual New Israel.
It is possible to make a distinction between archangel (with a lower-case a) and Archangel (with an uppercase A). The former can denote the second-lowest choir (arch-angels in the sense of being just above the lowest Choir of angels that is called only "angels") but the latter may denote the highest of all the angels (i.e., Arch-angels in the sense of being above all angels, of any Choir. The seven highest Seraphim, Michael being the highest of all).

Some Christian groups, such as the Seventh Day Adventists, believe Michael the Archangel is another name for Jesus.

**Angels**

The "angels" or malakhim, i.e. the "plain" angels (ἄγγελοι, pl. of the Greek word ἄγγελος, angêlōs, i.e. messenger or envoy), are the lowest order of the angels, and the most recognized. They are the ones most concerned with the affairs of living things. Within the category of the angels, there are many different kinds, with different functions. The angels are sent as messengers to mankind.
**Choirs in medieval theology**

During the Middle Ages, many schemes were proposed, some drawing on and expanding on Pseudo-Dionysius, others suggesting completely different classifications (some authors limited the number of Choirs to seven). Several other hierarchies were proposed, some in nearly inverted order. Some of those schemes are here presented:

- **Clement of Rome in *Apostolic Constitutions* (1st century):**

- **St. Ambrose in *Apologia Prophet David*, 5 (4th century):**

- **St. Jerome (4th century):**

- **Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite in *De Coelesti Hierarchia* (ca. 5th century):**

- **St. Gregory the Great in *Homilia* (6th century)**

- **St. Isidore of Seville in *Etymologiae* (7th century):**

- **John of Damascus in *De Fide Orthodoxa* (8th century):**

- **St. Hildegard of Bingen in *Scivias* (1098–1179):**

- **St. Thomas Aquinas in *Summa Theologica* (1225–1274):**
Christian angelic hierarchy

- Dante Alighieri in *The Divine Comedy* (1308–1321)

References

10. Revelation 1:5.

Bibliography

- The Bible ( Searchable online version (http://wayback.archive.org/web/20060314103504/http://www.bible.com/bible_read.html))

Further reading

Christian angelic hierarchy

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Yazata

The Faravahar, believed to be a depiction of a fravashi

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- Zarathustra
- aša (asha) / arta
- Babylonia

Angels and demons
- Amesha Spentas · Yazatas
- Ahuras · Daevas
- Angra Mainyu

Scripture and worship
- Avesta
- Gathas · Yasna
- Vendidad · Visperad
- Yashts · Khordeh Avesta
- Ab-Zohr
- The Ahuna Vairya Invocation
- Fire Temples

Accounts and legends
- Dēnkard · Bundahišn
- Book of Arda Viraf
- Book of Jamasp
- Story of Sanjan

History and culture
- Zurvanism
- Calendar · Festivals
- Marriage
- Eschatology

Adherents
Yazata is the Avestan language word for a Zoroastrian concept. The word has a wide range of meanings but generally signifies (or is an epithet of) a divinity. The term literally means "worthy of worship" or "worthy of veneration". The yazatas collectively represent "the good powers under Ohrmuzd", where the latter is "the Greatest of the yazatas".

**Etymology**

Yazata- is originally an Avestan language adjective derived from the verbal root yaz- "to worship, to honor, to venerate". From the same root comes Avestan yasna "worship, sacrifice, oblation, prayer". A yazata is accordingly "a being worthy of worship" or "a holy being".

As the stem form, yazata- has the inflected nominative forms yazātō, pl. yazatāḥō. These forms reflect Proto-Iranian *

*yazatah* and pl. *yazatāhah.* In Middle Persian the term became yazad or yazd, pl. yazdān, continuing in New Persian as izad.

Related terms in other languages are Sanskrit yājati "he worships, he sacrifices", yajatā- "worthy of worship, holy", yajñā "sacrifice", and perhaps[a] also Greek ἅγιος hagios "devoted to the gods, sacred, holy".

In Pokorny's comparative dictionary on Indo-European languages, the author considers Yazata-, yaz-, yasna, yājati, yajñā, ἅγιος hagios to all be derivatives of a Proto-Indo-European (PIE) root *yag*- (*yag’-*) "religiös verehren" ("religiously venerate"). However, some partially derivative authorities, such as Calvert Watkins' PIE Roots appendix to The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, give no indication that Greek ἅγιος hagios is still considered a reflex of this PIE root.

**In scripture**

The term yazata is already used in the Gathas, the oldest texts of Zoroastrianism and believed to have been composed by Zoroaster himself. In these hymns, yazata is used as a generic, applied to God as well as to the "divine sparks", that in later tradition are the Amesha Spentas. In the Gathas, the yazatas are effectively what the daevas are not; that is, the yazatas are to be worshipped while the daevas are to be rejected.

The Gathas also collectively invoke the yazatas without providing a clue as to which entities are being invoked, and—given the structure and language of the hymns—it is generally not possible to determine whether these yazatas are abstract concepts or are manifest entities. Amongst the lesser Yazatas being invoked by name by the poet of the Gathas are Sraosha, Ashi, Geush Tashan, Geush Urvan, Tushnamaiti, and Iza, and all of which "win mention in his hymns, it seems, because of their close association with rituals of sacrifice and worship".

In the Younger Avesta, the yazatas are unambiguously divinities, with divine powers but performing mundane tasks such as serving as charioteers for other divinities. Other divinities are described with anthropomorphic attributes, such as cradling a mace or bearing a crown upon their heads, or not letting sleep interrupt their vigil against the demons.
At some point during the late 5th or early 4th century BCE, the Achaemenids instituted a religious calendar in which each day of the month was named after, and placed under the protection of, a particular yazata. These day-name dedications were not only of religious significance because they ensured that those divinities remained in the public consciousness, they also established a hierarchy among the yazatas, with specific exalted entities having key positions in the day-name dedications (see Zoroastrian calendar for details).

Although these day-name dedications are mirrored in scripture, it cannot be determined whether these day-name assignments were provoked by an antecedent list in scripture (e.g. Yasna 16), or whether the day-name dedications provoked the compilation of such lists. Relatively certain however is that the day-name dedications predate the Avesta’s Siroza (“30 days”), which contain explicit references to the yazatas as protectors/guardians of their respective days of the month.

In tradition

The 9th - 12th century texts of Zoroastrian tradition observe the yazatas (by then as Middle Persian yazads) in much the same way as the hymns of the Younger Avesta. In addition, in roles that are only alluded to in scripture, they assume characteristics of cosmological or eschatological consequence.

For instance, Aredvi Sura Anahita (Ardivisur Nahid) is both a divinity of the waters as well as a rushing world river that encircles the earth, which is blocked up by Angra Mainyu (Ahriman) thus causing drought. The blockage is removed by Verethragna (Vahram), and Tishtrya (Tir) gathers up the waters and spreads them over the earth (Zam) as rain. In stories with eschatological significance, Sraosha (Sarosh), Mithra (Mihr), and Rashnu (Rashn) are guardians of the Chinvat bridge, the bridge of the separator, across which all souls must pass.

Further, what the calendrical dedications had begun, the tradition completed: At the top of the hierarchy was Ahura Mazda, who was supported by the great heptad of Amesha Spentas (Ameshaspands/Mahraspands), through which the Creator realized ("created with his thought") the manifest universe. The Amesha Spentas in turn had hamkars "assistants" or "cooperators", each a caretaker of one facet of creation.

In both tradition and scripture, the terms 'Amesha Spenta' and 'yazata' are sometimes used interchangeably. In general, however, 'Amesha Spenta' signifies the six great "divine sparks". In tradition, yazata is the first of the 101 epithets of Ahura Mazda. The word also came to be applied to Zoroaster, but Zoroastrians to this day remain sharply critical of any attempts to divinify the prophet. In a hierarchy that does not include either Ahura Mazda or the Amesha Spentas amongst the yazatas, the most prominent amongst those "worthy of worship" is Mithra, who "is second only in dignity to Ohrmazd (i.e. Ahura Mazda) himself."

In the present day

In the 1860s and 1870s, the linguist Martin Haug interpreted Zoroastrian scripture in Christian terms, and compared the yazatas to the angels of Christianity. In this scheme, the Amesha Spentas are the arch-angel retinue of God, with the hamkars as the supporting host of lesser angels.

At the time Haug wrote his translations, the Parsi (i.e. Indian Zoroastrian) community was under intense pressure from English and American missionaries, who severely criticized the Zoroastrians for—as John Wilson portrayed it in 1843—"polytheism", which the missionaries argued was much less worth than their own "monotheism". At the time, Zoroastrianism lacked scientifically-trained theologians of its own, and so the Zoroastrians were poorly equipped to make their own case. In this situation, Haug's counter-interpretation came as a welcome relief, and was (by-and-large) gratefully accepted as legitimate.

Haug's interpretations were subsequently disseminated as Zoroastrian ones, which then eventually reached the west where they were seen to corroborate Haug. Like most of Haug's interpretations, this comparison is today so well entrenched that a gloss of 'yazata' as 'angel' is almost universally accepted; both in publications intended for a general audience as well as in (non-philological) academic literature.
Amongst the Muslims of Islamic Iran, Sraosha came to be “arguably the most popular of all the subordinate Yazatas”, for as the angel Surush, only he (of the entire Zoroastrian pantheon) is still venerated by name.

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Jewish angelic hierarchy

Angels in Judaism (angel: Hebrew: מַלְאָךְ mal‘āḵ, plural mal‘āḵīm) appear throughout the Hebrew Bible, Talmud, Rabbinic literature, and traditional Jewish liturgy. They are categorized in different hierarchies.

Maimonides

Maimonides, in his Mishneh Torah or Yad ha-Chazakah: Yesodei ha-Torah, counts ten ranks of angels in the Jewish angelic hierarchy, beginning from the highest:

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<th>Angelic Class</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<td>Chayot HaKodesh</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Elohim</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Bene Elohim</td>
<td>&quot;Sons of Godly beings&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Cherubim</td>
<td>See Talmud Hagigah 13b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Ishim</td>
<td>&quot;manlike beings&quot;, see Genesis 18:2, Daniel 10:5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kabbalah

According to the Golden Dawn's interpretation of the Kabbalah, there are ten archangels, each commanding one of the choirs of angels and corresponding to one of the Sephirot. It is similar to the Jewish angelic hierarchy.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Choir of Angels</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Archangel</th>
<th>Sephirah</th>
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<td>Metatron</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Ophanim</td>
<td>Wheels</td>
<td>Raziel</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Erelim</td>
<td>Brave ones</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>Glowing ones, Amber ones</td>
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<td>Gabriel</td>
<td>Yesod</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Ishim</td>
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<td>Sandalphon</td>
<td>Malkuth</td>
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References


External links

- Jewish POV: Angels and Demons (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rc8c-3gaGbY) (YouTube)

Angels in Judaism
In Judaism an angel (Hebrew: מלאך malak, plural מלאכים malakim) is a messenger of God, an angelic envoy or an angel in general who appears throughout the Hebrew Bible, Rabbinic literature, and traditional Jewish liturgy. **Angels in Judaism** are categorized in different hierarchies.

### Etymology

Hebrew "mal'akh" (מַלְאָךְ) is the standard Hebrew Bible word for "messenger", both human and divine, though it is less used for human messengers in Modern Hebrew[2] as the latter is usually denoted by the term שליח (שליח). In the King James Bible, the noun mal'akh is rendered "angel" 111 times, "messenger" 98 times, "ambassadors" 4 times. The noun derives from the verbal consonantal root ל-א-ך (ל-א-ך), meaning specifically "to send with a message" and with time was substituted with more applicable של-ח. In Biblical Hebrew this root is attested only in this noun and in the noun "Mel'akah" (מְלָאכָה), meaning "work", "occupation" or "craftsmanship".

The morphological structure of the word mal'akh suggests that it is the maqta form of the root denoting the tool or the mean of performing it. The term "Ma'ak" therefore simply means the one who is sent, often translated as "messenger" when applied to humans; for instance, "Ma'ak" is the root of the name of the prophet Malachi, whose name means "my messenger". In modern Hebrew, mal'akh is the general word for "angel"; it is also the word for "angel" in Arabic (ملک malak), Aramaic and Ethiopic.

### In the Hebrew Bible

The Hebrew Bible reports that angels appeared to each of the Patriarchs, to Moses, Joshua, and numerous other figures. They appear to Hagar in Genesis 16:9, to Lot in Genesis 19:1, and to Abraham in Genesis 22:11, they ascend and descend Jacob's Ladder in Genesis 28:12 and appear to Jacob again in Genesis 31:11–13. God promises to send one to Moses in Exodus 33:2, and sends one to stand in the way of Balaam in Numbers 22:31.

Isaiah speaks of malak panov, "the angel of the presence" ("In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bore them, and carried them all the days of old") (Isaiah 63:9).

The Book of Psalms says "For his angels will charge for you, to protect you in all your ways" (Psalms 91:11).

### Angel of the Lord and the origins of angels

The figure of "the angel of Yahveh" (Heb. מלאך יהוה malak Yahveh) has been perceived by generations of exegetes and interpreters as theologically troublesome due to its obscure and perplexing identity. Yet, mal'akh Yahveh seems to conceal the answer in regards to the origins of the idea of angels as heavenly commissioners. Almost every appearance of this figure in the Hebrew Bible complies to the following pattern:

1. the narration introduces the angel of Yahveh;
2. it behaves as if he was a deity e.g. promising bewildering fertility (e.g. Genesis 21:18), annihilating the whole army with a single blow (e.g. 2 Kings 19:32-36) or merely delivering a speech where he presents himself as Yahveh or Elohim (e.g. Exodus 3:2-4);
3. the interlocutors of this figure address and revere him in a way reserved exclusively to deity.

As such, the incident leaves the reader with the question whether it was an angel or a deity who had just appeared. There is a wide array of explanations striving to elucidate this confusion. The most widespread theological ones try to deal with the problem by introducing additional concepts: the angel might be an earthly manifestation of God, some kind of God's avatar or pre-incarnated Christ. The different answer comes from the cultural studies which...
argue that the ancient commissioners during their proclamations used the first person point of view and spoke as if they had been the consigner himself. Both approaches however resort to additional theoretical concepts retroactively introduced to the source text itself. Meanwhile, the problem can be addressed by means of S.A. Meier's interpolation theory - a linguistic resolution of a seemingly complex theological and cultural dilemma. Accordingly, the word mal’akh would be a mere addendum preceding the divine name and simultaneously modifying the narrations in order to meet the standards of the “new” Israelite theology of single and transcendent God. The “default” form would be that of the ancient Near Eastern literary standards presenting a deity as manifesting to humans directly without any intermediary. On the grammatical level aforesaid augmentation resulted in forming the genitive construction and as such it was characterized by an exceptional ease of use deriving from two factors.

1. Both mal’akh and a deity, be it Yahveh or Elohim, are of masculine grammatical gender.
2. The introduction of the modifier noun neither affects the modified noun on the consonantal level nor does need any change in the form of the verbs connected to it.

In other words, mal’akh becomes “automatically” incorporated into the genitive construction and all the related verbs change their subject or object accordingly. On the other hand, the removal of the word mal’akh from the narration usually makes it far more coherent, meaningful and in line with its ancient Near Eastern literary context. In a nutshell, the interpolation theory, while basically explaining the function of mal’akh Yahveh, can be very well expanded so as to elucidate the nature of the rest of biblical “angels”. From this perspective then, the “angels” understood as metaphors would be the “semantic offspring” of mal’akh Yahveh who at certain moment in history started their literary existence.

**Angels and healing from impurity**

There are instances in the Bible where angels have the ability to heal an individual from impurity. For example, in the book of Isaiah, Isaiah ascends into heaven and sees angels praising the Lord. Their voices were so powerful that they make the pivots on the thresholds shake and filled the temple with smoke. (Isaiah 6: 3-4) All of this power made Isaiah feel unworthy and unclean so he cried out, "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" (Isaiah 6:5) Then one of the angels flew to Isaiah and touched his mouth with a live coal that "had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs." Once the angel had touched Isaiah's lips with the coal, he then said, "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out." (Isaiah 6: 6-7)

In the Book of Zechariah, Joshua was standing before the angel of the Lord, Satan, and God. (Zechariah 3:3) He was "dressed in filthy clothes" when standing before them. The angel then commanded him to take off his filthy clothing and gave him "festal apparel" and a clean turban to put on. At the removal of Zechariah's filthy clothing, the angel proclaimed, "See, I have taken your guilt away from you." (Zechariah 3: 4-5) Thus, the removal of Joshua's filthy clothing was like healing him from his guilt.

**Angels and prayer**

In the Book of Zechariah, Zechariah hears from the Lord that He had been angry with his ancestors due to their evil deeds. He promised them that if they 'return[ed] to [Him], [He] would return to [them]." Then the angel of the Lord prayed to the Lord and said, "O Lord of hosts, how long will you withhold mercy from Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with which you have been angry these seventy years?" Thus, the angel of the Lord prayed to God in order to petition for the people (Zechariah 1:12).
Angels in Judaism

Angels as warriors

In the Bible there are some references to angels acting as warriors, the protectors of all that is good. One of these references is The Book of Daniel which contains four apocalyptic visions. However, in Daniel 10:13, it makes reference to a sort of battle between the prince of the kingdom of Persia and the speaker whom Wikipedia:Avoid weasel words believe is Gabriel. Here Gabriel tells Daniel that the chief of princes, Michael, helped him in the opposition he was facing from the prince of the kingdom of Persia. Thus, both angels are acting as warriors for the good against the bad opposition from the prince of the kingdom of Persia. In addition, in Daniel 12:1, the speaker, Gabriel says that the angel Michael is the protector of the Israelite people and is a great prince.

Angels as messengers

In many passages from the Hebrew Bible, angels are utilized as messengers; indeed, there is no specific Hebrew equivalent for the English word "angel", relying instead on the Hebrew word for "messenger." Angels seem to have the appearance of ordinary humans; they are typically men and (unlike seraphim), have no wings. The presence of an angelic messenger versus a human messenger must be determined by the context of the passage. Regardless, messenger angels are a highly important part of preserving and strengthening the link, as well as necessary distance, of God to humans. The nature of the knowledge that angelic messengers carry is always heavenly; that is to say, it is divine, and only by being sanctioned by God can it be transmitted to humans, and only for necessary reasons. When an angel transmits knowledge from God, his own identity is effaced by that of his Lord; that is, he speaks directly for God. Examples of this role can be seen in numerous famous passages from the Old Testament, including the three mysterious men in the story of Abraham and the destruction of Sodom in Genesis 18:1-19:23, as well as the angel who informs Samson’s mother of the nature of the baby she carries in Judges 13:3-5. In these examples, the angels are disguised, their identities unimportant in relation to the heavenly magnitude of the knowledge they possess; they are entirely defined by their jobs.

Angels as Teachers in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature

Angels in the roles of teachers become especially important in Jewish apocalyptic literature, in such books as Daniel, Zechariah, and 4 Ezra, which feature enigmatic and terrifying prophetic visions experienced by unknowing humans who need heavenly guidance to understand what they have witnessed; no longer does prophecy come with full or immediate understanding, as in previous Old Testament works. Rather, with such a privileged insight into the heavenly sphere, a type of commentary or explanation of the vision is provided through the figure of an interpreting angel, whose teachings dispel the ignorance of the prophet and allow him to better understand, and thus better propagate, the heavenly knowledge of the end times that his vision contains. Such knowledge of the apocalypse had both heavenly and earthly implications, and assumed a great deal of importance to the oppressed people of Israel at the time, who needed explanations for why God would let them go through so much hardship; thus, the knowledge was "good." Because of the bizarre features of the visions contained in such apocalyptic literature, interpreting angels assume the roles of teachers rather than just messengers; instead of just conveying information, they must explain it. As teachers, they convey the full might and authority of heaven, while being able to comfort their distressed human charges in a more relatable way that if the prophets were directly spoken to by God. Thus, angels as teachers function as relatable interpreters and testaments to God’s power, while also increasing His transcendence. Most of all, they were important in establishing human prophets in their proper role as comforters, with “good” knowledge, to the people of Israel.

In 4 Ezra, the interpreting or teaching angel is Uriel. When Ezra expresses his distress about issues that would be similarly preoccupying Jews of his time—namely, why God would allow His chosen people to suffer under the oppression of the Gentiles—Uriel is sent from heaven by God to help relieve his ignorance. In the passage, Ezra argues with Uriel about matters of justice in a way that he never could with God; however, the angel argues back with a series of riddles that eventually show Ezra the misguidedness of his thinking (4 Ezra 3:1-4:21). Importantly,
Uriel does not simply transmit information or “speak at” Ezra; the two are engaged in an animated dialogue that reflects that of a teacher and a student, with the former guiding the latter to a realization. Ezra could never argue with God the way he argues with Uriel; however, this argument and its accompanying emotional catharsis is partially what leads him to discover the truth and main message of the passage on his own. In Daniel, angels also assume the roles of interpreters and teachers, notably in their abilities to explain visions concerning the eschaton, and help human prophets unknot knowledge from it. In Daniel, it is the archangel Gabriel who is sent down from heaven by God to explain Daniel’s perplexing visions and help relieve some of his distress (Daniel 8:16-17). In Daniel 7-12, the good knowledge that is transmitted to Daniel and thus to the rest of the population, is that the earthly events that have been so oppressing the Jewish people are being mirrored in heaven, and that justice will eventually reign in the form of a final battle pitting the armies of heaven against evil forces, which will be vanquished. However, Daniel is only aware of this information due to the assistance of Gabriel, who teaches him the correct interpretation of his vision, and encouraging him when he falters (Daniel 8:15-27). This role of angels is mirrored in Zechariah, where angelic interpretation and teaching is necessary to unravel the bizarre visions that the prophet witnesses. In the passage, the angel literally walks through Zechariah’s visions with him, explaining and teaching him as they go along so that Zechariah properly understands God’s intended meaning (Zechariah 1:9-5:11).

Second Temple Period Texts (Not Part of Mainstream Judaism)

The Dead Sea Scrolls, apocrypha, pseudepigrapha, and Book of Enoch - discussed in the next sections - are second temple period texts in Hebrew, which have not been considered authoritative in Judaism, are not part of the Jewish Bible, and should not be considered as part of the sacred literature of modern or medieval Judaism.

Angels in Jubilees

In the story of Mount Sinai, Exodus has no mention of angels at all while Jubilees chooses to include them. The inclusion of the angel in this passage indicates that the story had an, “interpretative artistry in both method and content; it also carries a message”. In Exodus 19-20 God speaks to Moses directly, telling him to write the ten commandments and to follow God, but in Jubilees 1:26 and Jubilees 2:1 God speaks to an angel who then relays the message to Moses, sending quite a different message to readers about God’s role and His intentions. Not only is the message related to Moses by an angel, but it is the “angel of the presence who enjoys a special intimacy with God”. The text reveals the “authority of the specific, angelically licensed interpreters.” The goal of the addition of the angel is for the “distancing of God from the everyday events of the world” Angels are also used as voices in God’s court. In Genesis 21-22, God decides on his own accord that Abraham was faithful to Him and therefore needed to be tested. In Jubilees, however, “there were voices in heaven regarding Abraham, that he was faithful in all that He told him, and that he loved the Lord, and that in every affliction he was faithful” (Jubilees 17:15).

Fallen Angels in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Book of Enoch

Second Temple era literature such as the Dead Sea scrolls, pseudepigrapha and in particular the Book of Enoch, begins to have extensive mythology about Fallen angels, Azazel, Shemihaza, and so on, though these did not become part of rabbinical orthodoxy later. Angels are also used as voices in God’s court. In Genesis 21-22, God decides on his own accord that Abraham was faithful to Him and therefore needed to be tested. In Jubilees, however, “there were voices in heaven regarding Abraham, that he was faithful in all that He told him, and that he loved the Lord, and that in every affliction he was faithful” (Jubilees 17:15).

Angels and Healing in Jubilees and the Dead Sea Scrolls

Healing from evil spirits in the Pseudepigrapha

In Jubilees, God command angels to teach Noah how to physically cure illnesses, they told Noah about the healing of the diseases along with their seductions, and how to heal them using herbs of the earth. Noah wrote it out in a book, which he gave to his eldest son so he too could learn the use of medicine. This happened because Mastema had been given evil spirits to test man, try to make them stray from the path of righteousness, and cause them to succumb
to diseases which they will cause. Mastema was given complete control over the spirits and thus Noah need some form of protection (Jub. 10:7-14). Mastema helps the Egyptian’s magicians to counter and mimic the acts Moses was doing, but the angels did not give them the power of healing so that the Pharaoh’s problems would be due to the magicians’ mistakes. This shows how the angels have the ability to give the power of medicine and healing out to people, yet refrain from teaching it to just anyone, only appearing to use it when helping to fight against evil forces (Jub. 48:10-11). In the Book of Tobit, God sends Raphael, who is thought of as the angel of healing, to aid Sara against the demon that is killing all her husbands (Tobit 3:17). Tobias follows Raphael’s instructions (Tobit 6:15-16) about the fish innards and scares away the demon terrorizing Sara thus making it possible for them to be together. Raphael passes the knowledge onto Tobias, instead of actually taking the spirit away from Sara (Tobit 8:2).

Healing from Illness and Disease in the Pseudepigrapha

In 1 Enoch, the watchers (angels from heaven) made wives of some women on Earth and taught them medicine, incantations, and the usage of roots and plants. Although God did not approve of these actions, He actually punishes them for it; it still shows that angels have knowledge for healing diseases that they can pass on to people on Earth. It also shows that people are able to comprehend this knowledge, since it is not mentioned that the women struggled or were too overwhelmed by what they learned (1 Enoch 7:1-2). In Tobit, God sends Raphael so that he could heal Tobit’s eyesight. Only angels, including Raphael, appear to know how to cure certain ailments (Tobit 3:17). Raphael instructs Tobias how to use the fish’s gall in order to cure Tobit’s eyesight. Tobias uses it on Tobit’s eyes and Tobit regains sight by causing the whiteness to fall from his eyes (Tobit 11:7-9).

Healing from Impurity in the Pseudepigrapha

In 1 Enoch 10:9, the Lord tells Gabriel to get rid of the children of impure relationships. That is, the children, also known as the giants, that were conceived from the relationships that the Watchers had with human women. The Lord tells Michael to tell the Watchers that they and all their children will die because of the defilement that they caused. He also tells Michael to punish them for their wrongdoing by binding them underneath rocks. (1 Enoch 10: 11-15) Both of these angels’ deed would essentially cleanse and heal the earth from all of the pollution, sin, plague, and suffering, caused by the giants, allowing everyone to become righteous once again.

In the Community Rule, those who are sons of light and walk with the Prince of Light are said to be given counsel in order to be holy, pure, humble, faithful and show great charity. It is also stated that for all who walk with the Prince of Light “it shall be healing.” Thus, it seems as if it will be healing from anything that is not pure and holy.

Angels as Warriors in the War Scroll

The War Scroll is an apocalyptic text, which describes a battle between the Sons of Light, who are fighting alongside the angels, and the Sons of Dark, who are fighting alongside the demon Belial. This battle is ultimately between good and evil. The angels serve as warriors for good while Belial serves as a warrior for evil. In the battle, each side wins three phases, becoming a tie. At this point, God intervenes and destroys evil, allowing for good to triumph. In the Community Rule in the Dead Sea Scrolls, it is said that there are two kinds of people, those who are “born of truth” and “spring from a mountain of light” and those who are “born of injustice” and “spring from a source of darkness.” The Prince of Light rules those who are born of truth and the Angel of Darkness rules those born of injustice. The Angel of Darkness causes the sons of light to stray away from righteousness. But, God and the Angel of Truth, having favor for the sons of light, protect and help the sons of light. The “allotted spirits” of the Angel of Darkness “seek the overthrow of the sons of light.” So there is a battle of power between the Prince of Light and his sons, and the Angel of Darkness and his sons.
Angels as Teachers

Angels as Teachers in the Apocrypha

Since angels possess so much knowledge, they often assume the role of teachers to transfer this knowledge to humans. An example of this can be seen in the Book of Tobit. As stated earlier, God sends the angel Raphael to teach Tobias about different medicinal practices and things he can do to help both Tobit and Sarah. (Tobit 3:7) Raphael uses the good knowledge that he possesses to instruct Tobias on what to do. (Tobit 6:5) He acts as a teacher, guiding Tobias and showing him the way, sharing only good, holy knowledge with him.

Angels assuming the role of teachers can also be seen in Jubilees 10. In Jubilees 10 the angels teach Noah about the different herbs and medicinal processes that he can use to help his grandsons. (Jubilees 10:12) The angels again use the good knowledge that they possess to help humans. (Jubilees 10:13) They act the same way teachers in a classroom do, instructing Noah on the best way to use the medicine to help his grandsons.

Angels and Knowledge

Angels and Good Knowledge

Throughout many passages of the Bible and other religious texts examples of angels possessing good knowledge can be seen. Angels often acquire this good knowledge through God in heaven. God then sends the angels down to assist humans by sharing that knowledge, in this way connecting them to God. An example of this can be seen in the Book of Tobit. In the Book of Tobit, Tobit is blinded for illegally burying people. (Tobit 2:10) At the same time, a distant relative of Tobit, Sarah, keeps losing her husbands to a demon that is in love with her. (Tobit 3:8) God decides to send down the angel of healing, Raphael, to share his good knowledge on how to help both Tobit and Sarah, with Tobit’s son, Tobias. (Tobit 3:17) Raphael teaches Tobias that he can use the heart, liver, and gull of a fish to heal both Sarah and Tobit. (Tobit 6:5) In this story, the angel, Raphael uses the good knowledge that he possesses to heal Tobit and to free Sarah of the demons. The knowledge that he shares is good because not only does it help both Tobit and Sarah, but he had God’s permission to share this knowledge. Raphael only shares this precious and valuable information with Tobias because he was commanded by God to do so. God wants the humans in this passage to be aware of this, deeming this knowledge both good and helpful.

An example of angels possessing and sharing good knowledge can also be seen in Jubilees 10. In Jubilees 10 God tells the angels to help heal Noah’s grandsons who are being tempted by demons. (Jubilees 10:10) The angels show Noah the different herbs and medicines that he can use to help his grandsons, similarly to the medicinal knowledge that Raphael shares with Tobias in the Book of Tobit. (Jubilees 10:12) Noah can then use the knowledge that he acquires from the angels about the herbs to help his grandsons. (Jubilees 10:13) The angels here are again sharing good knowledge. Like in the Book of Tobit, the information being shared can be deemed good knowledge because it is valuable information that can help protect Noah’s grandsons from the demons. The information shared is being used for a good, honorable cause. Also, the knowledge disclosed here is good knowledge because it is revealed by good angels who are obeying God and doing as He instructs them to do. They do not act on their own accord, and they are sharing this information with only pure, holy, and good intentions, hoping to help Noah, help his grandsons.

Angels and Bad Knowledge

Even though in many passages of both the Bible and other religious texts the angels share good knowledge with humans, in some passages the angels harbor bad knowledge and transfer that information on to humans. An example of this can be seen in the passages of 1 Enoch 6-16. These passages of Enoch follow the story of the fallen angels who decide to marry and impregnate female humans. (1 Enoch 6:2) The women then give birth to evil giant babies who cause much harm to the world. (1 Enoch 7:2) The fallen angels teach humans about many different medicinal practices. (1 Enoch 7:2) Here, however, this knowledge is deemed bad knowledge because the knowledge that they
share is associated with these bad angels. They are seen as evil angels, so any knowledge that they share is evil or bad as well. The fallen angels are sharing information with humans, that the humans should learn on their own. Also, the angels are sharing this information with humans, without God’s permission. God never sends them down like he does in Tobit and Jubilees 10. The angels are acting on their own accord, and God decides to punish them for this.

**Angels with Demonic Qualities**

During the second temple period, there began a blurring of the lines between the demonic and the divine.\(^{[19]}\) The nature of a demon was that of a “spirit” of malevolent nature and capabilities beyond that of a human. Angels of the period, being frequently tasked with temptation of man and punishment of sin, embody those qualities, thus forming representations of somewhat demonic angels. This strange intersection in behaviors of those expected to be good and those expected to be evil leads to a valid argument that in the second temple period, there were no demons at all, and that Angels may have filled the role entirely.

**Sinning Watchers**

The Watchers, who appear most extensively in 1 Enoch, are angels, but they seem more demonic through their actions.\(^{[20]}\) Their first evil act was to transgress God by taking wives on Earth. They acknowledge that this is wrong in the text, and know full well what they are doing.\(^{[21]}\) The Watchers were sinful and evil because they transgressed God’s commandments.\(^{[22]}\) The Watchers, while on Earth with their women, are said to have taught humans many things that humans were not supposed to know. Azaz’el is mentioned as teaching the people about weapons, war, make-up, jewelry, and alchemy.\(^{[23]}\) His teachings, along with those of other sinning Watchers, were responsible for corrupting the whole Earth.\(^{[24]}\) The Watchers took wives, and had children by them. The children of the Watchers were giants who consumed all of the food, and then turned on the people and animals. An angel took them away from the humans and forced them to fight and eventually kill each other,\(^{[25]}\) but their spirits remained bound to the Earth.\(^{[26]}\) These spirits are said to have corrupted Noah’s children and grandchildren, and were referred to as demons.\(^{[27]}\) Nine tenths of them were bound with the Watchers, but one tenth of them were left under Mastema’s control.\(^{[28]}\) The Watchers are the parents of what came to be known as demons. According to 1 Enoch 15:8-12, they are the origin of sin and evil on Earth.

**Adversaries/Advocates**

In texts from the Second Temple Period, there are three main adversary figures: Mastema, Belial, and Satan. These three figures are functionally the same, as they all fulfill the purpose of testing men’s faith.\(^{[29]}\) Satan mostly appears in the Bible, while Belial and Mastema mostly appear in the pseudepigrapha and Dead Sea Scrolls. All three figures are very powerful metaphysical beings that expose and sometimes command evil.

*Mastema*

The word “mastema” in Hebrew means “hostility” and comes from the same root as the word “satan.” However, there are references to a Prince of Mastema or Angel of Mastema throughout the Dead Sea Scrolls and pseudepigrapha.\(^{[30]}\) In these cases, “mastema” is referring to a figure under the control of God who controls the forces of evil/demons.\(^{[31]}\) In Jubilees, it is Mastema who has 1/10 of the spirits of the children of the Watchers put under his control.\(^{[32]}\) He is given them so that he can expose the evil of the son of men, which it is great.\(^{[33]}\) Mastema functions as an adversary of men, trying to corrupt them and point out their sins. In the Book of Jubilees, Mastema is also made to be responsible for some of the actions that are done by God in the Bible, but are not considered just or good.\(^{[34]}\)

*Belial*

The word “belial” in Hebrew means “worthlessness” or “wickedness.”\(^{[35]}\) Like the word “mastema”, it is a noun that describes an abstract quality.\(^{[36]}\) However, the word “belial” is used many times in Qumran texts to refer to the figure Belial, without an attached prefix like with the word “mastema.” When used to
Angels in Judaism refer the specific figure, Belial is used as the name for the leader of the forces of evil. Belial has a host that includes both men and other heavenly beings (angels). In the War Scroll, Belial and Angel of Darkness and Angel of Mastema are used interchangeably. Belial is said to have corrupted humans through his three nets, which are: wealth, fornication, and defiling the sanctuary. Similarly to Mastema, Belial commands forces of evil, and also tempts people to transgress God's commandments. He is also under God's control, like Mastema. Belial was put in control of the angels of destruction, who like Belial were created by God to do evil. Belial is readily found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, where the word is used both to designate the abstract noun, and the specific figure.

Satan

“Satan” in Hebrew means “adversary.” In Kings 11, the word “satan” is used to denote a military opponent of King Solomon. In Numbers 22, “satan” is used to denote an angel who was sent by God to prevent a human from doing a bad deed. The word devolved into the name of a specific figure, but during the Second Temple Period it never came to describe the modern Satan figure that is a fallen Lucifer who commands the forces of evil from Hell. The Satan of the Second Temple Period is the adversary of man. He operates within the heavenly court, and his job is to find and expose people that are not being faithful to God and following His commandments. If he believes that someone is not faithful to God, he can bring his case before God and ask for permission to test him. In his tests, Satan inflicts death, destruction, pain, and sickness upon people. Satan, like Belial and Mastema, has the job of exposing the sins of men to God so that they can be punished. The difference between Satan, and Belial and Mastema, is that Satan does his job alone and does not command the forces of evil.

Destructive Angels

Angels, while typically thought of as benevolent entities, are also often employed by God or by an angel of higher authority to wreak destruction on mortals. The official name for such an “evil” angel in the original Hebrew is: mal'akhei habbalah, which more literally means “destroying agent.” Originally, this phrase actually referred to demons, but this changed in the Gaonic period when mal'akhei began to be interpreted normally as “angel.”

“Angels of Destruction”

“Angels of Destruction” is a specific phrase used in the Dead Sea Scrolls to describe the angels directly under the rule of Belial. In the War Scroll, such angels are mentioned as fighting side by side with the spirits and humans that make up the Sons of Darkness, Belial’s army.

Angels Against Humanity

In the book of Job, Satan recommends to God that Job’s faith be tested, suggesting that suffering will cause Job to lose faith in God. God then sends satan to afflict Job by destroying his family, possessions, and health. Satan brings about these sufferings himself, as an angel against Humanity, even though God Ultimately sent him to do so.

In the passages of 4QpseudoJubilees, angels, specifically those under Mastema, are shown to be actively seeking the demise of the son of Abraham. These represent accusing angels, a recurring variety that begins appearing in Jubilees. Unlike Satan, this prompting by the angels for such punishment is not justified and is wholly malevolent.

Destroying Angels

Even the more conventional agents of God are often far from benevolent protectors. Angels can be brutal while fulfilling the will of God, often depicted as killing off thousands of people to do His bidding.

• In 2 Kings 19, an angel is tasked with the destruction of an entire Assyrian army, and kills them all in one night.
• In 1 Chronicles 21, an angel is tasked with visiting punishment upon Israel as a penalty for David's numbering of the people.[58]
• God sends an "evil spirit," specifically not referred to as demons in the text so as to mean angels, against Saul for having looted the Amalekites instead of destroying them.[59]

In Rabbinic literature
As a subcategory of heavenly beings, malakim occupy the sixth rank of ten in the famous medieval Rabbinic scholar Maimonides' Jewish angelic hierarchy.

Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphael
The Talmud names four angels who would later be known as archangels, surrounding God's throne: "As the Holy One blessed be He created four winds (directions) and four banners (for Israel's army), so also did He make four angels to surround His Throne—Michael, Gabriel, Uriel and Raphael. Michael is on its right, corresponding to the tribe of Reuben; Uriel on its left, corresponding to the tribe of Dan, which was located in the north; Gabriel in front, corresponding to the tribe of Judah as well as Moses and Aaron who were in the east; and Raphael in the rear, corresponding to the tribe of Ephraim which was in the west." [60]

Kabbalah
Jewish mysticism or Kabbalah describes the angels at length. Historically, Rabbis have forbidden the teachings of Kabbalah on the angels and the worlds until one is 40 years old, married and well-versed in fundamental concepts of Judaism and the Hebrew Bible. The Rabbinic warning is against learning it otherwise because it may lead to insanity or false beliefs about the world. Angels are described in Kabbalah literature as forces that send information, feelings, between mankind and the God of Israel. They are analogized to atoms, wavelengths or channels that help God in his creation, and it is therefore, reasoned that they should not be worshipped, prayed to, nor invoked. They are not physical in nature but spiritual beings, like spiritual atoms. Therefore, the Kabbalah reasons, when they appear in the Hebrew Bible their description is from the viewpoint of the person that received the vision or prophesy or occurrence, which will be anthropomorphic. However, they are not material beings but are likened to a single emotion, feeling, or material, controlled by God for his purpose of creation.

In Jewish liturgy
On returning home from services on Friday night, the eve of Shabbat, or at the dinner-table before dinner Friday night, it is customary in Orthodox Judaism and Conservative Judaism to greet ones guardian angels (Angels of Service or Ministering Angels) with a traditional hymn beginning with:

Peace be unto you, Malachai HaSharet (Angels of Service)

Angels of the Most High
From the King of the kings of kings
The Holy One Blessed Be He

Before going to sleep, many Jews recite a traditional prayer naming four archangels, "To my right Michael and to my left Gabriel, in front of me Uriel and behind me Raphael, and over my head God's Shekhinah ["the presence of God"])."

On the Jewish holiday of Simchat Torah, it is customary to call all the boys (in some synagogues, all the children) to the Torah reading and for the whole congregation to recite a verse from Jacob's blessing to Ephraim and Manasheh (Manassas).
May the angel who redeems me from all evil, bless the children, and let my name be named in them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac, and let them flourish like fish for multitude in the midst of the land (Genesis 48:16)

References

[51] Job 1:6-12
[53] Job 1:12
[54] 4QpseudoJubilees: 10-13
[57] 2 Kings 19: 35.
[59] 1 Samuel 16:14
[60] (Numbers Rabbah 2:10). See http://jhom.com/topics/angels/talmud_fourangels.htm

External links

Living creatures (Bible)

The living creatures, living beings, or Hayyoth (Hebrew חַיּוֹת chayot, from חַי chai, "to live") are a class of heavenly beings described in Ezekiel's vision of the heavenly chariot in the first and tenth chapters of the Book of Ezekiel. References to the creatures reoccur in texts of Second Temple Judaism, in rabbinical merkabah ("chariot") literature, and in the Book of Revelation.

Ezekiel's four living creatures

Ezekiel's vision of the four living creatures in Ezekiel chapter 1 [1] are identified as cherubim in chapter 10 [2] who are God's throne bearers. The concept of cherubim has been known all over the Ancient East as minor guardian deities of temple or palace thresholds. Each of Ezekiel's cherubim have four faces, that of a man, a lion, an ox and an eagle. However, their human shape appearances set them apart from the Griffin-like cherubs of Babylonia and Assyria. In their ability to move, Ezekiel's cherubim do not need to turn, as they front all directional points of the compass. This description of movement differs from the Seraphim in Isaiah's vision (Isaiah 6:2 [3]) who have an extra set of wings for their ability to fly.

Revelation's four living beings

Comparing the living creatures in Ezekiel with Revelation's four living beings (Greek: τέσσαρα ζῷα, tessera zōïa) is a prominent apocalyptic study in Western Christianity. An example, is the 18th Century works of Jonathan Edwards' recorded interpretation of 1722/23. The four living creatures that John of Patmos sees in the Book of Revelation, is the author's reworking of the living creatures in the visions of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:5-28 [4]) and Isaiah (Isaiah 6:2 [3]). In a critical analysis of John's vision, April De Conick's 2006 essay outlines that the hayyot in Ezekiel are perhaps not original with the author of Revelation. De Conick suggests that John may have drawn from other merkabah-related texts and by subtly working with images already known to his audience, he reshaped them for his own purposes. With John blending and transforming the images of his sources, it has given way to different interpretations.

In John's vision of Revelation 4:8 [5] the four living beings have six wings, whereas Ezekiel's four living creatures are described as only having four. In verse 6, they are said to have "eyes all over, front and back" which suggests that they are alert and knowledgeable, that nothing escapes their notice. The description parallels the wheels that are beside the living creatures in Ezek 1.18; 10.12, that are said to be "full of eyes all around". The Hebrew word for "wheel" (ôpannim) was also used in later Jewish literature to indicate a member of the angelic orders (1 Enoch 71.7; 3 Enoch 1.8; 7.1; 25.5-6, etc.). The term "eyes" can also be used as a metaphor for "stars". William D. Mounce noted a belief that the living creatures may have been associated with the four principal signs of the zodiac.
Religious views

In Judaism, the living beings are considered angels of fire, who hold up the throne of God and the earth itself. They are ranked first in Maimonides' Jewish angelic hierarchy.

In Christianity, the four living creatures are Cherubim. A prominent early interpretation has been to equate the four creatures as a tetramorph of the Four Evangelists where the lion represents Mark the Evangelist, the calf is Luke the Evangelist, the man is Matthew the Apostle, and the eagle symbolizes John the Evangelist. This interpretation originated with Irenaeus and was adopted by Victorinus. Its influence has been on art and sculpture and is still prevalent in Catholicism and Anglicanism.

References


External links

- Jewish Encyclopedia: Angelology (http://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/1521-angelology)

Ophanim

The *ophanim* or *ofanim*, also Ophide (Hebrew "wheels" אֹפַנִּים 'ophannīm; singular אֹפָן 'ōphān) refer to the wheels seen on Ezekiel's vision of the chariot (Hebrew *merkahab*) in Ezekiel 1:15-21 [1]. These are first construed as angels in one of the Dead Sea scrolls (4Q405), and as a class of celestial beings in late sections of the Book of Enoch (61:10, 71:7) where with the Cherubim and Seraphim they never sleep, but guard the throne of God.

These "wheels" have been associated with Daniel 7:9 [5] (mentioned as *galgal*, traditionally "the wheels of galgallin", in "fiery flame" and "burning fire") of the four, eye-covered wheels (each composed of two nested wheels), that move next to the winged Cherubim, beneath the throne of God. The four wheels move with the Cherubim because the spirit of the Cherubim is in them. These are also referred to as the "many-eyed ones" in the late Second Book of Enoch (20:1, 21:1).

The Ophanim are also equated as the "Thrones", associated with the "Wheels", in the vision of Daniel 7:9 (Old Testament). They are the carriers of the throne of God, hence the name. However, they may or may not be the same Thrones (Gr. *thronos*) mentioned by Paul of Tarsus in Colossians 1:16 [2] (New Testament).
Ophanim

Function and philosophy

These Angelic Princes are often also called "Ofanim, Wheels of Galgallin." It is said that they were the actual wheels of the Lord's Heavenly Chariot (Merkabah). "The four wheels had rims and they had spokes, and their rims were full of eyes round about." They are also frequently referred to as "many-eyed ones."

Rosemary Gulley (1996: p. 37) states that:

The 'thrones'; also known as 'ophanim' (offanim) and 'galgallin', are creatures that function as the actual chariots of God driven by the cherubs. They are characterized by peace and submission; God rests upon them. Thrones are depicted as great wheels containing many eyes, and reside in the area of the cosmos where material form begins to take shape. They chant glories to God and remain forever in his presence. They mete out divine justice and maintain the cosmic harmony of all universal laws. [3]

Ophanim in specific spiritual traditions

Ophanim in Judaism

Maimonides lists Ofanim as occupying the second of ten ranks of angels in his exposition of the Jewish angelic hierarchy.

Ophanim are mentioned in the kel adon prayer, often sung by the congregation, as part of the traditional Shabbat morning service.

In the Jewish angelic hierarchy thrones and wheels are different. This is also true in the Kabbalistic angelic hierarchy.

Thrones in the Catholic Church

_De Coelesti Hierarchia_ refers to the Thrones (from the Old Testament description) as the third Order of the first sphere, the other two superior orders being the Cherubim and Seraphim. It is mentioned that "The name of the most glorious and exalted Thrones denotes that which is exempt from and untainted by any base and earthly thing, and the super mundane ascent up the steep. For these have no part in that which is lowest, but dwell in fullest power, immovably and perfectly established in the Most High, and receive the Divine Immanence above all passion and matter, and manifest God, being attentively open to divine participations."

Lords of the Flame in the Western Wisdom Teachings

_The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception_ refers that the "Lords of the Flame", the Hierarchy of Elohim astrologically assigned to Leo, are the Thrones (from the Old Testament description, "because of the brilliant luminosity of their bodies and their great spiritual powers."); the other two superior hierarchies being also the Cherubim and Seraphim. According to this teaching, these three Hierarchies have already reached liberation, and thus are no longer active in the work of evolution.
Nation of Islam

The Nation of Islam identifies the ophanim with the Mother Plane, which Wallace Fard Muhammad described as a "small man-made planet" located approximately 40 miles (64 km) above the earth that would one day destroy the cities of white people. His successor Elijah Muhammad also identified them with contemporary sightings of flying saucers. [4][5]

References

[4] Elijah Muhammad, Message to the Blackman in America, ch. 125
[5] Elijah Muhammad, The Fall of America, ch. 58

Christian angelic hierarchy

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Er’el

An Arel, Ar’el, or Er’el, more commonly referred to in the plural as "the Erelim", are a rank of angels in Jewish Kabbala and Christian religion. The name is seen to mean "the valiant/courageous". They are generally seen as the third highest rank of divine beings/angels below God.

A specific Arel, or the erelim, are also referenced in other modern mysticism, in various ways, like the various Kabbalistic traditions, and elsewhere.

There may be an etymological relationship between the Arelim and the angel Ariel.

External references

• Angels [1]
• Dictionary of Angels [2]

References

Hashmal

**Hashmallim** (singular **Hashmal**) are angelic entities in both Judaism\(^1\) and Christianity.

They appear in the Hebrew Bible in Ezekiel 1:4:

> I saw, and behold, there was a stormy wind coming from the north, a great cloud with flashing fire and a brilliance surrounding it; and from its midst, like the color of the Hashmal [often translated electrum] from the midst of the fire, and in its midst there was the likeness of four Chayot (living creatures).

Hashmallim occupy the fourth rank of ten in Maimonides's exposition of the Jewish angelic hierarchy. Hashmallim also appear in the Christian angelic hierarchy.

The Septuagint translates "hashmal" to "elektron," which means "amber" in English. Francis Bacon coined the English word "electricity" to describe the static electric effect of rubbing amber with cloth. Later, "hashmal" became the modern Hebrew word that translates to the English word "electricity." Jewish poet Judah Leib Gordon coined the modern Hebrew word.\(^2\)

**Popular culture**

In the Ivalice Alliance sub-series of the *Final Fantasy* franchise, a recurring leonid demigod character is named variously "Hashmal", "Hashmalum", and "Hashmallim".

**References**

Seraph

A seraph (/ˈsɜːrəf/; pl. seraphs or seraphim /ˈsərəf.ɪm/; Hebrew: שְׂרָפִים, singular שָׂרָף śārāf; Latin: seraphi[m], singular seraph[us]; Greek: σεραφεῖμ) is a type of celestial or heavenly being in the Abrahamic religions.

Literally "burning ones", the word seraph is normally a synonym for serpents when used in the Hebrew Bible. A seminal passage in the Book of Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1-8) used the term to describe fiery six-winged beings that fly around the Throne of God crying "holy, holy, holy". This throne scene, with its triple invocation of holiness (a formula that came to be known as the Trisagion), profoundly influenced subsequent theology, literature and art. Its influence is frequently seen in works depicting angels, heaven and apotheosis. Seraphs are mentioned as celestial beings in an influential Hellenistic work, the Book of Enoch, and the Book of Revelation. Tradition places seraphs in the fifth rank of ten in the Jewish angelic hierarchy and the highest rank in the Christian angelic hierarchy.

Origins and development

The word seraphim, literally "burning ones", transliterates a Hebrew plural noun; translation yields seraphs. The word saraph/seraphim appears three times in the Torah (Numbers 21:6–8, Deuteronomy 8:15) and four times in the Book of Isaiah (6:2–6, 14:29, 30:6). In Numbers and Deuteronomy the "seraphim" are serpents—the association of serpents as "burning ones" is possibly due to the burning sensation of the poison. Isaiah also uses the word in close association with words to describe snakes (nachash, the generic word for snakes, in 14:29, and epheh, viper, in 30:6).

The Isaiah vision of seraphs in an idealised Jerusalem First Temple represents the sole instance in the Hebrew Bible of this word being used to describe celestial beings. "... I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and His train filled the Hekhal (sanctuary). Above him stood the Seraphim; each had six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew." (Isaiah 6:1–3) The seraphim cry continually to each other, "Holy, holy, holy, is YHWH of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory." (verses 2–3) One seraph then carries out an act of purification for the prophet by touching his lips with a live coal from the altar (verses 6–7). The text uses the word "seraphim" but adds no adjectives or modifiers emphasizing snakes (nahash, etc.). The description gives the creatures both human and avian attributes. A strong association with fire, though, is maintained.

In the Hebrew Bible the seraphs do not have the status of angels. It is only in later sources (like De Coelesti Hierarchia or Summa Theologiae that they are considered to be a division of the divine messengers.

Seraphs appear in the 2nd century BC Book of Enoch where they are designated as drakones (δράκονες "serpents"), and are mentioned, in conjunction with cherubs, as the heavenly creatures standing nearest to the throne of God. Two other classes of celestial beings were equated with the seraphim - the phoenixes and the chalkydri (from Greek χάλκος "copper", "brass" + ὕδρα "hydra", "water-snake"; lit. "brazen hydraz" or "serpents"), who were
both described as "flying elements of the sun". In the late 1st century AD Book of Revelation (iv. 4–8) the seraphim are described as being forever in God's presence and praising him: "Day and night with out ceasing they sing: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come.' ” They appear also in the Christian Gnostic text On the Origin of the World, described as "dragon-shaped angels".

In Judaism

The 12th century scholar Maimonides placed the seraphs in the fifth of ten ranks of angels in his exposition of the Jewish angelic hierarchy. In Kabbalah, the seraphim are the higher angels of the World of Beriah ("Creation", first created realm, divine understanding),[3] whose understanding of their distance from the absolute divinity of Atziluth causes their continual "burning up" in self-nullification. Through this they ascend to God, and return to their place. Below them in the World of Yetzirah ("Formation", archetypal creation, divine emotions) are the Hayot angels of Ezekiel's vision, who serve God with self-aware instinctive emotions ("face of a lion, ox, eagle"). Seraphim are part of the angelarchy of modern Orthodox Judaism. Isaiah's vision is repeated several times in daily Jewish services, including at Kedushah prayer as part of the repetition of the Amidah, and in several other prayers as well. Conservative Judaism retains the traditional doctrines regarding angels and includes references to them in the liturgy, although a literal belief in angels is by no means universal among adherents. Adherents of Reform Judaism and Reconstructionist Judaism generally take images of angels as symbolic.

In Christianity

Medieval Christian theology places seraphs in the highest choir of the angelic hierarchy. They are the caretakers of God's throne, continuously singing "holy, holy, holy". Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite in his Celestial Hierarchy (vii), drew upon the Book of Isaiah in fixing the fiery nature of seraphim in the medieval imagination. Seraphim in his view helped the Deity maintain perfect order and are not limited to chanting the trisagion. Taking his cue as well from writings in the Rabbincic tradition, the author gave an etymology for the Seraphim as "those who kindle or make hot":

The name seraphim clearly indicates their ceaseless and eternal revolution about Divine Principles, their heat and keenness, the exuberance of their intense, perpetual, tireless activity, and their elevative and energetic assimilation of those below, kindling them and firing them to their own heat, and wholly purifying them by a burning and all-consuming flame; and by the unhidden, unquenchable, changeless, radiant and enlightening power, dispelling and destroying the shadows of darkness.

Thomas Aquinas in his Summa Theologiae offers a description of the nature of seraphs:

The name "Seraphim" does not come from charity only, but from the excess of charity, expressed by the word ardor or fire. Hence Dionysius (Coel. Hier. vii) expounds the name "Seraphim" according to the properties of fire, containing an excess of heat. Now in fire we may consider three things.
First, the movement which is upwards and continuous. This signifies that they are borne inflexibly towards God.

Secondly, the active force which is "heat," which is not found in fire simply, but exists with a certain sharpness, as being of most penetrating action, and reaching even to the smallest things, and as it were, with superabundant fervor; whereby is signified the action of these angels, exercised powerfully upon those who are subject to them, rousing them to a like fervor, and cleansing them wholly by their heat.

Thirdly we consider in fire the quality of clarity, or brightness; which signifies that these angels have in themselves an inextinguishable light, and that they also perfectly enlighten others.

The seraphim took on a mystic role in Pico della Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1487), the epitome of Renaissance humanism. Pico took the fiery Seraphim—"they burn with the fire of charity"—as the highest models of human aspiration: "impatient of any second place, let us emulate dignity and glory. And, if we will it, we shall be inferior to them in nothing", the young Pico announced, in the first flush of optimistic confidence in the human capacity that is the coinage of the Renaissance. "In the light of intelligence, meditating upon the Creator in His work, and the work in its Creator, we shall be resplendent with the light of the Cherubim. If we burn with love for the Creator only, his consuming fire will quickly transform us into the flaming likeness of the Seraphim."

St. Bonaventure, a Franciscan theologian who was a contemporary of Aquinas, uses the six wings of the seraph as an important analogical construct in his mystical work *The Journey of the Mind to God*.

Christian theology developed an idea of seraphs as beings of pure light who enjoy direct communication with God.

As mascots and symbols

Several Catholic schools use a Seraph or a seraph-related symbol as their mascot:
- Mater Dei Catholic Preparatory School, Middletown, New Jersey, USA.
- St. Bonaventure High School, Ventura, California, USA.
- St. Madeleine Sofie Catholic School, Bellevue, Washington, USA.
- Koinonia Academy, Plainfield, New Jersey, USA

Several models of Rolls Royce use a "Flying Lady" symbol or moniker, which some equate to a seraph.

References

[3] Angels 2: Wings on Fire (http://www.kabbalaonline.org/kabbalah/article_cdo/aaid/380697/jewish/Angels-2-Wings-on-Fire.htm), kabbalaonline.org: "These creatures of the world of Beriya, are the higher angels, called seraphim, from the Hebrew word for burn, saraf."

External links

- Jewish Encyclopedia: Seraphim (http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13437-seraphim)
Seraph

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Elohim

Elohim (אֱלֹהִים) is a grammatically singular or plural noun for "god" or "gods" in both modern and ancient Hebrew language. When used with singular verbs and adjectives elohim is usually singular, "god" or especially, the God. When used with plural verbs and adjectives elohim is usually plural, "gods" or "powers".[1][2] It is generally thought that Elohim is a formation from eloah, the latter being an expanded form of the Northwest Semitic noun il (ʾēl). It is usually translated as "God" in the Hebrew Bible, referring with singular verbs both to the one God of Israel, and also in a few examples to other singular pagan deities. With plural verbs the word is also used as a true plural with the meaning "gods". The related nouns eloah (ʾēlah) and el (ʾēl) are used as proper names or as generics, in which case they are interchangeable with elohim.

Mark S. Smith said that the notion of divinity underwent radical changes throughout the period of early Israelite identity. Smith said that the ambiguity of the term Elohim is the result of such changes, cast in terms of "vertical translatability" by Smith (2008); i.e. the re-interpretation of the gods of the earliest recalled period as the national god of the monolatrism as it emerged in the 7th to 6th century BCE in the Kingdom of Judah and during the Babylonian captivity, and further in terms of monotheism by the emergence of Rabbinical Judaism in the 2nd century CE.[4] A different version was produced by Morton Smith. Despite the -im ending common to many plural masculine nouns in Hebrew, the word when referring to the Name of God is grammatically singular, and takes a singular verb in the Hebrew Bible.

The word is identical to the usual plural of el meaning gods or magistrates, and is cognate to the 'l-h-m found in Ugaritic, where it is used for the pantheon of Canaanite gods, the children of El and conventionally vocalized as "Elohim". Most use of the term Elohim in the later Hebrew text imply a view that is at least monolatrist at the time of writing, and such usage (in the singular), as a proper title for the supreme deity, is generally not considered to be synonymous with the term elohim, "gods" (plural, simple noun). Hebrew grammar allows for this nominally-plural form to mean "He is the Power (singular) over powers (plural)", or roughly, "God of gods". Rabbinic scholar Maimonides wrote that the various other usages are commonly understood to be homonyms. The plural form ending in -im can also be understood as denoting abstraction, as in the Hebrew words chayyim ("life") or betulim ("virginity"). If understood this way, Elohim means "divinity" or "deity". [citation needed]
**Etymology**

The *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* defines "elohim" as a plural of *eloaḥ*, an expanded form of the common Semitic noun "ʾēl" (ʾēl). It contains an added *heh* as third radical to the biconsonantal root. Discussions of the etymology of *elohim* essentially concern this expansion. An exact cognate outside of Hebrew is found in Ugaritic ʾlm, the family of El, the creator god and chief deity of the Canaanite pantheon, in Biblical Aramaic ʾĔlāḥā and later Syriac Alaha "God", and in Arabic ʿilāḥ "god, deity" (or *Allāh* as "The [single] God").

"El" (the basis for the extended root ʾlh) is usually derived from a root meaning "to be strong" and/or "to be in front".

**Canaanite religion**

The word *el* (singular) is a standard term for "god" in other related Semitic languages including Ugaritic. The Canaanite pantheon of gods was known as the *elohim* (the gods [plural]). For instance, in the Ugaritic Baal cycle we read of "seventy sons of Asherah". Each "son of god" was held to be the originating deity for a particular people. (KTU2 1.4.VI.46). A memory of this myth is contained in Genesis, describing the "sons of God" who lay with the "daughters of men". In post-exilic apocrypha these were identified as Nephelim, or fallen angels.

**Elohist**

*Elohim* occurs frequently throughout the received text of the Torah. In some cases (e.g. Exodus 3:4, "... Elohim called unto him out of the midst of the bush ..."), it acts as a singular noun in Hebrew grammar, and is then generally understood to denote the single God of Israel. In other cases, Elohim acts as an ordinary plural of the word Eloah, and refers to the polytheistic notion of multiple gods (for example, Exodus 20:3, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me.").

The choice of word or words for God varies in the Hebrew Bible. According to the documentary hypothesis these variations are evidence of different source texts: Elohim is used as the name of God in the Elohist and the Priestly source, while Yahweh is used in the Jahwist source. The difference in names results from the theological point being made in the Elohist and Priestly sources that God did not reveal his name, Yahweh, to any man before the time of Moses.

While the Jahwist presented an anthropomorphic God who could walk through the Garden of Eden looking for Adam and Eve, the Elohist frequently involves angels. For example, it is the Elohist version of the tale of Jacob's ladder in which there is a ladder of angels with God at the top, whereas in the Jahwist tale, it is just a dream in which God is simply above the location, without the ladder or angels. Likewise, the Elohist describes Jacob actually wrestling with God. (Genesis 32:28)

The classical documentary hypothesis as developed in the late 19th century assumed that the Elohist portions of the Torah were composed in the 9th century BCE (i.e. during the early period of the Kingdom of Judah). This is far from universally accepted today, as there is evidence of a later "Elohist redaction" (post-exilic) during the 5th century BCE which makes it difficult to determine whether a given passage is "Elohist" in origin, or only as a result of late redaction.

**Hebrew Bible**

The word *Elohim* occurs more than 2500 times in the Hebrew Bible, with meanings ranging from "god" in a general sense (as in Exodus 12:12, where it describes "the gods of Egypt"), to a specific god (e.g., 1 Kings 11:33, where it describes Chemosh "the god of Moab", or the frequent references to Yahweh as the "elohim" of Israel), to demons, seraphim, and other supernatural beings, to the spirits of the dead brought up at the behest of King Saul in 1 Samuel 28:13, and even to kings and prophets (e.g., Exodus 4:16). The phrase *bene elohim*, usually translated "sons of God",...
has an exact parallel in Ugaritic and Phoenician texts, referring to the council of the gods.

Elohim occupy the seventh rank of ten in the famous medieval Rabbinic scholar Maimonides' Jewish angelic hierarchy. Maimonides said: "I must premise that every Hebrew knows that the term Elohim is a homonym, and denotes God, angels, judges, and the rulers of countries, ..."[1]

Grammar – singular or plural
In Hebrew the ending -im mainly indicates a masculine plural. However with Elohim the construction is grammatically singular (i.e. it governs a singular verb or adjective) when referring to the Hebrew God, but grammatically plural elohim (i.e. taking a plural verb or adjective) when used of pagan divinities (Psalms 96:5; 97:7). Citation needed Similarly, the Quran uses aliha as the plural of ilah for pagan divinities, and occasionally uses "Allahuma" (O God! - plural) for the sole god (as opposed to "Allah"). The exact equivalent of Elohim would be Īlahin (إلهين), although it is rarely used in Arabic parlance. Note that human beings can also have names with plural endings, such as Ephraim, the son of Joseph.

Plural "gods", with plural verb
The noun elohim is used with a plural verb in 1 Samuel 28:13[6]. The witch of Endor told Saul that she saw "gods" (elohim) ascending (olim עולים, plural verb) out of the earth.[7]

God of Israel, with singular verb
In the Hebrew Bible Elohim, when meaning the God of Israel, is mostly grammatically singular. Even in Genesis 1:26 "Then God said (singular verb), 'Let us make (plural verb) man in our image, after our likeness', Elohim is singular. Wilhelm Gesenius and other Hebrew grammarians traditionally described this as the pluralis excellentiae (plural of excellence), which is similar to the pluralis majestatis (plural of majesty, or "Royal we").[8]

Gesenius comments that Elohim singular is to be distinguished from elohim plural gods and remarks that:

the supposition that elohim is to be regarded as merely a remnant of earlier polytheistic views (i.e. as originally only a numerical plural) is at least highly improbable, and, moreover, would not explain the analogous plurals (below). To the same class (and probably formed on the analogy of elohim) belong the plurals kadoshim, meaning "the Most Holy" (only of Yahweh, Hosea 12:1, Proverbs 9:10, 30:3 (cf. El hiym kadoshim in Joshua 24:19 and the singular Aramaic "the Most High", Daniel 7:18, 22, 25); and probably teraphim (usually taken in the sense of penates) the image of a god, used especially for obtaining oracles. Certainly in 1 Samuel 19:13, 16 only one image is intended; in most other places a single image may be intended; in Zechariah 10:2 alone is it most naturally taken as a numerical plural.

There are a number of notable exceptions to the rule that Elohim is treated as singular when referring to the God of Israel, including Gen. 20:13, 35:7, 2 Sam. 7:23 and Ps. 58:11, and notably the epithet of the "Living God" (Deuteronomy 5:26 etc.), which is constructed with the plural adjective, Elohim Hayiym אֶלֹהִים חַיִים but still takes singular verbs.

In the Septuagint and New Testament translations Elohim has the singular ὁ θεὸς even in these cases, and modern translations follow suit in giving "God" in the singular. The Samaritan Torah has edited out some of these exceptions.[9]
Abraham’s "the gods caused me"

In Gen 20:13 Abraham, before the polytheistic Philistine king Abimelech, says that "the gods (elohim) caused (plural verb) me to wander". The Greek Septuagint (LXX) and most English versions usually translate this "God caused", possibly to avoid the implication of Abraham deferring to Abimelech's polytheistic beliefs.

Angels and judges

In a few cases in the Greek Septuagint (LXX), Hebrew elohim with a plural verb, or with implied plural context, was rendered either angeloi ("angels") or pros to kriterion tou Theou ("before the judgement of God"). These passages then entered first the Latin Vulgate, then the English King James Version (KJV) as "angels" and "judges", respectively. From this came the result that James Strong, for example, listed "angels" and "judges" as possible meanings for elohim with a plural verb in his Strong's Concordance, and the same is true of many other 17th-20th century reference works. Both Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon and the Brown-Driver-Briggs Lexicon list both angels and judges as possible alternative meanings of elohim with plural verbs and adjectives.

The reliability of the Septuagint translation in this matter has been questioned by Gesenius and Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg. In the case of Gesenius, he lists the meaning without agreeing with it. Hengstenberg stated that the Hebrew Bible text never uses elohim to refer to "angels", but that the Septuagint translators refused the references to "gods" in the verses they amended to "angels."

The Greek New Testament (NT) quotes Psalm 8:4-6 in Hebrews 2:6b-8a, where the Greek NT has "ἀγγέλους" (angelos) in vs. 7, quoting Ps. 8:5 (8:6 in the LXX), which also has "ἀγγέλους" in a version of the Greek Septuagint. In the KJV, elohim (Strong's number H430) is translated as "angels" only in Psalm 8:5.

The KJV has elohim translated as "judges" in Exodus 21:6; Exodus 22:8; and twice in Exodus 22:9.

Ambiguous readings

Sometimes when elohim occurs as the referent or object (i.e. not subject) of a sentence, and without any accompanying verb or adjective to indicate plurality, it may be grammatically unclear whether gods plural or God singular is intended. An example is Psalm 8:5 where "Yet you have made him a little lower than the elohim" is ambiguous as to whether "lower than the gods" or "lower than God" is intended. The Septuagint read this as "gods" and then "corrected" the translation to "angels" which reading is taken up by the New Testament in Hebrews 2:9 "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (full quote and compare)

Other plural-singualr in biblical Hebrew

The Hebrew language has several nouns with -im (masculine plural) and -oth (feminine plural) endings which nevertheless take singular verbs, adjectives and pronouns. For example Ba'aleim "owner": "He is lord (singular) even over any of those things that he owns that are lordly (plural)."

Jacob's ladder "gods were revealed" (plural)

In the following verses Elohim was translated as God singular in the King James Version even though it was accompanied by plural verbs and other plural grammatical terms.

And there he built an altar and called the place El-bethel, because there God had revealed [plural verb] himself to him when he fled from his brother.

Here the Hebrew verb "revealed" is plural, hence: "the-gods were revealed". A NET Bible note claims that the Authorized Version wrongly translates: "God appeared unto him. This is one of several instances where the Bible uses plural verbs with the name elohim.
The Divine Council of Elohim

AV Psalm 82:1 God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods. [...] I have said, Ye [are] gods; and all of you [are] children of the most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.
—Psalm 82:1, 6-7 (AV)

Marti Steussy, in *Chalice Introduction to the Old Testament*, discusses: “The first verse of Psalm 82: ‘Elohim has taken his place in the divine council.’ Here elohim has a singular verb and clearly refers to God. But in verse 6 of the Psalm, God says to the other members of the council, ‘You [plural] are elohim.’ Here elohim has to mean gods.”[19]

Mark Smith, referring to this same Psalm, states in *God in Translation* “This psalm presents a scene of the gods meeting together in divine council...Elohim stands in the council of El. Among the elohim he pronounces judgment:...”[20]

In *Hulsean Lectures for...*, H. M. Stephenson discussed Jesus’ argument in John 10:34–36[21] concerning Psalm 82. (In answer to the charge of blasphemy Jesus replied;) "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods. If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?” – "Now what is the force of this quotation 'I said ye are gods.' It is from the Asaph Psalm which begins 'Elohim hath taken His place in the mighty assembly. In the midst of the Elohim He is judging.”[22]

Sons of God

The Hebrew word for a son is *ben*; plural is *benim* (with the construct state form being "benei"). The Hebrew term *benei elohim* ("sons of God" or "sons of the gods") in Genesis 6:2[23] compares to the use of "sons of gods" (Ugaritic *b'n il*) sons of El in Ugaritic mythology.[24] Karel van der Toorn states that gods can be referred to collectively as *bene elim*, *bene elyon*, or *bene elohim*.

In Jewish tradition, the Torah verse, that was the battle-cry of the Maccabees (Hebrew: יְהוָהָּ בַּא'לֵי הַשָּׂאֹר YHWH, "*Mi chamocha ba'elim YHWH"* (“Who is like You among the heavenly powers, YHWH”),[25] is an acronym for "Machabi" as well as an acronym for "Matityahu Kohen ben Yochanan".[26] The correlating Torah verse, *The song of Moses and the Children of Israel by the Sea*, makes a reference to *elim*, but more with a mundane notion of natural forces, might, war and governmental powers.

English Bible translations

Hebrew *elohim* in English translations of the Bible is generally rendered as *gods* when occurring with a plural verb or referring to pagan deities, and as *God* when occurring with a singular verb or referring to the God of Israel.[27]

References


Notes

[1] Glinert *Modern Hebrew: An Essential Grammar* Routledge p14 section 13 "(b) Agreement of verbs Verbs agree with their subject, and not only in gender and number but also in person. Present tense verbs distinguish masculine from feminine and singular from plural:"


[7] Brian B. Schmidt *Israel's benificent dead: ancestor cult and necromancy in ancient Israelite Religion and Tradition*, Forschungen zum Alten Testament 11 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1994). Page 217 "In spite of the fact that the MT plural noun 'elohim of v.13 is followed by a plural participle 'olim, a search for the antecedent to the singular pronominal suffix on mah-to'ro in v.14 does he/it look like? has led interpreters to view the 'elohim . . . 'olim as a designation for the dead Samuel, 'a god ascending.' The same term 'elohim . . . He, therefore, urgently requests verification of Samuel's identity, mah-to'ro, 'what does he/it look like?' The ... 32:1, 'elohim occurs with a plural finite verb and denotes multiple gods in this instance: 'elohim 'seryel'ku I fydnenu, "the gods who will go before us." Thus, the two occurrences of 'elohim in 1 Sam 28:13,15 — the first complimented by a plural ...28:13 manifests a complex textual history, then the 'elohim of v. 13 might represent not the deified dead, but those gods known to be summoned — some from the netherworld — to assist in the retrieval of the ghost.373 ...

[8] Gesenius *Hebrew Grammar*: 124g, without article 125f, with the singular 145h, with plural 132h,145i


[10] e.g. Gen. 20:13 (where is from "to err, wander, go astray, stagger", the causative plural "they caused to wander")

[11] LXX; : KJV: "when God caused me to wander from my father's house"

[12] Brenton *Septuagint* Exodus 21:6 προσόμενο κύριον τὸ κριθριόν τοῦ θεοῦ

[13] The Biblical Repository p. 360 ed. Edward Robinson - 1838 "Gesenius denies that elohim ever means angels; and he refers in this denial particularly to Ps. 8: 5, and Ps. 97: 7; but he observes, that the term is so translated in the ancient versions."

[14] Samuel Davidsohn *An Introduction to the New Testament* 3 1848 p282 "Hengstenberg, for example, affirms, that the usus loquendi is decisive against the direct reference to angels, because Elohim never signifies angels. He thinks that the Septuagint translator could not understand the representation . . ."


[16] NET Bible with Companion CD-ROM W. Hall Harris, 3rd, none - 2003 - 15:34:15 So Jacob set up a sacred stone pillar in the place where God spoke with him.30 He poured out a 20tn Heb "revealed themselves." The verb iVl (niglu), translated "revealed himself," is plural, even though one expects the singular"

[17] Haggai and Malachi p36 Herbert Wolf - 1976 If both the noun and the verb are plural, the construction can refer to a person , just as the statement "God revealed Himself" in Genesis 35:7 has a plural noun and verb. But since the word God, "Elohim," is plural in form,8 the verb . . ."

[18] Psychology and the Bible: From Genesis to apocalyptic vision p243 J. Harold Ellens, Wayne G. Rollins - 2004 "Often the plural form Elohim, when used in reference to the biblical deity, takes a plural verb or adjective (Gen. 20:13, 35;7: Exod. 32:4, 8; 2 Sam. 7:23; Ps. 58:12),"

[19] Steussy, Marti. "Chalice Introduction to the Old Testament" (http://books.google.com/books?id=NkP4QInlEmYC&pg=PA11&dq=the+divine+council+of+elohim&hl=en&ei=Uo5RTpjpHBUwNsAKr8SHyBd&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CCQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=the+divine+council+of+elohim&f=false)

[20] Smith, Mark. "God in Translation..." (http://books.google.com/books?id=yvWiC0kUlkYC&pg=PA134&dq=the+divine+council+of+elohim&hl=en&ei=Uo5RTpjpHBUwNsAKr8SHyBd&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=4&ved=0CDkQ6AEwAv#v=onepage&q=the+divine+council+of+elohim&f=false)


[23] (e.g. Genesis 6:2, "... the sons of the Elohim (e-aleim) saw the daughters of men (e-adam, the adam) that they were fair; and they took them for wives. . .")


[25] Exodus 15:11


[27] grammar clarification
Sons of God

(Sons of God) (Heb: בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים, בני האלהים) is a phrase used in the Hebrew Bible. Bene elohim are part of different Jewish angelic hierarchies.

Hebrew Bible

In the Hebrew Bible, the phrase "sons of the Elohim" occurs in:

- Gen 6:2 \(^{[2]}\) בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים (בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים) the sons of Elohim.
- Job 1:6 \(^{[3]}\) בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים (בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים) the sons of Elohim.
- Job 38:7 \(^{[4]}\) בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִֽים (בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִֽים) without the definite article - sons of godly beings.
- Psalm 29:1 \(^{[5]}\) בְּנֵי אֵלִים (בְּנֵי אֵלִים) without the definite article - sons of elim.

Deuteronomy 32:8 \(^{[6]}\) also mentions "sons of Israel" b’yney yisra’el (בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) which is translated as the "people of Israel" in the HCSB, "heavenly court" in the New Living Translation and "heavenly assembly" in the New English Translation. In some copies of Deuteronomy the Dead Sea Scrolls refer to the sons of God rather than the sons of Israel, probably in reference to angels. The Septuagint reads similarly.

Literary origins

When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. Then the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years." The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown.

—Genesis 6:1-4
The first mention of "sons of God" in the Hebrew Bible occurs at Genesis 6:1-4. In terms of literary-historical origin, this phrase is typically associated with the Jahwist tradition.

Joseph Hong believes that Genesis 6:1-4 has gone through drastic abridgment by either the original writer or later editors. Nahum M. Sarna believes that the text defies certain interpretation, based on difficulties with the text's themes, extreme terseness, vocabulary and syntax. Sarna postulates that such a passage cannot be other than a fragment, or bare outline, from a well-known fuller story.

Ugaritic text

Claus Westermann claims that the text of Genesis 6 is based on an Ugaritic urtext. In Ugaritic, a cognate phrase is bn 'il. This may occur in the Ugaritic Baal Cycle.

- KTU² 1.40 demonstrates the use of bn il to mean "sons of gods".
- KTU² 1.65 (which may be a scribal exercise) uses bn il three times in succession: il bn il / dr bn il / mphrt bn il

"El, the sons of gods, the circle of the sons of gods / the totality of the sons of gods."

The phrase bn ilm ("sons of the gods") is also attested in Ugaritic texts, as is the phrase phr bn ilm ("assembly of the sons of the gods").

Elsewhere in the Ugarit corpus it is suggested that the bn ilm were the 70 sons of Asherah and El, who were the titulary deities of the people of the known world, and their "hieros gamos" marriage with the daughters of men gave rise to their rulers. There is evidence in 2 Samuel 7 that this may have been the case also in Israel.

Late text

J. Scharbert associates Genesis 6:1-4 with the Priestly source and the final redaction of the Pentateuch. On this basis, he assigns the text to later editorial activity. Rüdiger Bartelmus sees only Genesis 6:3 as a late insertion.

Józef Milik and Matthew Black advanced the view of a late text addition to a text dependent on post-exilic, non-canonical tradition, such as the legend of the Watchers from the pseudepigraphic Book of Enoch.

Translations

Different source versions of Genesis 6:1-4 vary in their use of "sons of God". Some manuscripts of the Septuagint have emendations to read "sons of God" as "angels". Codex Vaticanus contains "angels" originally. In Codex Alexandrinus "sons of God" has been omitted and replaced by "angels". The Peshitta reads "sons of God".

Second Temple Judaism (c.500 BCE-70 CE)

The Book of Enoch and the Book of Jubilees refer to the Watchers who are paralleled to the "sons of God" in Genesis 6. The Epistle of Barnabas is considered by some to acknowledge the Enochian version.

Interpretation

Christian antiquity

Early Christian writers such as Justin Martyr, Eusebius, Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Commodianus believed that the "sons of God" in Genesis 6:1-4 were fallen angels who engaged in unnatural union with human women, resulting in the begetting of the Nephilim. Modern Christians have argued against this view by reasoning on Jesus' comment in Matthew 22:30 that angels do not marry, although it only refers to angels in heaven. Others saw them as descendants of Seth.
Saint Augustine subscribed to this view, based on the orations of Julius Africanus in his book *City of God*, which refer to the "sons of God" as being descendants of Seth (or Sethites), the pure line of Adam. The "daughters of men" are viewed as the descendants of Cain (or Cainites). Variations of this view was also received by Jewish philosophers.

**Medieval Judaism**

Traditionalists and philosophers of Judaism in the Middle Ages typically practiced rational theology. They rejected any belief in rebel or fallen angels since evil was considered abstract. Rabbinic sources, most notably the Targum, state that the "sons of God" who married the daughters of men were merely human beings of exalted social station. They have also been considered as pagan royalty or members of nobility who, out of lust, married women from the general population. Other variations of this interpretation define these "sons of God" as tyrannical Ancient Near Eastern kings who were honored as divine rulers, engaging in polygamous behavior. No matter the variation in views, the primary concept by Jewish rationalists is that the "sons of God" were of human origin.

Most notable Jewish writers in support for the view of human "sons of God" were Saadia, Rashi, Lekah Tob, Midrash Aggada, Joseph Bekor Shor, Abraham ibn Ezra, Maimonides, David Kimhi, Nahmanides, Hizkuni, Bahya Ashur, Gersonides, Shimeon ben Yochai and Hillel ben Samuel.

Ibn Ezra reasoned that the "sons of God" were men who possessed divine power, by means of astrological knowledge, able to beget children of unusual size and strength.

Jewish commentator Isaac Abrabanel considered the *aggadot* on Genesis 6 to have referred to some secret doctrine and was not to be taken literally. Abrabanel later joined Nahmanides and Levi ben Gerson in promoting the concept that the "sons of God" were the older generations who were closer to physical perfection, as Adam and Eve were perfect. Though there are variations of this view, the primary idea was that Adam and Eve's perfect attributes were passed down from generation to generation. However, as each generation passed, their perfect physical attributes diminished. Thus, the early generations were mightier than the succeeding ones. The physical decline of the younger generations continued until the Flood, to the point that their days were numbered as stated in Genesis 6:3. It was immoral for the older generations to consort with the younger generations, whereby puny women begot unusually large children. *Nephilim* was even considered a stature.

Jewish philosophic preachers such as Jacob Anatoli and Isaac Arama viewed the groups and events in Genesis 6:1-4 as an allegory, primarily for the sin of lust that declined man's higher nature.

**Footnotes**

[11] Mark S. Smith *The Ugaritic Baal cycle* 1994 p249 "all the divine sons" (or "all the sons of God"). ESA sources may support this point."
[16] Rahmouni, A. *Divine epithets in the Ugaritic alphabetic texts* 2008 p91
Sons of God

[20] James Carleton Paget, The Epistle of Barnabas: outlook and background 1994 - p10 "The quotation finds no precise equivalent in Enoch, which is probably explicable on the grounds that B. is inspired by something he remembers from Enoch at this point (see for a parallel to I Enoch 89:61-64; 90:17f.)"

References


External links

- Catholic Encyclopedia: Son of God (http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14142b.htm)
Cherub

A cherub, also pl. cherubim. (Hebrew כְּרוּב, pl. כְּרוּבִים, English trans kərūv, pl. kərūvīm, dual kərūvāyim Latin cherub[us], pl. cherubi[m], Syriac كَرُوب is a winged angelic being who is considered to attend on the Abrahamic God in biblical tradition. The concept is represented in ancient Middle Eastern art as a lion or bull with eagles' wings and a human face, and regarded in traditional Christian angelology as an angel of the second highest order of the ninefold celestial hierarchy. Cherubim are mentioned throughout the Hebrew Bible and once in the New Testament in reference to the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant (Hebrews 9:5).[1]

Origins

The Hebrew term cherubim is cognate with the Assyrian term karabu, Akkadian term kuriba, and Babylonian term karabu; the Assyrian term means 'great, mighty', but the Akkadian and Babylonian cognates mean 'propitious, blessed'.[2] In some regions the Assyro-Babylonian term came to refer in particular to spirits which served the gods, in particular to the shedu (human-headed winged bulls); the Assyrians sometimes referred to these as kirubu, a term grammatically related to karabu. They were originally a version of the shedu, protective deities sometimes found as pairs of colossal statues either side of objects to be protected, such as doorways.[3] However, although the shedu were popular in Mesopotamia, archaeological remains from the Levant suggest that they were quite rare in the immediate vicinity of the Israelites. The related Lammasu (human-headed winged lions—to which the sphinx is similar in appearance), on the other hand, were the most popular winged-creature in Phoenician art, and so scholars suspect that Cherubim were originally a form of Lammasu. In particular, in a scene reminiscent of Ezekiel's dream, the Megiddo Ivories—ivory carvings found at Megiddo (which became a major Israelite city)—depict an unknown king being carried on his throne by hybrid winged-creatures.[4]

The Lammasu was originally depicted as having a king's head, a bull's body, and an eagle's wings, but because of the artistic beauty of the wings, these rapidly became the most prominent part in imagery; wings later came to be bestowed on men, thus forming the stereotypical image of an angel. The griffin—a similar creature but with an eagle's head rather than that of a king—has also been proposed as an origin, arising in Israelite culture as a result of Hittite usage of griffins (rather than being depicted as aggressive beasts, Hittite depictions show them seated calmly, as if guarding), and some have proposed that griffin may be cognate to cherubim,[5] but Lammasu were significantly more important in Levantine culture, and thus more likely to be the origin.

Early Semitic tradition conceived the cherubim as guardians, being devoid of human feelings, and holding a duty both to represent the gods and to guard sanctuaries from intruders, in a comparable way to an account found on Tablet 9 of the inscriptions found at Nimrud. In this early teaching, the cherubim, like the shedu, were probably originally depictions of storm deities, especially the storm winds. This conception of the cherubim is hypothesized as being the reason that cherubim are described as acting as the chariot of the LORD in Ezekiel's visions, the Books of Samuel,[6] the parallel passages in the later Book of Chronicles,[7] and passages in the early Psalms: "and he rode upon a cherub and did fly: and he was seen upon the wings of the wind".[8][9]
In the Bible

Cherubim first appear in the Bible in the Garden of Eden, to guard the way to the Tree of life.[10] In Isaiah 37:16, Hezekiah prays, addressing Yahweh as "enthroned above the Cherubim" (referring to the mercy seat).

Cherubim feature at some length in the Book of Ezekiel. When they first appear in chapter one, when Ezekiel was "by the river Chebar", they are not called cherubim until chapter 10, but he saw "the likeness of four living creatures". (Ezekiel 1:5) Each of them had four faces and four wings, with straight feet with a sole like the sole of a calf's foot, and "hands of a man" under their wings. Each had four faces: The face of a man, the face of a lion on the right side, the face of an ox on the left side, and the face of an eagle. (Ezekiel 1:6-10)

In Ezekiel chapter ten, another full description of the Cherubim appears with slight differences in details. Three of the four faces are the same; man, lion and eagle; but where chapter one had the face of an ox, Ezekiel 10:14 says "face of a cherub". Ezekiel equates the Cherubim of chapter ten with the living creature of chapter one by saying: "This is the living creature (חיה) that I saw by the river of Chebar", in Ezekiel 10:15, and in Ezekiel 10:20 he said: "This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river of Chebar; and I knew that they were the cherubim."

In a psalm of David that appears in 2 Samuel 22:11 and Psalms 18:10, David said that the LORD "rode upon a cherub, and did fly: and he was seen upon the wings of the wind,".

The words Cherub and Cherubim appear many other times in the holy scriptures, referring to the Cherubim of beaten gold on the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant, and images on the curtains of the tabernacle, and in Solomon's temple, including two Cherubim made of olive wood overlaid with gold that were ten cubits high.

Worth noting is also the fact that within the Hebrew Bible the cherubim do not have the status of angels. It is only in later sources (like De Coelesti Hierarchia - see below) that they are considered to be a division of the divine messengers.

Post-biblical Judaism

Many forms of Judaism teach belief in the existence of angels, including Cherubim within the Jewish angelic hierarchy. The existences of angels is generally widely contested within traditional rabbinic Judaism. There is, however, a wide range of beliefs about what angels actually are, and how literally one should interpret biblical passages associated with them.

In Kabbalah there has long been a strong belief in Cherubim, with the Cherubim, and other angels, regarded as having mystical roles. The Zohar, a highly significant collection of books in Jewish mysticism, states that the Cherubim were led by one of their number, named Kerubiel.

On the other end of the philosophical spectrum is Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, better known as Maimonides, who had a neo-Aristotelian interpretation of the Bible. Maimonides writes that to the wise man, one sees that what the Bible and Talmud refer to as "angels" are actually allusions to the various laws of nature; they are the principles by which the physical universe operates. "Guide for the Perplexed" II:4 and II:6.
For all forces are angels! How blind, how perniciously blind are the naive?! If you told someone who purports
to be a sage of Israel that the Deity sends an angel who enters a woman's womb and there forms an embryo, he
would think this a miracle and accept it as a mark of the majesty and power of the Deity, despite the fact that
he believes an angel to be a body of fire one third the size of the entire world. All this, he thinks, is possible for
God. But if you tell him that God placed in the sperm the power of forming and demarcating these organs, and
that this is the angel, or that all forms are produced by the Active Intellect; that here is the angel, the
"vice-regent of the world" constantly mentioned by the sages, then he will recoil.
For he [the naive person] does not understand that the true majesty and power are in the bringing into being of
forces which are active in a thing although they cannot be perceived by the senses....Thus the Sages reveal to
the aware that the imaginative faculty is also called an angel; and the mind is called a cherub. How beautiful
this will appear to the sophisticated mind, and how disturbing to the primitive."

Maimonides says (Guide for the Perplexed III:45) that the figures of the cherubaim were placed in the sanctuary only
to preserve among the people the belief in angels, there being two in order that the people might not be led to believe
that they were the image of God.

Reform Judaism and Reconstructionist Judaism generally either drop references to angels or interpret them
metaphorically. [citation needed]

Cherubs are discussed within the midrash literature. The two cherubaim placed by God at the entrance of paradise
(Gen. iii. 24) were angels created on the third day, and therefore they had no definite shape; appearing either as men
or women, or as spirits or angelic beings (Genesis Rabbah xxi., end). The cherubim were the first objects created in
the universe (Tanna debe Eliyahu R., i. beginning). The following sentence of the Midrash is characteristic: "When a
man sleeps, the body tells to the neshamah (soul) what it has done during the day; the neshamah then reports it to the
nefesh (spirit), the nefesh to the angel, the angel to the cherub, and the cherub to the seraph, who then brings it
before God (Leviticus Rabbah xxii.; Eccl. Rabbah x. 20).

A midrash states that when Pharaoh pursued Israel at the Red Sea, God took a cherub from the wheels of His throne
and flew to the spot, for God inspects the heavenly worlds while sitting on a cherub. The cherub, however, is
"something not material", and is carried by God, not vice versa (Midr. Teh. xviii. 15; Canticles Rabbah i. 9).

In the passages of the Talmud that describe the heavens and their inhabitants, the seraphim, ofannim, and hayyot are
mentioned, but not the cherubim (Hag. 12b); and the ancient liturgy also mentions only these three classes.

In the Talmud, Yose ha-Gelili holds,[11] when the Birkat HaMazon (Grace after Meals) is recited by at least ten thousand seated at one
meal, a special blessing, "Blessed is Ha-Shem our God, the God of Israel, who dwells between the Cherubim", is added to the regular
liturgy.

Middle Ages Christianity

In Medieval theology, following the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius, the
cherubim are the second highest rank in the angelic hierarchy,
following the Seraphim. [12] In western art, Putti are sometimes
mistaken for Cherubim, although they look in no way alike.
**Depictions**

There were no cherubim in Herodian reconstruction of the Temple, but according to some authorities, its walls were painted with figures of cherubim.\[^{13}\] In Christian art they are often represented with the faces of a lion, ox, eagle, and man peering out from the center of an array of four wings (Ezekiel 1:5-11, 10:12,21 Revelation 4:8); (seraphim have six); the most frequently encountered descriptor applied to cherubim in Christianity is many-eyed, and in depictions the wings are often shown covered with a multitude of eyes (showing them to be all seeing beings). Since the Renaissance, in Western Christianity cherubim have become confused with putti—inocent souls, looking like winged children, that sing praises to God daily—that can be seen in innumerable church frescoes and in the work of painters such as Raphael.

**References**

[3] *Peske's commentary on the Bible*

[8] 2 Samuel 22:11
[9] Psalms 18:10
[13] Yoma 54a

**Further reading**


**External links**

- *Catholic Encyclopedia: (http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03646c.htm) Cherubim*
Cherub

Christian angelic hierarchy

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Thrones

This page concerns the class of angels in the Christian tradition; for other meanings see Throne (disambiguation).

The Thrones (lat. thronus, pl. throni) are a class of celestial beings mentioned by Paul the Apostle in Colossians 1:16 [2] (New Testament) and related to the Throne of God. They are living symbols of God's justice and authority. According to the New Testament, these high celestial beings are among those Orders at the Christ's service.[1][2] The Thrones are mentioned again in Revelation 11:16 [4].

According to Matthew Bunson, the corresponding order of angels in Judaism is called the "abalim" or "arelim"/"erelim",[3] but this opinion is far from unrivaled. The Hebrew word Erelim is usually not translated 'Thrones', but rather 'valiant ones', 'heroes', 'warriors'. The function ascribed to Erelim in Is. 33.7 and in Jewish folklore [4] is not consonant with the lore surrounding the Thrones.

The Ophanim (Wheels or Galgallin) is a class of higher liberated celestial beings, under many Christian angelic hierarchies, that are also known as the "Thrones", from Daniel 7:9 [5] (Old Testament). They are the carriers of the Throne of God, hence the name. They are said to be great wheels covered in eyes.

About the Thrones

Thrones are angels of the Third Order (first sphere) and are beings of tremendous power and movement. They are the keepers of higher, more expanded energies. They ensure that these energies maintain connections and flow through the realms. They act as the conduits of the physical worlds and tend to be more stationary in their existence.

According to tradition

God's Spirit is shown in a certain manner to these angels, who in turn pass on the message to men and the inferior angels.

Thrones are known in scripture as the bringers of justice, but their status in hierarchy is often confused, sometimes placing them above the Seraphim, and sometimes placing them at the same level as the Cherubim. They do however, come in the second Choir, and are assigned to planets.

This position makes them some of the most powerful angels in service to the Lord. According to St. Thomas Aquinas, the Thrones have the task of pondering the disposition of divine judgments. In other words, they carry out or fulfill the divine justice of the Lord.

They create, channel and collect incoming and outgoing positive energies. Dispensation of justice is important to the Thrones and they send healing energies to victims while shining a light on injustice to bring its presence to our attention.

Like their counterparts in the second angelic triad, they come the closest of all Angels to spiritual perfection and emanate the light of God with mirror-like goodness. They, despite their greatness, are intensely humble, an attribute that allows them to dispense justice with perfect objectivity and without fear of pride or ambition. Because they are living symbols of God's justice and authority, they are called Thrones and have as one of their symbols the throne.
According to the Western Wisdom Teachings

Dionysius the Areopagite includes the Thrones as the third highest of 9 levels of angels.

Notes


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Archangel

An archangel /ˈarkəndʒəl/ is an angel of high rank. Beings similar to archangels are found in a number of religious traditions; but the word "archangel" itself is usually associated with the Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Michael and Gabriel are recognised as archangels in Judaism, Islam, and by most Christians. The Book of Tobit—recognised in the Catholic and Orthodox Bibles, but considered apocryphal by Protestants—mentions Raphael, who is also considered to be an archangel. The archangels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael are venerated in the Roman Catholic Church with a feast on September 29 (between 1921 and 1969 March 24 for Gabriel and 24 October for Raphael), and in the Eastern Orthodox Church on November 8 (if the Julian calendar is used, this corresponds to November 21 in the Gregorian). The named...
archangels in Islam are Gabriel, Michael, Isaïfîl and Azrael. Jewish literature, such as the Book of Enoch, mentions Metatron as an archangel, called the "highest of the angels," though the acceptance of this angel is not canonical in all branches of the faith. In Zoroastrianism, sacred texts allude to the six great Amesha Spenta (literally "Bounteous/Holy Immortals") of Ahura Mazda. The orthodox church recognize Mikael, Gabriel, Rafael, Selaphiel, Jegudiel, Barachiel and Jeremiel.

Some branches of the faiths mentioned have identified a group of seven Archangels, but the actual angels vary, depending on the source. Raphael, Gabriel, and Michael are always mentioned; the other archangels vary, but most commonly include Uriel as well, who is mentioned in the book 2 Esdras. The word archangel is derived from the Greek ἀρχάγγελος (arch- + angel, literally chief angel).

In Judaism

The Hebrew Bible uses the terms מַלְאֵךְ אֵלֹהִים (malakhi Elohim; Angels of God), "The Hebrew word for angel is "malach," which means messenger, for the angels are God's messengers to perform various missions." מַלְאָקי אֲדُוֹנָי (malakhi Adonai; Angels of the Lord),[1] בני אלהים (b'nai elohim; sons of God) and הקדושים (ha-qodeshim; the holy ones) to refer to beings traditionally interpreted as angelic messengers. Other terms are used in later texts, such as התלויים (ha-elyonim, the upper ones, or the ultimate ones). Indeed, angels are uncommon except in later works such as the Book of Daniel, though they are mentioned briefly in the stories of Jacob (who, according to several interpretations, wrestled with an angel) and Lot (who was warned by angels of the impending destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah). Daniel is the first biblical figure to refer to individual angels by name. It is therefore widely speculated that Jewish interest in angels developed during the Babylonian captivity.[2] According to Rabbi Simeon ben Lakish of Tiberias (230–270 AD), specific names for the angels were brought back by the Jews from Babylon.

There are no explicit references to archangels in the canonical texts of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). In post-Biblical Judaism, certain angels came to take on a particular significance and developed unique personalities and roles. Though these archangels were believed to have rank amongst the heavenly host, no systematic hierarchy ever developed. Metatron is considered one of the highest of the angels in Merkavah and Kabbalist mysticism and often serves as a scribe. He is briefly mentioned in the Talmud,[3] and figures prominently in Merkavah mystical texts. Michael, who serves as a warrior and advocate for Israel (Daniel 10:13[4]), is looked upon particularly fondly. Gabriel is mentioned in the Book of Daniel (Daniel 8:15-17[5]) and briefly in the Talmud,[6] as well as many Merkavah mystical texts. The earliest references to archangels are in the literature of the intertestamental periods (e.g., 4 Esdras 4:36).

Within the rabbinic tradition, the Kabbalah, chapter 20 of the Book of Enoch, and the Life of Adam and Eve, the usual number of archangels given is at least seven, who are the focal angels. Three higher archangels are also commonly referenced, Michael, Raphael, and Gabriel, followed by Uriel, Sariel, Raguel, and Remiel.[7] Four additional names are: Zadkiel, Jophiel, Haniel and Chamuel. Medieval Jewish philosopher Maimonides made a Jewish angelic hierarchy.
In Christianity

The New Testament speaks frequently of angels (for example, angels giving messages to Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds; angels ministering to Christ after his temptation in the wilderness, an angel visiting Christ in his agony, angels at the tomb of the risen Christ, the angels who liberate the Apostles Peter and Paul from prison); however, it uses the word "archangel" only twice. The earlier mention is in 1 Thessalonians: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first" (King James Version); "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first" (English Standard Version). The later mention is in the Epistle of Jude: "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee" (King James Version)

Roman Catholic

In Roman Catholicism, three are honoured by name:

- Gabriel
- Michael
- Raphael

The last-named of these identifies himself in Tobit 12:15 \[8\](NAB) thus: "I am Raphael, one of the seven angels who stand and serve before the Glory of the Lord." To the other four of these seven archangels post-Exilic Judaism gave the names Uriel, Raguel, Sariel, and Jerahmeel (Book of Enoch) or, in other apocryphal sources: Uriel, Izidkiel, Hanael, and Kepharel, but these are not venerated by the Catholic Church. The Fourth Book of Esdras, which mentions the angel Uriel, was popular in the West and was frequently quoted by Church Fathers, especially Ambrose, but was never considered part of the biblical canon.
Eastern and Oriental Orthodox

Eastern Orthodox Tradition mentions "thousands of archangels;[9] however, only seven archangels are venerated by name.[10] Uriel is included, and the other three are most often named Selaphiel, Jegudiel, and Barachiel (an eighth, Jeremiel, is sometimes included as archangel).[11] The Orthodox Church celebrates the Synaxis of the Archangel Michael and the Other Bodiless Powers on November 8 of Stencyl the Eastern Orthodox liturgical calendar (for those churches which follow the Julian Calendar, November 8 falls on November 21 of the modern Gregorian Calendar). Other feast days of the Archangels include the Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel on March 26 (April 8), and the Miracle of the Archangel Michael at Colossae on September 6 (September 19). In addition, every Monday throughout the year is dedicated to the Angels, with special mention being made in the church hymns of Michael and Gabriel. In Orthodox iconography, each angel has a symbolic representation:

- **Michael** in the Hebrew language means "Who is like unto God?" or "Who is equal to God?" St. Michael has been depicted from earliest Christian times as a commander, who holds in his right hand a spear with which he attacks Lucifer/Satan, and in his left hand a green palm branch. At the top of the spear there is a linen ribbon with a red cross. The Archangel Michael is especially considered to be the Guardian of the Orthodox Faith and a fighter against heresies.

- **Gabriel** means "Man of God" or "Might of God." He is the herald of the mysteries of God, especially the Incarnation of God and all other mysteries related to it. He is depicted as follows: In his right hand, he holds a lantern with a lighted taper inside, and in his left hand, a mirror of green jasper. The mirror signifies the wisdom of God as a hidden mystery.

- **Raphael** means "God's healing" or "God the Healer" (Tobit 3:17 [12], 12:15 [8]). Raphael is depicted leading Tobit (who is carrying a fish caught in the Tigris) with his right hand, and holding a physician's alabaster jar in his left hand.

- **Uriel** means "Fire of God," or "Light of God" (II Esdras 4:1, 5:20). He is depicted holding a sword against the Persians in his right hand, and a flame in his left.

- **Sealtiel** means "Intercessor of God." He is depicted with his face and eyes lowered, holding his hands on his bosom in prayer.

- **Jegudiel** means "Glorifier of God." He is depicted bearing a golden wreath in his right hand and a triple-thonged whip in his left hand.

- **Barachiel** means "Blessing of God." He is depicted holding a white rose in his hand against his breast.

- **Jerahmeel** means "God's exaltation." He is venerated as an inspirer and awakener of exalted thoughts that raise a person toward God (II Esdras 4:36). As an eighth, he is sometimes included as archangel.

In the canon of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, 1 Enoch describes Saraqael as one of the angels that watch over "the spirits that sin in the spirit." (20:7, 8).
Protestant

The Protestant Bible provides names for two angels: "Michael the archangel" and the angel Gabriel, who is called "the man Gabriel" in Daniel 9:21 [13]. Protestants who reject the apocrypha view Michael as the sole archangel, since he is the only one explicitly described as such in the Bible in Jude 1:9 [14][15]. Gabriel is never called an archangel in the Bible.[16]

Michael is now the angel above all angels, recognized in rank to be the first prince of heaven. He is, as it were, the prime minister in God's administration of the universe, and is the "angel administrator" of God for judgment. He must stand alone, because the Bible never speaks of archangels, only the archangel.

—Billy Graham, Angels

Seventh-day Adventists hold that "Michael" and "archangel" are just other titles for the Lord Jesus Christ, who is not a created being but the Eternal Word of God, "very God of very God, of the same substance as the Father". They credit Presbyterian Matthew Henry as supporting this view.

Jehovah's Witnesses

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that there is only one archangel (Michael), based on the literal meaning of the Greek word ἀρχάγγελος: "chief angel". They also believe that the definite article at Jude 9 ("Michael the archangel") means there is only one archangel. Citing 1 Thessalonians 4:16 (NWT), which says: "because the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a commanding call, with an archangel's voice and with God's trumpet",[17] they conclude that Michael is another name for Jesus in heaven.[18]

Latter Day Saints

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) interprets the term archangel as meaning "Chief Angel".[19] Michael is the only individual so-designated in the Latter Day Saints canon (Jude 1:9 [20] KJV). It is believed that he is the head of all of the angels. LDS Church doctrine also states that archangel Michael was the first man, Adam.[21]

Though no other being is identified as an "archangel," Joseph Smith taught that the angel Gabriel was known in mortality as Noah[22] and the angel Raphael is a being of significant standing even though he has never been identified with any mortal prophet.[23]

In Islam

In Islam, the named archangels include:

- Gabriel (Jibril in Arabic). Gabriel is the archangel responsible for revealing the Quran to Muhammad and inducing him to recite it. Gabriel is known as the angel who communicates with the prophets. Various hadiths (traditions) mention his role in delivering messages from "God the Almighty" to the prophets.
- Michael (Mikhail in Arabic). Michael is often depicted as the archangel of mercy who is responsible for bringing rain and thunder to Earth.
- Israfil (Israfiel or Israafiyl). According to tradition, Israfil is the angel responsible for signaling the coming of Judgment Day by blowing a horn/trumpet. It translates in Hebrew as Raphael.
• Azrael (Izra'il). Azrael is usually regarded as the *angel of death* Malaku I-mawt, in the Quran (Surah al-Sajdah 32:11) is responsible for parting the soul from the body.

**In Zoroastrianism**

An increasing number of experts in anthropology, theology and philosophy, believe that Zoroastrianism contains the earliest distillation of prehistoric belief in angels.\(^{[25]}\)

The Amesha Spentas of Zoroastrianism are likened unto archangels. Simultaneously, they individually inhabit immortal bodies, that operate in the physical world, to protect, guide and inspire humanity, and the spirit world. The Avesta explains the origin and nature of archangels or Amesha Spentas.

To maintain equilibrium, Ahura Mazda engaged in the first act of creation, distinguishing his Holy Spirit Spenta Mainyu, the Archangel of righteousness. Ahura Mazda also distinguished from himself six more Amesha Spentas, who, along with Spenta Mainyu, aided in the creation of the physical universe. Then he oversaw the development of sixteen lands, each imbued with a unique cultural catalyst, calculated to encourage the formation of distinct human populations. The Amesha Spentas were charged with protecting these holy lands and through their emanation, also believed to align each respective population in service to God.\(^{[26]}\)

The Amesha Spentas (amesha meaning eternal & spenta meaning brilliance and beneficence) as attributes of God are:

1. Spenta Mainyu (Phl. Spenamino): lit. 'Bountiful Spirit'
2. Asha Vahishta (Phl. Ardwahisht): lit. 'Highest Truth'
3. Vohu Mano (Phl. Vohuman): lit. 'Righteous Mind'
4. Khshathra Vairya (Phl. Shahrewar): lit. 'Desirable Dominion'
5. Spenta Armaiti (Phl. Spandarmad): lit. 'Holy Devotion'
6. Haurvatat (Phl. Hordad): lit. 'Perfection or Health'
7. Ameretat (Phl. Amurdad): lit. 'Immortality'

**Other traditions**

Occultists sometimes associate archangels in Kabbalistic fashion with various seasons or elements, or even colors. In some Kabbalah-based systems of ceremonial magic, all four of the main archangels (Michael, Gabriel, Raphael and Uriel) are invoked as guarding the four quarters, or directions, and their corresponding colors are associated with magical properties.\(^{[27]}\) Lucifer or Sataniel in Judeo-Christian traditions, or Iblis in Islam, is considered an archangel by Satanists and many non-Satanists, but non-Satanists consider him evil and fallen from God's grace.
Cultural references

In art, archangels are sometimes depicted with larger wings. Some of the more commonly represented archangels are Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, and Uriel.\[28\]

In Cassandra Clare's The Mortal Instruments series, Shadowhunters are a hybrids of humans and angels. In the book series, the world was being overrun by demons, so Jonathan Shadowhunter pleaded to the heavens to help. Archangel Raziel spilled his blood into the Mortal Cup and told Jonathan Shadowhunter to drink it, creating the race. Archangel Michael is also mentioned, because Raziel gave Simon, a main character in the series, his sword to use in battle.

In the TV series Supernatural, many angels appear, at first to Dean Winchester for help after raising him from hell, because the Righteous Man who falls from grace in hell and starts the apocalypse is the one who must stop it. Four are named as archangels: Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and Lucifer (as a fallen angel).

In the 2010 film Legion, the main character Michael falls to Earth in Los Angeles after cutting his wings during an attempt to save humanity, while Gabriel fights Michael as the film's main antagonist.

In the lesser ritual of the pentagram, the invocation includes the words "Before me Raphael; Behind me Gabriel; On my right hand Michael; On my left hand Auriel [Uriel]..."\[29\]

References

[6] cf. Sanhedrin 95b
Archangel


Bibliography


External links

• The World of Djinn and Its Secrets (http://www.islamawareness.net/Jinn/fatwa_secrets.html)

• The Zoroastrian Religion and its Progeny (http://mailstar.net/zoroastrianism.html)

• Synaxis of the Archangel Michael and the Other Bodiless Powers (http://ocafs.oca.org/FeastSaintsViewer.asp?SID=4&ID=1&FSID=103244) Orthodox icon and synaxarion

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Seven Archangels

The earliest reference to a system of seven archangels as a group appears to be in *Enoch I* (the Book of Enoch) which is not part of the Jewish Canon but is prevalent in the Judaic tradition, where they are named as Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, Uriel, Raguel, Remiel and Saraqael. While this book today is non-canonical in most Christian Churches, it was explicitly quoted in the New Testament (Letter of Jude 1:14-15) and by many of the early Church Fathers. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church to this day regards it to be canonical.

In the late 5th to early 6th century, Pseudo-Dionysius gives them as Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Chamuel, Jophiel, and Raguel. The earliest Christian mention is by Pope Saint Gregory I who lists them as Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, Uriel (or Anael), Simiel, Oriphiel and Raguel. A later reference to seven archangels would appear in an 8th or 9th century talisman attributed to Auriolus, a "servant of God" in north-western Spain. He issues a prayer to "all you patriarchs Michael, Gabriel, Cecitiel, Oriel, Raphael, Ananiel, Marmoniel ("who hold the clouds in your hands").[1]

Archangels in current church traditions

The Catholic Church in the Roman Rite only explicitly names 3 archangels: Gabriel, Michael and Raphael. Gabriel and Michael are the only two named in the New Testament of the Bible. However, the same passages that name Raphael in the book of Tobit also states that he is "one of the seven who stand before God." The other names can be derived from traditional Jewish teaching. The Catholic Church suppressed the names of the other Archangels during the First Council of Nicaea. However, in the Byzantine Rite and other eastern rites of the Catholic Church, there is a popular devotion to the seven archangels: Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Jegudiel, Raguel, and Selaphiel.

The Eastern Orthodox tradition venerates Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, Uriel, Selaphiel, Jegudiel, and Raguel.[citation needed]

Another variation lists them corresponding to the days of the week as: Michael (Sunday), Gabriel (Monday), Raphael (Tuesday), Uriel (Wednesday), Selaphiel (Thursday), Raguel or Jegudiel (Friday), and Barachiel (Saturday).

In the Coptic Orthodox tradition the seven archangels are named as Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, Suriel, Zadakiel, Raguel and Aniel.

In Anglican and Episcopal tradition, there are three or four archangels in its calendar for September 29 feast for St. Michael and All Angels (also called Michaelmas: namely Gabriel, Michael and Raphael),[2] and often, Uriel.[3][4][5][6][7]
**Other views**

In the more modern angelology, different sources disagree on the names and identities of the seven archangels. In the Book of Enoch, Remiel is also described as one of the leaders of the 200 Grigori, the fallen angels. Various occult systems associate each archangel with one of the traditional seven "luminaries" (the seven naked-eye-visible objects in the heavens, that move counter to that of the other star objects): the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn; but there is disagreement as to which archangel corresponds to which body.

According to Rudolf Steiner, four important archangels also display periodic spiritual activity over the seasons: Spring is Raphael, Summer is Uriel, Autumn is Michael, and Winter is Gabriel. Following this line of reasoning, Aries (astrologically ruled by Mars) represents Spring, Cancer (ruled by Moon) represents Summer, Libra (ruled by Venus) represents Autumn, and Capricorn (ruled by Saturn) represents Winter. Therefore by association, Raphael is Mars, Uriel is Moon, Michael is Venus, and Gabriel is Saturn. However it should be noted that Rudolf Steiner's Northern Hemisphere indications regarding the seasons and their placement in the Zodiac will be the opposite in the Southern Hemisphere... making Michael the Autumn archangel - with Mars in Aries; Raphael the Spring Archangel - with Venus in Libra; and in mid-winter Gabriel in Cancer; Uriel presides in Capricorn during mid summer in the south;

The seven archangels figure in some systems of ritual magic, each archangel bearing a specific seal.

There may be an etymological relationship between the three "disputed" Archangel names, and they may in fact be equivalent.

It could also be argued that each one of the seven archangels represents one of the heavenly virtues, in the same way that each of the seven princes of hell represents one of the deadly sins.

**Notes and references**

Angels (Arabic: ﻣﻼﻜﺔ malāʾikah; singular: ﻣَﻠَﻚْ malāk or ﻣَﻠَﻚْ malāk) are heavenly beings mentioned many times in the Quran and hadith. Unlike humans or jinn, they have no free will and therefore can do only what God orders them to do. An example of a task they carry out is testing individuals by granting them abundant wealth and curing their illness. Believing in angels is one of the six Articles of Faith in Islam. Just as humans are made of clay, and jinn are made of smokeless fire, angels are made of light.[2]

Angel hierarchy

There is no standard hierarchical organization in Islam that parallels the division into different "choirs" or spheres, as hypothesized and drafted by early medieval Christian theologians. Most Islamic scholars agree that this is an unimportant topic in Islam, simply because angels have a simple existence in obeying God already, especially since such a topic has never been directly addressed in the Quran. However, it is clear that there is a set order or hierarchy that exists between angels, defined by the assigned jobs and various tasks to which angels are commanded by God. Some scholars suggest that Islamic angels can be grouped into fourteen categories as follows, of which numbers two-five are considered archangels. Not all angels are known by Muslims however, the Quran and hadith only mentions a few by name. Due to varied methods of translation from Arabic and the fact that these angels also exist in Christian contexts and the Bible, several of their Christian and phonetic transliteral names are listed:

- Jibrail/Jibril (Judeo-Christian, Gabriel), the angel of revelation, who is said to be the greatest of the angels. Jibril is the archangel responsible for revealing the Quran to Muhammad, verse by verse. Jibrail is widely known as the angel who communicates with (all of) the prophets and also for coming down with God's blessings during the night of Laylat al-Qadr ("The Night of Power").
Israfil or Israafiy (Judeo-Christian, Raphael), is an archangel in Islam who will blow the trumpet twice at the end of time. According to the hadith, Israfil is the angel responsible for signaling the coming of Qiyamah (Judgment Day) by blowing a horn. The blowing of the trumpet is described in many places in the Quran. It is said that the first blow will bring all to attention, will end all life, while the second blow will bring all human beings back to life again to meet their Lord for their final judgement.

- Mikail (Judeo-Christian, Michael), who provides nourishments for bodies and souls. Mikail is often depicted as the archangel of mercy who is responsible for bringing rain and thunder to Earth. He is also responsible for the rewards doled out to good people in this life.

- 'Azrael/'Azraaiyl also known as Malak al-maut (Judeo-Christian, Azrael), the angel of death. He is responsible for parting the soul from the body. He is only referred as malak al-maut, meaning angel of death, in the Quran.

**Characteristics**

Islam is clear on the nature of angels. The functions that the angels perform vary, one of the most prominent of these functions is their function as messengers. The angel Jibraaiyl (Gabriel) is the most important (prominent) messenger angel, as in Islam, he delivers the message of God (Allah) to the Islamic prophets. Angels cannot be seen as they are heavenly beings but that can take on different forms, including human. One well known example is when God sent the angel Jibreel (Gabriel) to Maryam (Mary) in the form of a man, as God says in the Quran:

> ...then We sent her our angel, and he appeared before her as a man in all respects.
> —Quran, sura 19 (Maryam), ayat 17

Similarly, angels also came to ʾIbrāhīm (Abraham) in human form, and he was not aware that they were angels until they told him so. Lūṭ (Lot) also had angels come to him to warn him of the impending doom of his people. All angels praise and glorify God and they never become tired of doing this.

> They celebrate His praises night and day, nor do they ever flag or intermit.
> —Quran, sura 21 (Al-Anbiya), ayah 20

> ...for in the presence of thy Lord are those who celebrate His praises by night and by day. And they never flag (nor feel themselves above it).
> —Quran, sura 41 (Fussilat), ayah 38

There are angels standing in rows, who never get tired or sit down, and others who bow or prostrate, and never raise their heads. Abu Dharr al-Ghifari is quoted as saying:

> "The Messenger of Allah (Peace & Blessings of Allah be upon Him) said: 'I see what you do not see and hear what you do not hear. The heaven makes a noise like groaning, and it has the right to (or it is no surprise), for there is no space in it the width of four fingers, but there is an angel there, placing his forehead in sujood (prostration) to Allah. By Allah, if you knew what I know, you would laugh little and weep much, you would not enjoy your relationships with women and you would go out in the street praying to Allah.'"
> —Abu `Isa Muhammad ibn `Isa at-Tirmidhi, *Jami` at-Tirmidhi*

No angel is able to disobey God due to the way God created angels. For this reason, Islam does not teach that Iblīs or Shayṭan (the Devil or Satan) was a fallen angel, rather he was one of the jinn.

> O ye who believe! save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is Men and Stones, over which are (appointed) angels stern (and) severe, who flinch not (from executing) the Commands they receive from Allah, but do (precisely) what they are commanded.

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Islamic view of angels
Islamic view of angels

—Quran, sura 66 (At-Tahrim), ayah 6

The Quran also mentions that angels have qualities that may be typified by the word wings:

Praise be to Allah, Who created (out of nothing) the heavens and the earth, Who made the angels, messengers with wings, two, or three, or four (pairs);

—Quran, sura 35 (Fatir) ayah 1

The preceding sentence does not imply that all angels have two to four wings. Most notably, archangels (namely Gabriel and Michael) are described as having thousands of wings.

However, according to hadith collected by Muhammad al-Bukhari, Muhammad said that Gabriel had 600 wings;

Narrated Abu Ishaq-Ash-Shaibani:

I asked Zir bin Hubaish regarding the Statement of Allah: "And was at a distance Of but two bow-lengths Or (even) nearer; So did (Allah) convey The Inspiration to His slave (Gabriel) and then he (Gabriel) Conveyed (that to Muhammad). (53.9-10) On that, Zir said, "Ibn Mas'ud informed us that the Prophet had seen Gabriel having 600 wings."

—Muhammad al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 4, Book 54, Number 455

The angels also accompanied Muhammad up to Jannah (Heaven) when he received commands from God. Instead of riding on an angel, Muhammad rode a creature called a Buraq whose stride spans from horizon to horizon.

Angels are not equal in status and consequently they have been delegated different tasks to perform. The names and roles of some angels have been mentioned to us:

- The angels of the Seven Heavens.
- Hafaza, (The Guardian Angel):
  - Kiraman Katibin (Honourable Recorders), two of whom are charged to every human being; one writes down good deeds and the another one writes down evil deeds. They are both described as 'Raqeebun 'Ateed' in the Qur'an.
  - Mu'aqqibat (The Protectors) who keep people from death until its decreed time and who bring down blessings.
- Jundullah, those who help Muhammad in the battlefield
- The angels who violently pull out the souls of the wicked,
- Those who gently draw out the souls of the blessed,
- Those angels who distribute (provisions, rain, and other blessings) by (God's) Command.
- Those angels who drive the clouds.
- Hamalat al-'Arsh, those who carry the 'Arsh (Throne of God), comparable to the Christian Seraph
- Those that give the spirit to the foetus in the womb and are charged with four commands: to write down his provision, his life-span, his actions, and whether he will be wretched or happy.
- The Angel of the Mountains
- Munkar and Nakir, who question the dead in their graves.
- Darda'il (The Journeyers), who travel in the earth searching out assemblies where people remember God's name.
- The angels charged with each existent thing, maintaining order and warding off corruption. Their number is known only to God.
- There is the angel who is responsible for Jannah (Paradise). A weak hadeeth says his name is Ridwan so as far as we know, there is no name for sure that we know of.
- Maalik is the chief of the angels who govern Jahannam (Hell)
- Zabaniah are 19 angels who torment sinful persons in hell

These angels take no pity on punishing them as they do what the Lord has commanded them to precisely and perfectly. A verse stipulates this:
O ye who believe! save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is Men and Stones, over which are (appointed) angels stern (and) severe, who flinch not (from executing) the Commands they receive from Allah, but do (precisely) what they are commanded.

—Quran, sura 66 (At-Tahrim), ayah 6

The following is a Quranic verse that mentions the meeting of an angel with Mary, mother of Jesus (ʿĪsā):

Behold! the angels said: "O Mary! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a Word from Him: his name will be Isa(Christ Jesus), the son of Mary, held in honour in this world and the Hereafter and of (the company of) those nearest to Allah;

—Quran, sura 3 (Ali-Imran), ayah 45

Muhammad, speaking of the magnitude of the angel Gabriel, has said that his wings spanned from the eastern to the western horizon.

Narrated Aisha:

Whoever claimed that (the Prophet) Muhammad saw his Lord, is committing a great fault, for he only saw Gabriel in his genuine shape in which he was created covering the whole horizon.

—Muhammad al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 4, Book 54, Number 457

Verses in the Quran that directly name angels

Template: Muslim beliefs

Gabriel (Jibreel) and Michael (Meekaal) are mentioned early on the Quran in sura Al-Baqarah:

Say: Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel—for he brings down the (revelation) to thy heart by Allah's will, a confirmation of what went before, and guidance and glad tidings for those who believe,-

Whoever is an enemy to Allah and His angels and messengers, to Gabriel and Michael,- Lo! Allah is an enemy to those who reject Faith.

—Quran, sura 2 (Al-Baqara) ayat 97-98

Another angel, Maalik is defined in the Quran as a being who is the warden of Hell. However Maalik is not an evil angel, nor a fallen one, a notion Islam rejects, rather Maalik is merely doing what he is commanded to do by God. In Islam, Iblis or Shayṭan (the Devil or Satan) is considered to be a jinn rather than a fallen angel, since he questioned God when He ordered the angels to prostrate themselves before Adam, an act that suggested he possesses free will. An alternative view holds that rather than "defying" God, Iblis was acting in a manner predetermined by God.

They will cry: "O Malik! would that thy Lord put an end to us!" He will say, "Nay, but ye shall abide!"

—Quran, sura 43 (Az-Zukhruf ) ayah 77

Two other angels are also mentioned directly in the Quran: Haaroot and Maaroot (Harut and Marut):

...and such things as came down at Babylon to the angels Harut and Marut.

—Quran, sura 2 (Al-Baqara) ayah 102

Several angels such as Azrael, Israfil, Munkar and Nakir are not mentioned directly in the Quran but are explained further in the hadiths of Muhammad.
Israfil

Israfil (Arabic: إسرافل, translit.: Isrāfīl, Alternate Spelling: Israelf, Meaning: The Burning One[1]), is the angel of the trumpet in Islam, though unnamed in the Qur'an. Along with Mikhail, Jibrail and Izra'il, he is one of the four Islamic archangels. Israfil will blow the trumpet from a holy rock in Jerusalem to announce the Day of Resurrection. The trumpet is constantly poised at his lips, ready to be blown when God so orders. In Judeo-Christian biblical literature, Raphael is the counterpart of Isrāfīl. Isrāfīl is usually conceived as having a huge, hairy body that is covered with mouths and tongues and that reaches from the seventh heaven to the throne of God. One wing protects his body, another shields him from God, while the other two extend east and west. He is overcome by sorrow and tears three times every day and every night at the sight of Hell.

In religious tradition

Although the name "Israfel" does not appear in the Quran, mention is repeatedly made of an unnamed trumpet-angel assumed to identify this figure:

"And the trumpet shall be blown, so all those that are in the heavens and all those that are in the earth shall swoon, except him whom Allah will; then it shall be blown again, then they shall stand up awaiting." —Qur'an (39.68).

In Islamic tradition he is said to have been sent, along with the other three Islamic archangels, to collect dust from the four corners of the earth, [2] although only Izra'il succeeded in this mission.[3] It was from this dust that Adam was formed. Wikipedia: Identifying reliable sources

Israfil has been associated with a number of other angelic names not pertaining to Islam, including Uriel,[4] Sarafiel[5] and Raphael.[6]

Certain sources indicate that, created at the beginning of time, Israfil possesses four wings, and is so tall as to be able to reach from the earth to the pillars of Heaven. A beautiful angel who is a master of music, Israfil sings praises to God in a thousand different languages, the breath of which is used to inject life into hosts of angels who add to the songs themselves.

According to Sunni traditions reported by Imam Al-Suyuti, the Ghawth or Qutb, who is regarded among Sufis as the highest person in the rank of siddiqun (saints), is someone who has a heart that resembles that of Archangel Israfil, signifying the loftiness of this angel. The next in rank are the saints who are known as the Umdah or Awtad, amongst whom the highest ones have their hearts resembling that of Angel Michael, and the rest of the lower ranking saints having the heart of Jibrel or Gabriel, and that of the previous prophets before the Prophet Muhammad. The earth is believed to always have one of the Qutb.[7]
In 19th-century Occultism

Israfil appears in cabbalistic lore as well as 19th-century Occultism. He was referenced in the title of Aleister Crowley's Liber Israfil, formerly Liber Anubis, a ritual which in its original form was written and utilized by members of the Golden Dawn. This is a ritual designed to invoke the Egyptian god, Thoth, the deity of wisdom, writing, and magic who figures large in the Hermetica attributed to Hermes Trismegistus upon which modern practitioners of Alchemy and Ceremonial Magic draw.

In Media

- Israfil is the subject and title of a poem by Edgar Allan Poe, used for the exotic effect of the name:

  In Heaven a spirit doth dwell
  Whose heart-strings are a lute;
  None sing so wildly well
  As the angel Israfil,
  And the giddy stars (so legends tell),
  Ceasing their hymns, attend the spell
  Of his voice, all mute.

- Israfil appears as a character in the book Heavenly Discourse by C. E. S. Wood.
- Israfil is a character in the Remy Chandler book series - specifically the book A kiss before the Apocalypse - by Thomas E. Sniegoski. In that series he plays the part of the Angel of Death.
- Israfil appears as an angelic character in the Sheri S. Tepper book - "Beauty".
- Israfil (Spelled Israphel) is the main antagonist in the popular machinima by the YouTube group, The Yogscast
- Israfil is mentioned in Kazi Nazrul Islam's poem Bidrohi. (আমি ইস্রাফিলের শিঙ্গার, মহা হুঙ্কার; I am the mighty roar of Israfil's bugle[10],[11])
Notes


[7] See Jalaluddeen AsSuyuti’s compilation on the proofs of Qutb, Awtad and Abdals.


References


Israfil

External links

- Oval metal seal inscribed with the four archangels' names in Islam - Displayed at British Museum (http://www.britishmuseum.org/system_pages/beta_collection_introduction/beta_collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1353701&partId=1&searchText=israfil)

Holy Spirit (Islam)

The Holy Spirit (Arabic: الروح القدس, al-Rūḥ al-Quds) in Islam is mentioned several times in the Quran, and is interpreted by Muslims as referring to the angel Gabriel.

The Holy Spirit, al-Ruh al-Quds, in the Quran

The phrase al-Ruh al-Quds is used twice in the Quran:

"Say, the Holy Spirit has brought the Revelation from thy Lord in Truth, in order to strengthen those who believe, and as a Guide and Glad Tidings to Muslims.

— Qur'ān, sura 16 (An-Nahl), ayat 102"

"Then will God say: "O Jesus the son of Mary! Recount My favour to thee and to thy mother. Behold! I strengthened thee with the Holy Spirit, so that thou didst speak to the people in childhood and in maturity. Behold! I taught thee the Book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel and behold! thou makest out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, by My leave, and thou breathest into it and it becometh a bird by My leave, and thou healest those born blind, and the lepers, by My leave. And behold! thou bringest forth the dead by My leave. And behold! I did restrain the Children of Israel from (violence to) thee when thou didst show them the clear Signs, and the unbelievers among them said: "This is nothing but evident magic."

— Qur'ān, sura 5 (Al-Ma'idah), ayat 110"
The Spirit, *al-Ruh*, in the Quran

The Spirit of Allah is used in the Quran in two senses:

Allah uses it to blow into our mothers' wombs our human-spirits(souls). Creation of life:

"But He fashioned him in due proportion, and breathed into him something of His Spirit. And He gave you (the faculties of) hearing and sight and feeling (and understanding): little thanks do ye give!

— Qur'an, sura 32 (As-Sajda), ayat 9

"When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My Spirit, fall ye down in obeisance unto him."

— Qur'an, sura 15 (Al-Hijr), ayat 29

"And (remember) her who guarded her chastity: We breathed into her of Our Spirit, and We made her and her son a sign for all peoples.

— Qur'an, sura 21 (Al-Anbiya), ayat 91

"And Mary the daughter of 'Imran, who guarded her chastity; and We breathed into (her body) of Our Spirit; and she testified to the truth of the words of her Lord and of His Revelations, and was one of the devout (servants).

— Qur'an, sura 66 (At-Tahrim), ayat 12

It is used to provide Divine Guidance to the Believers, those whom Allah Almighty Loves and Favors. It is not just the Holy Spirit that gives Guidance. Angels too give it:

"Raised high above ranks (or degrees), (He is) the Lord of the Throne (of Authority): by His Command doth He send the Spirit (of inspiration) to any of His servants he pleases, that it may warn (men) of the Day of Mutual Meeting.

— Qur'an, sura 40 (Ghafir), ayat 15

"Thou wilt not find any people who believe in God and the Last Day, loving those who resist God and His Apostle, even though they were their fathers or their sons, or their brothers, or their kindred. For such He has written Faith in their hearts, and strengthened them with a Spirit from Himself. And He will admit them to Gardens beneath which Rivers flow, to dwell therein (for ever). God will be well pleased with them, and they with Him. They are the Party of God. Truly it is the Party of God that will achieve Felicity.

— Qur'an, sura 58 (Al-Mujadila), ayat 22

The Quran against the Trinity

God is neither a trinity, nor duality, nor plural in Islam:

"They do blaspheme who say: God is one of three in a Trinity: for there is no god except One God. If they desist not from their word (of blasphemy), verily a grievous penalty will befall the blasphemers among them.

— Qur'an, sura 5 (Al-Ma'ida), ayat 73

"Say: He is God, the One and Only; God, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; And there is none like unto Him.

— Qur'an, sura 112 (Al-Ikhlas), ayat 1-4

"Say: "O People of the Book (i.e., Jews and Christians)! Come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than Allah." If then they turn back, say ye: "Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to Allah's Will)."

— Qur'an, sura 3 (Aal-e-Imran), ayat 64
 Gabriel

In the view of some Muslims the term al-Ruh al-Quds refers to the Angel Gabriel (referred to as Jibral, Jibrīl, Jibrīl, Džibrīl, Jabriyl or Jibrail (جبريل, جبريل, جبريل, جبريل, جبريل) in Islam),[2][3][4] the high-ranked angel who was assigned by Allah to deliver his revelation to all apostles and prophets.[5] He is also the angel who delivered the Annunciation to Mary and also delivered the Qur'an to the prophet Muhammad in the cave of Hira by Mecca.

Gabriel's physical appearance is described in the Hadith (Sahih al-Bukhari, 4:54:4:55 [6]):

Narrated by Abu Ishaq-Ash-Shaibani: I asked Zir bin Hubaish regarding the statement of God: "And was at a distance of but two bow-lengths or (even) nearer; So did (God) convey the inspiration to his servant (Gabriel) and then he (Gabriel) conveyed (that to Muhammad). [Quran 53:9] From ‘Abdullah ibn Mas'ood, who said: the Messenger of God saw Gabriel in his true form. He had six hundred wings, each of which covered the horizon. There fell from his wings jewels, pearls and rubies; only God knows about them."

The Qur'an has referred to Gabriel both by name and by using the "spirit" designation. Gabriel is regarded with exactly the same respect by Muslims as all of the Prophets, and upon saying his name or referring to him a Muslim repeats: "peace be upon him". Gabriel's primary tasks are to bring messages from God to his messengers. As in Christianity, Gabriel is said to be the angel that informed Mary (Maryam, Arabic ﺑۡنَةٴ) of how she would conceive Isa:

She placed a screen (to screen herself) from them; then we sent to her our Ruh [angel Jibrael (Gabriel)], and he appeared before her in the form of a man in all respects. She said: "Verily! I seek refuge with the Most Beneficent (God) from you, if you do fear God." (The angel) said: "I am only a messenger from your Lord, (to announce) to you the gift of a righteous son." She said: "How can I have a son, when no man has touched me, nor am I unchaste?" He said: "So (it will be), your Lord said: 'That is easy for me (God): And (we wish) to appoint him as a sign to mankind and a mercy from us (God), and it is a matter (already) decreed (by God).' " [Quran 19:17 [8]]

Muslims believe Gabriel to have accompanied Muhammad in his spiritual ascension to the heavens, where Muhammad also is said to have met previous messengers of God and was informed about the Islamic prayer (Bukhari Sahih al-Bukhari, 1:8.345 [9]). Muslims also believe that Gabriel descends to Earth on the night of Laylat al-Qadr in spirit & essence ("The Night of Destiny"), a night in the last ten days of the holy month of Ramadan (Islamic calendar) which is believed to be the night in which the Qur'an was first revealed.
Buraq

Al-Burāq (Arabic: ﺍﻟﺒُﺮﺍﻕ al-Burāq "lightning") is a mythological steed, described as a creature from the heavens which transported the prophets. The most commonly told story is how in the 7th century, Al-Burāq carried the Islamic prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Jerusalem and back during the Isra and Mi'raj or "Night Journey", which is the title of one of the chapters (sura), Al-Isra, of the Quran.

Description

While the Buraq is almost always portrayed with a human face in far-eastern and Persian art, no Hadiths or early Islamic references allude to it having a humanoid face. This, which found its way into Indian and Persian Islamic art, may have been influenced by a misrepresentation or translation from Arabic to Persian of texts and stories describing the winged steed as a "... beautiful faced creature."

An excerpt from a translation of Sahih al-Bukhari describes Al-Burāq:

"... Then a white animal which was smaller than a mule and bigger than a donkey was brought to me." ... "The animal's step (was so wide that it) reached the farthest point within the reach of the animal's sight..."

—Muhammad al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari

Another description of the Buraq:

Then he [Gabriel] brought the Buraq, handsome-faced and bridled, a tall, white beast, bigger than the donkey but smaller than the mule. He could place his hooves at the farthest boundary of his gaze. He had long ears. Whenever he faced a mountain his hind legs would extend, and whenever he went downhill his front legs would extend. He had two wings on his thighs which lent strength to his legs.

He bucked when Muhammad came to mount him. The angel Jibril (Gabriel) put his hand on his mane and said: "Are you not ashamed, O Buraq? By Allah, no-one has ridden you in all creation more dear to Allah than he is." Hearing this he was so ashamed that he sweated until he became soaked, and he stood still so that the Prophet mounted him. [1]
The journey to the Seventh Heaven

According to Islam, the Night Journey took place 10 years after Muhammad became a prophet, during the 7th century. Muhammad had been in his home city of Mecca, at his cousin's home (the house of Ummu Hani' binti Abu Talib). Afterwards, Prophet Muhammad went to the Masjid al-Haram. While he was resting at the Kaaba, the angel Jibril (Gabriel) appeared to him followed by the Buraq. Muhammad mounted the Buraq, and in the company of Gabriel, they traveled to the "farthest mosque". The location of this mosque was not explicitly stated, but is generally accepted to mean Al-Aqsa Mosque (Temple Mount) in Jerusalem. At this location, He dismounted from the Buraq, prayed, and then once again mounted the Buraq and was taken to the various heavens, to meet first the earlier prophets and then God (Allah). Muhammad was instructed to tell his followers that they were to offer prayers 50 times per day. However, at the urging of Moses (Musa), Muhammad returns to God and it was eventually reduced to 10 times, and then 5 times per day as this was the destiny of Muhammad and his people. The Buraq then transported Muhammad back to Mecca.

In the Qur'an's sura, Muhammad's mystic travel to the Heavens is quoted as:

Glory to (Allah) Who did take His servant for a Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the farthest Mosque, whose precincts We did bless, in order that We might show him some of Our Signs: for He is the One Who heareth and seeth (all things).
—Qur'an, sura 17 (Al-Isra), ayah 1

Sahih International translation:

Exalted is He who Took His Servant by night from al-Masjid al-Haram to al-Masjid al-Aqsa, whose surroundings We Have Blessed, to Show him of Our Signs. Indeed, He Is the Hearing, the Seeing.
—Qur'an, sura 17 (Al-Isra), ayah 1

All the other details were filled in from the supplemental writings, the hadith.

Abraham

The Buraq was also said to transport Abraham (Ibrahim) when he visited his wife Hajera or Hagar and son Ismaail or Ishmael. According to tradition, Abraham lived with one wife, Sarah, in Syria, but the Buraq would transport him in the morning to Mecca to see his family there, and take him back in the evening to his Syrian wife.[2]

Western Wall

Following the destruction of the Second Temple the Western Wall was traditionally referred to as el-Mabka (the place of weeping) for the Jewish people who gathered there weekly. In the 1920s, with the rise of Arab-Jewish tension, a part of the Western Wall, which is the only remaining part of the Second Temple in the Old City of Jerusalem, began to be referred to as the Al-Buraq Wall. It was given this name because it was said that Muhammad had tied the Buraq to that wall during his Night Journey.[3]
**Cultural impact**

- In Turkey, Burak is a common name given to male children. Burak is also a surname in Bosnia, Poland, and Turkey.
- Two airlines have been named after the Buraq: Buraq Air of Libya, and the former Bouraq Indonesia Airlines of Indonesia (closed in 2006).
- The name has been used in fiction: "el-Borak" is a pirate in the novel *The Sea Hawk* by Rafael Sabatini; "El Borak" is a character in several short stories by Robert E. Howard. Both are named for their speed and reflexes.
- In Aceh, Indonesia, the image of Buraq has been adopted as an official seal of the government.[4]

**References**


**External links**

- Contemporary photo (http://www.pakistanphotos.co.uk/pakphotos/ppages/ppage59.html) of a Pakistani truck decorated with a picture of the buraq.