

ISLAMIC CREED SERIES • 2

# THE WORLD OF THE NOBLE ANGELS

In the Light of the Qur'an and Sunnah

عالم الملائكة الأبرار

'Umar S. al-Ashqar

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC PUBLISHING HOUSE

---

# THE WORLD OF THE NOBLE ANGELS

---

In the Light of the Qur'an and Sunnah

'Umar S. al-Ashqar

Translated by:  
Nasiruddin al-Khattab

كلام الله  
Kalamullah.Com

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

PUBLISHER'S NOTE	09
TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD	11
AUTHOR'S FOREWORD	13
INTRODUCTION	15
DEFINITION OF THE ANGELS AND BELIEF IN THEM	15
CHAPTER ONE	17
THEIR PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS, ATTRIBUTES AND ABILITIES	17
1 - PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS	17
(1) What they were created from and when	17
Seeing the angels	19
(2) Their great physical size	19
The great size of Jibreel	19
The great size of the bearers of the Throne	22
(3) Their most important physical characteristics	22
2 - ATTRIBUTES	35
The angels are honourable and obedient	35
The modesty of the angels	35
3 - ABILITIES	36
(1) Their ability to take on different forms	36

(2) Their great speed	39
(3) Their knowledge	39
(4) They are disciplined and organized in all their affairs	42
(5) The infallibility of the angels	43
CHAPTER TWO	47
THE WORSHIP OF THE ANGELS	47
A LOOK AT THE NATURE OF THE ANGELS	47
THE STATUS OF THE ANGELS	48
Examples of their worship	49
(1) <i>Tasbeeh</i> (Glorifying Allah)	49
(2) Standing in rows	50
(3) <i>Hajj</i>	51
(4) Their fear of Allah	53
CHAPTER THREE	55
THE ANGELS AND MAN	55
1 - THE ANGELS AND ADAM	55
2 - THE ANGELS AND THE SONS OF ADAM	57
(1) Their role in the creation of man	57
(2) The angels guard the sons of Adam	58
(3) The emissaries of Allah to His Messengers and Prophets	59
His leading the Messenger in prayer	63
(4) Stirring up good motives in human hearts	66

(5) Recording the good and bad deeds of the sons of Adam	68
(6) Testing the sons of Adam	73
(7) The angels take the soul from the body when the appointed time of death comes	75
(8) The relationship of the angels with man in the grave, on the Day of Resurrection and in the Hereafter	78
3 - THE ANGELS AND THE BELIEVERS	79
(1) The role of the angels with the believers	79
(2) The obligations of the believers towards the angels	99
4 - THE ANGELS AND THE <i>KUFFAAR</i> AND EVILDOERS	104
(1) Bringing the punishment down upon the <i>kuffaar</i>	104
(2) Their destruction of the people of the Prophet Loot	104
(3) Their cursing of the <i>kuffaar</i>	106
(4) The demand of the <i>kuffaar</i> to see the angels	108
CHAPTER FOUR	111
THE ANGELS AND OTHER CREATED THINGS	111
1 - THE BEARERS OF THE THRONE	111
2 - THE ANGELS OF THE MOUNTAIN	111
3 - THE ANGELS WHO ARE APPOINTED OVER RAIN, VEGETATION AND PROVISION	112
CHAPTER FIVE	115
WHO IS SUPERIOR — THE ANGELS OR THE SONS OF ADAM?	115

THIS IS AN ANCIENT DISPUTE	115
Different views on this matter	116
The point of dispute	117
The evidence of those who say that righteous human beings are superior to the angels	117
The correct view	120
SYMBOLS' DIRECTORY	122
GLOSSARY	123
TRANSLITERATION CHART	127

## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

All praise and thanks belong to Allah, Lord of the Universe. May Allah's blessings and peace be upon the last of the prophets and messengers Muhammad, his family, Companions, and all those who follow his footsteps till the end of time.

This is the second book of the Islamic Creed (*'aqeedah*) series by Dr. 'Umar Sulaymaan al-Ashqar. It deals with the world of the Angels, an integral part of the Islamic faith. Persons denying the existence of Angels go outside the pale of Islam.

As usual, Dr. Al-Ashqar has discussed this issue exhaustively. His arguments are based on the texts of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. He has covered all aspects of the topic: definition, origin and characteristics, kinds and their relationship with mankind and other creation. Moreover, he draws a comparison between mankind and the angels in their respective roles as determined by Allah. A number of editions of the Arabic original have been sold out.

We are pleased to present this excellent English translation of a very popular book. May Allah bless with acceptance the efforts of the author, the translator and all those associated with the publication of this work.

***Muhammad ibn 'Abdul-Muhsin Al Tuwaijri***

General Manager

International Islamic Publishing House

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia





## TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD

### *In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful*

Belief in the Unseen (*Al-Ghayb*) is one of the basic tenets of Islam, and forms an important part of Islamic teachings. One of the unseen worlds of which Islam tells us is the world of the angels, who are described in great detail in the Qur'an and Sunnah and who are involved with man throughout his life.

From the moment an individual is conceived in his mother's womb, until his death and beyond, angels play a role in human life. Angels accompany the human being, protecting him and keeping a record of all his deeds. Angels bring forth the soul of the deceased person/s and they bring comfort or inflict torment in the grave. An angel will sound the Trumpet on the Last Day, and angels will be present on the Day of Judgement until they accompany people to their ultimate destination in Paradise or Hell.

Almost all human cultures, ancient and modern, have some kind of belief about angels. The pre-Islamic Arabs believed them to be daughters of the Almighty. Some philosophers thought that angels were the stars in the sky. In modern times there has been a resurgence of interest in angels, and they feature prominently in movies and other forms of popular western culture. Stories featuring angels circulate on the internet and various kinds of gifts, bearing supposed images of angels, gift shops in the west.

But these myths have no role to play in the belief of the Muslim. Our beliefs are based on the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah, which tell us all we need to know about the reality of the unseen, including the world of the angels. Belief in the angels brings comfort to man's soul; this belief makes man feel that he is important in the sight of Allah, and that he matters a lot to Him; this belief also encourages a person to strive in the path of goodness. Hence it is of the utmost importance for the

Muslim to understand what Islam says about the angels, and what the implications of this knowledge are for his daily life. In this book, Dr. 'Umar al-Ashqar draws on the sources of Islam to give us a comprehensive picture of who the angels are, their origins, their role in the universe and their interaction with mankind in this world and the next.

May Allah reward the author for his presentation of the Islamic belief in the angels. May He guide us on the Straight Path which leads to Paradise, and may He grant us admittance to that eternal abode where the angels will welcome the believers with greetings of *salaam*. May Allah bless our Prophet Muhammad and his family and Companions, and grant them peace.

***Naṣiruddīn al-Khaṭṭāb***

**Translator's Note:**

**All translations of the meaning of the Qur'anic quotations have been taken from "Translation of the Meanings of the Noble Qur'an" by Dr. Muhammad Muḥsin Khan and Dr. Muhammad Taqī-ud-Dīn al-Hilālī, unless otherwise stated.**

## AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

Praise be to Allah. We praise Him and seek His help, forgiveness and guidance. We seek refuge in Allah from the evil of our own selves and from our evil actions. Whomsoever Allah guides, none can lead astray, and whomsoever He leads astray, none can guide. I bear witness that there is no god except Allah alone, with no associate or partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger.

Belief in the angels is one of the basic principles of *'aqeedah*, and faith is not complete without this belief. The angels form one of the worlds of the Unseen, belief in which is commanded by Allah, Who praises those who believe in what Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ) have told us about them.

The texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah speak in detail about all aspects of this subject. Whoever studies these texts will come to have a clear belief in the angels and realize that this is not an obscure topic. This will deepen and strengthen his faith, for detailed knowledge is stronger and firmer than general knowledge.

The only reason why the texts go into such detail on this topic is that the human mind on its own is not able to learn about the angels. Human senses are unable to see the angels or hear their conversations, but this inability is no doubt in man's best interests, for if man could hear and see everything that is going on around him, he would not be able to survive. It is sufficient for us to imagine how hard it would be for a man if he could detect all the sounds that are picked up by a radio set; the result would surely make him lose his mind.

No one should assume that studying this principle is a kind of superfluous knowledge. The facts stated in the texts which speak of this topic have a great effect in counteracting the myths and false beliefs that exist in people's minds concerning this matter. Since ancient times there has been a widespread belief that the angels are divine or that they are

the daughters of Allah, and some philosophers think that the angels are the stars which we see in space.

The facts which are stated in the texts implant in our hearts the firm belief in the One God Who is in control of all of creation, Who has appointed His troops of angels to take care of the various affairs of this universe.

The relationship of the angels with us, their role in our formation and their watching over us, speaks to man of his importance and valuable status, and it refutes the idea that human beings are insignificant and worthless. Thus man can fully appreciate his own value and strive hard to play the great role which he is required to fulfil.

If we were to count the positive effects which stem from man's belief in the angels, and to study the texts which speak of them, the introduction would turn into a lengthy article. So I will leave the reader to look at those texts which, when studied in depth, will supply him with these inspiring effects.

We ask Allah to benefit people through this book, and to make it sincerely for His sake, for He is the best of helpers and supporters.

*'Umar Sulaymaan al-Ashqar*

## INTRODUCTION

### DEFINITION OF THE ANGELS AND BELIEF IN THEM

The Angels form a world different to the world of mankind and the world of the jinn. It is a noble world, completely pure. They are noble and pious, worshipping Allah as He should be worshipped, fulfilling whatever He commands them to do and never disobeying Him.

From the texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah, we will see their attributes as described therein.

The word *malak* (angel) is derived from the root *alaka*; *ma'lakah* and *ma'lak* mean message. From this root is derived the word *malaa'ik* (angels), because they are the messengers of Allah.

It is also said that the word *malak* is derived from the root *la'aka*, and that *mal'aakah* means message. The phrase *wa'alikni ila fulaan* means 'convey to him from me.' *Al-Mal'ak* means *al-malak* (angel) because the angels convey (messages) from Allah.

Some of the scholars said *al-malak* (angel) is derived from *al-mulk* (sovereignty). He said: if one of the angels is in control of some affairs, he is described as *malak*, and if a human being is in control of some affairs, he is described as *malik* (king).<sup>1</sup>

Belief in the angels is one of the principles of faith. A person's faith cannot be correct unless he believes in them. Allah says:

﴿ءَاْمَنَ الرَّسُوْلُ بِمَا اُنزِلَ اِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ كُلُّ ءَاْمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ  
وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ اَحَدٍ مِنْ رُسُلِهِ﴾

«The Messenger [Muhammad] believes in what has been sent down to him from his Lord, and [so do] the believers. Each one believes in

<sup>1</sup> *Baṣaa'ir Dhawi al-Tamyeez*, by Al-Fayroozabadi, 4/524.

Allah, His Angels, His Books, and His Messengers. [They say,] ‘We make no distinction between one another of His Messengers.’ ﴿  
*(Qur'an 2:285)*

### How should we believe in the angels?

Suyooṭi narrated that Al-Bayhaqi said in *Shu'ab al-Eemaan*: “Belief in the Angels” means the following:

1. Belief that they exist.
2. Giving each one of them his rightful status, and believing that they are the slaves of Allah, created by Him, like mankind and the jinn. They are commanded to do things and they are accountable. They are not able to do anything except that which Allah has enabled them to do. Death is possible for them, but Allah gives them a long life, and they do not die until their appointed time comes. They should not be described in any way that would imply association with Allah, and they should not be regarded as gods as they were regarded by the ancients, some traditional cultures of early people.
3. Acknowledging that among them are messengers whom Allah sends to whomsoever He wills among mankind. He may also send some of them to others. This implies acknowledging that among them are the bearers of the Throne, those who stand in ranks, the keepers of Paradise, the keepers of Hell, those who record man’s deeds and those who drive the clouds. The Qur’an has mentioned all or most of them.”<sup>2</sup>

This book will describe in detail what is said in the texts (of the Qur’an and Sunnah) about belief in the angels.

---

<sup>2</sup> *Al-Ḥabaa’ik fi Akhbaar al-Malaa’ik* by Suyooṭi, Pp. 10. See *Mukhtaṣar Shu'ab al-Eemaan*, 1/405-406.

## CHAPTER ONE

# THEIR PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS, ATTRIBUTES AND ABILITIES

In this chapter we look at what we have learned from the *ṣaḥeeḥ* texts about the physical characteristics as well as the attributes of the angels, then we will discuss the abilities which Allah has granted to them.

### 1 - PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

#### (1) What they were created from and when

The substance from which Allah created them is light. In *Ṣaḥeeḥ Muslim* it is narrated from ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her and her father) that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: “The angels were created from light, the jinn were created from smokeless fire, and Adam was created from that which has been described to you.”<sup>1</sup>

The Messenger (ﷺ) did not explain what light this is that they were created from. Hence we cannot indulge in trying to say more about this matter, because it is the matter of the unseen concerning which no further clarification has been narrated, apart from this hadith.

It is narrated that ‘Ikrimah said: “The angels were created from the light of glory and *Iblees* was created from the fire of glory.” And it is narrated that ‘Abd-Allah ibn ‘Amr said, “Allah created the angels from the light of the arms and chest.” It is not permissible to accept these views, even if they are narrated through sound chains from these scholars, because they are not infallible, and they may have taken these ideas from the

---

<sup>1</sup> Muslim, 4/2294, hadith no. 2996.

Some of those who claim to be scholars reject this hadith and others like it, claiming that it is a hadith *aaḥaad*, and that a hadith *aaḥaad* cannot be relied on in matters of *‘aqeedah*. I have criticized this view and explained its flawed nature in a paper entitled *Aṣl al-I’tiqaad*.

*Israa'eeliyyaat* (reports from Jewish sources).<sup>2</sup>

Wali-Ullah ad-Dehlawi said: "The hosts on high (the angels) are of three groups: a group upon whom Allah made the system of goodness was dependent, so He created them from physical light similar to the fire of Moosa and breathed into them noble souls;

A group which was created from a mixture of very light vapour and other elements, which resulted in the emergence of great souls with a strong aversion to animalistic behaviour;

And a group of human souls who are very close to the hosts on high, who keep striving to do deeds which could save them and help them to catch up with (the angels), until they shed their physical cloaks and follow in their footsteps, and are counted as being among them."

There is no *ṣaḥeeḥ* evidence to support this definition and this division of the angels into these categories.

We do not know when the angels were created, for Allah has not informed us about that. But we do know that they were created before Adam, the father of mankind. Allah has told us that He informed the angels that He was going to create a *khaleefah* on earth:

﴿وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً ﴿٣٠﴾﴾

«Behold, your Lord said to the angels, 'I will create a vicegerent [khaleefah] on earth.'» (Qur'an 2:30 - A. Yoosuf 'Ali)

What is meant by the word *khaleefah* here is Adam (ﷺ), and He commanded them to prostrate to him when He created him:

﴿فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾﴾

«So, when I have fashioned him completely and breathed into him [Adam] the soul which I created for him, then fall [you] down prostrating yourselves unto him.» (Qur'an 15:29)

<sup>2</sup> *Silsilat al-Aḥaadeeth aṣ-Ṣaḥeeḥah*, 1/197.



## Seeing the angels

Because the angels have bodies of light which are of a low density, mankind cannot see them, especially since Allah has not given our eyes the ability to see them.

No one among this ummah has seen the angels in their true form apart from the Messenger (ﷺ). He saw Jibreel twice in the form in which Allah created him. The texts indicate that human beings are able to see the angels when the angels appear in human form.

### (2) Their great physical size

Allah says concerning the angels of Hell:

﴿يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا فَوْاْ أَنفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ غِلَاطٌ شِدَادٌ لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ ﴿٦﴾﴾

«O you who believe! Ward off yourselves and your families against a Fire [Hell] whose fuel is men and stones, over which are [appointed] angels stern [and] severe, who disobey not, [from executing] the Commands they receive from Allah, but do that which they are commanded.» (Qur'an 66:6)

It will be sufficient to quote the *ahaadeeth* which speak of two noble angels.

### The great size of Jibreel (عليه السلام)

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) saw Jibreel twice in the angelic form in which Allah created him. These two occasions are mentioned in the *ayaat*:

﴿وَلَقَدْ رَءَاهُ بِالْأَفْقِ الْمُبِينِ ﴿٢٣﴾﴾

«And indeed he [Muhammad] saw him [Jibreel] in the clear horizon [towards the east].» (Qur'an 81:23)

And:

﴿وَلَقَدْ رَآهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَىٰ ﴿١٣﴾ عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَىٰ ﴿١٤﴾ عِنْدَهَا جَنَّةُ الْمَأْوَىٰ ﴿١٥﴾﴾

﴿And indeed he [Muhammad] saw him [Jibreel] at a second descent [i.e. another time].

Near *Sidrat-ul-Muntaha* [a lote tree of the utmost boundary over the seventh heaven beyond which none can pass].

Near it is the Paradise of Abode.﴾ (Qur'an 53:13-15)

- that was when he was taken up to the highest heaven (during the *Mi'raaj*).

In *Shaheeh Muslim* it is narrated that 'Aa'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: "I asked the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) about these two *aayaat*. He said, 'That is Jibreel; I never saw him in the form in which Allah created him except on these two occasions. I saw him descending from the heavens, with his huge size filling the space between the heaven and the earth'"<sup>3</sup>

'Aa'ishah (رضي الله عنها) was asked about the *aayah*,

﴿ثُمَّ دَنَا فَدَدَىٰ ﴿٨﴾﴾

﴿Then he [Jibreel] approached and came closer﴾

(Qur'an 53:8)

She said, "That is Jibreel (ﷺ). He used to come to him in human form, but on this occasion he came in his real form, and he filled the horizons of the sky."<sup>4</sup>

It is narrated in *Shaheeh al-Bukhaari* that 'Abd-Allah ibn Mas'ood said: "Muhammad (ﷺ) saw Jibreel with six hundred wings."<sup>5</sup>

Ibn Mas'ood said concerning the *aayah* –

﴿لَقَدْ رَأَىٰ مِنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِ الْكُبْرَىٰ ﴿٧﴾﴾

<sup>3</sup> Muslim, 1/159, hadith no. 177.

<sup>4</sup> Muslim, 1/160, hadith no. 177.

<sup>5</sup> Bukhaari, 8/610, hadith no. 4856, 4857.

«Indeed he [Muhammad] did see of the Greatest Signs, of his Lord [Allah]» (Qur'an 53:18) –

“This means green cushions, filling the horizons.”<sup>6</sup> These cushions that filled the horizons were what Jibreel was seated upon. Ibn Hajar mentioned that An-Nasaa'i and Al-Haakim narrated with their *isnaads* from Ibn Mas'ood that he said, “The Prophet of Allah (ﷺ) saw Jibreel (جبرئيل) with his own eyes, on a cushion which filled the space between heaven and earth.”<sup>7</sup>

Ibn Hajar mentioned that Ibn Mas'ood said, according to a report narrated by An-Nasaa'i: “Muhammad (ﷺ) saw Jibreel with six hundred wings, filling the horizon.”<sup>8</sup>

In *Musnad al-Imam Ahmad* it is narrated that 'Abd-Allah ibn Mas'ood said: “The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) saw Jibreel in his true form. He had six hundred wings, each of which filled the horizon, and there were multi-coloured pearls and rubies falling from his wings.”

Ibn Katheer said, concerning this hadith, its *isnaad* is *jayyid*.<sup>9</sup>

Allah said, describing Jibreel:

﴿إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ ﴿١٩﴾ ذِي قُوَّةٍ عِنْدَ ذِي الْعَرْشِ مَكِينٍ ﴿٢٠﴾ مُطَاعٍ ثَمَّ أَمِينٍ ﴿٢١﴾﴾

«Verily, this is the Word [this Qur'an brought by] a most honourable messenger [Jibreel (Gabriel)], from Allah to Prophet Muhammad]. Owner of power, [and high rank] with [Allah], the Lord of the Throne,

Obeyed [by the angels in the heavens] and trustworthy.»

(Qur'an 81:19-21)

What is meant by the “most honourable messenger” here is Jibreel, and the Lord of the Throne is the Lord of Glory, may He be glorified.

<sup>6</sup> Bukhaari, 8/611, hadith no. 4858.

<sup>7</sup> *Fath al-Baari*, 8/611.

<sup>8</sup> *Fath al-Baari*, 8/611.

<sup>9</sup> *Al-Bidaayah wan-Nihaayah*, 1/47.

## The great size of the bearers of the Throne

Abu Dawood narrated from Jaabir ibn ‘Abd-Allah (رضي الله عنه) that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: “I have been granted permission to speak to one of the angels of Allah, one of the bearers of the Throne. The distance from his earlobes to his shoulders is the distance of a seven - hundred year journey.”<sup>10</sup>

This is also narrated by Ibn Abi Haatim, who said: “... as a bird flies.” The editor of *Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh* said: its *isnaad* is *ṣaḥeeh*.<sup>11</sup>

Ṭabaraani narrated in *Al-Mu‘jam al-Awsaṭ* with a *ṣaḥeeh isnaad* from Anas that he said: “The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: ‘I have been granted permission to speak of an angel, one of the bearers of the Throne. His feet are in the lowest earth and the Throne is resting on his horn. The distance from his earlobe to his shoulder is like that of a bird flying for seven hundred years. That angel says, ‘Glory be to You, wherever You are.’”<sup>12</sup>

### (3) Their most important physical characteristics

#### (i) The wings of the angels

The angels have wings, as Allah has informed us. Some of them have two wings, some have three or four, and some have more than that.

﴿الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ فَاطِرِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ جَاعِلِ الْمَلَائِكَةِ رُسُلًا أُولِي أَجْنِحَةٍ مَثْنٍ وَثُلَاثَ وَرُبْعَ بَرِيدٍ فِي الْخَلْقِ مَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ﴾

﴿All the praises and thanks be to Allah, the [only] Originator [or the (Only) Creator] of the heavens and the earth, Who made the angels messengers with wings, two or three or four. He increases in creation what He wills. Verily, Allah is Able to do all things.﴾

(*Qur'an* 35:1)

<sup>10</sup> *Ṣaḥeeh Sunan Abi Dawood*, 3/895, no. 9353.

<sup>11</sup> *Mishkaat al-Maṣaabeeh*, 3/121. See also *Silsilat al-Aḥaadeeth aṣ-Ṣaḥeeḥah*, hadith no. 151.

<sup>12</sup> *Ṣaḥeeh al-Jaami' aṣ-Ṣagheer*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn., 1/208, no. 853.

What is meant by saying that Allah made them with wings is that some of them have two wings, some have three or four, and some have more than that.

We have already mentioned the hadith in which the Messenger (ﷺ) stated that Jibreel has six hundred wings.

### (ii) The beauty of the angels

Allah has created them in a noble and beautiful form, as Allah says of Jibreel:

﴿عَلَّمَهُ سَدِيدُ الْقُوَىٰ ذُو مِرَّةٍ فَاسْتَوَىٰ﴾

«He has been taught [this Qur'an] by one mighty in power [Jibreel (Gabriel)].

One free from any defect in body and mind then he [Jibreel – Gabriel in his real shape as created by Allah] rose and became stable.»

(Qur'an 53:5-6)

Ibn 'Abbaas said: 'one free from any defect in body or mind' means one whose appearance is beautiful. Qataadah said: one whose form is tall and beautiful. And it is said that 'one free from any defect in body or mind' means one who is possessed of strength. There is no contradiction between the two views, for he is both strong and of a beautiful appearance.

The idea that angels are beautiful is well-established in people's minds, just as the idea that devils are ugly is also well-established. Hence we see them likening beautiful human beings to angels. Look at what the women said when they saw Yousuf:

﴿فَلَمَّا رَأَيْنَهُ أَكْبَرْنَهُ وَقَطَّعْنَ أَيْدِيَهُنَّ وَقُلْنَ حَسْبُ لِلَّهِ مَا هَذَا بَشَرًا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا مَلَكٌ كَرِيمٌ﴾

«Then, when they saw him, they exalted him [at his beauty] and [in their astonishment] cut their hands. They said: 'How perfect is Allah [or Allah forbid]! No man is this! This is none other than a noble angel!''»

(Qur'an 12:31)

### (iii) Is there any similarity in appearance and form between angels and humans?

Muslim narrated in his *Ṣaḥeeḥ*, and At-Tirmidhi narrated in his *Sunan* from Jaabir (رضي الله عنه) that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: “The Prophets were shown to me, and I saw Moosa, a man of average build, looking like one of the men of (the tribe of) Shanu’ah. And I saw ‘Eesa ibn Maryam, and the person I have seen who most resembles him is ‘Urwah ibn Mas‘ood. And I saw Ibraaheem, and the one who most resembles him is your Companion (meaning himself). And I saw Jibreel (رضي الله عنه); the person I have seen who most resembles him is Duḥyah.” According to another report: Duḥyah ibn Khaleefah.<sup>13</sup>

Is this a similarity between Jibreel’s true form, or the form which Jibreel took when he appeared in human form? Most likely it is the latter, because as we shall see, Jibreel often used to appear in the form of Duḥyah.

### (iv) Variations in their physical shape and status

The angels are not all the same in their physical shape and status. Some of the angels have two wings, some have three, and Jibreel has six hundred wings. They vary in their status before their Lord:

﴿وَمَا مِنَّا إِلَّا لَهُ مَقَامٌ مَّعْلُومٌ﴾

﴿And there is not one of us [angels] but has his known place [or position].﴾  
(*Qur’an* 37:164)

And Allah said concerning Jibreel:

﴿إِنَّمَا لَقَوْلُ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ ﴿٨١﴾ ذِي قُوَّةٍ عِنْدَ ذِي الْعَرْشِ مَكِينٍ ﴿٨٢﴾﴾

﴿Verily, this is the Word [this Qur’an brought by] a most honourable messenger [Jibreel (Gabriel), from Allah to Prophet Muhammad]. Owner of power, [and high rank] with [Allah], the Lord of the Throne.﴾  
(*Qur’an* 81:19-20)

<sup>13</sup> Muslim, 1/153, hadith no. 167.

i.e., he has a high status and important rank before Allah.

The best of the angels are those who were present at the battle of Badr. In *Ṣaḥeeḥ al-Bukhaari* it is narrated from Rafaa'ah ibn Raafi' that Jibreel came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and said: "What do you think of the people of Badr among you (i.e., those among you who were present at Badr)?" He said, "They are among the best of the Muslims" or similar words. Jibreel said, "The same is true of the angels who were present at the Badr."<sup>14</sup>

#### **(v) They cannot be described as being male or female**

One of the reasons why the children of Adam go astray when speaking about the worlds of the unseen is because they subject those worlds to human criteria. So we see one of them expressing his amazement, in one of his articles, that Jibreel used to come to the Messenger (ﷺ) a few seconds after a question had been put to the Messenger (ﷺ) that needed a reply from Allah. How could he come at such an extraordinary speed? When light needs millions of light-years in order to reach nearby heavenly bodies.

This poor man did not realize that he is like a mosquito trying to measure the speed of an airplane using its own standards. If he had thought about the matter, he would have realized that the world of the angels has its own standards which are completely different from our human standards.

The *mushrik* Arabs also went astray in this regard, as they used to claim that the angels were female, and they mixed this idea, which is far removed from the truth, with an even greater myth, when they claimed that these females were the daughters of Allah.

The Qur'an refuted them on both counts. It pointed out that they had no sound evidence for their claims, and that this notion was nonsense. It is strange indeed that they attributed daughters to Allah, when they themselves hated daughters; when the news of (the birth of) a baby girl

---

<sup>14</sup> Bukhaari, 7/312, hadith no. 3992.

was brought to any of them, his face would become dark, and he would be filled with inward grief, and he would hide himself from the people because of the evil of that whereof he had been informed (cf. Qur'an 16:58-59). This doomed fellow might even lose his mind and bury the newborn girl alive. Nevertheless, they attributed children to Allah, and claimed that these children were female. In this manner myths grow and take root in the minds of those whom the divine light has not reached.

Listen to these verses which tell of this myth and criticize those who believed in it:

﴿فَأَسْتَفْتِهِمْ أَلرِّبَّكَ الْبَنَاتُ وَلَهُنَّ الْبَنُونَ ﴿١٤٩﴾ أَمْ خَلَقْنَا الْمَلَائِكَةَ إِنثًا وَهُمْ شَاهِدُونَ ﴿١٥٠﴾ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ مِّنْ إِفْكِهِمْ لَيَقُولُونَ ﴿١٥١﴾ وَلَدَ اللَّهُ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿١٥٢﴾ أَصْطَفَى الْبَنَاتِ عَلَى الْبَنِينَ ﴿١٥٣﴾ مَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ ﴿١٥٤﴾ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٥٥﴾ أَمْ لَكُمْ سُلْطٰنٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٥٦﴾﴾

﴿Now ask them [O Muhammad]: ‘Are there [only] daughters for your Lord and sons for them?

Or did We create the angels female while they were witnesses?

Verily, it is of their falsehood that they [Quraysh pagans] say:

‘Allah has begotten [offspring – the angels being the daughters of Allah]?’ And, verily, they are liars!

Has He [then] chosen daughters rather than sons?

What is the matter with you? How do you decide?

Will you not then remember?

Or is there for you a plain authority?﴾ (Qur'an 37:149-156)

Allah will make these words a testimony for which they will be brought to account. One of the greatest of sins is to speak about Allah without knowledge:

﴿وَجَعَلُوا الْمَلَائِكَةَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عِبْدُ الرَّحْمٰنِ إِنثًا أَشْهَدُوا خَلْقَهُمْ سَوَّكَبُ ﴿١٦١﴾ سَهَدَتْهُمُ وَمَسَّلُونُ ﴿١٦٢﴾﴾

﴿And they make the angels who themselves are slaves of the Most Gracious [Allah] females. Did they witness their creation? Their



testimony will be recorded, and they will be questioned!﴾

(Qur'an 43:19)<sup>15</sup>

### (vi) They do not eat or drink

We indicated above that the angels cannot be described as being male or female. Similarly, they do not eat or drink the type of food we (humans) eat and drink. Allah has told us that the angels came to Ibraaheem in human form, and he offered them food, but they did not stretch out their hands towards it. He felt afraid of them, but when they told him of their true identity, his fear left him.

﴿هَلْ أُنْتِكَ حَدِيثُ ضَيْفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْمُكْرَمِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾ إِذْ دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَقَالُوا سَلَامًا ﴿٢٥﴾ قَالَ سَلَامٌ قَوْمٌ مُنْكَرُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ فَرَأَى إِلَيْكَ أَهْلِيهِ فَجَاءَ بِعِجَلٍ سَمِينٍ ﴿٢٧﴾ فَقَرَّبَهُ إِلَيْهِمْ قَالَ أَلَا تَأْكُلُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾ فَأَوْحَسَ مِنْهُمْ خِيفَةً ﴿٢٩﴾ قَالُوا لَا نَحْفَظُ وَبَشَّرُوهُ بِغُلَامٍ عَلِيمٍ ﴿٣٠﴾﴾

﴿Has the story reached you, of the honoured guests [three angels; Jibreel (Gabriel) along with another two] of Ibraaheem [Abraham]? When they came in to him and said: ‘Salaam, [peace be upon you]!’ He answered: ‘Salaam, [peace be upon you],’ and said: ‘You are a people unknown to me.’

Then he turned to his household, and brought out a roasted calf [as the property of Ibraaheem [Abraham] was mainly cows].

And placed it before them [saying]: ‘Will you not eat?’

Then he conceived fear of them [when they ate not]. They said: ‘Fear not.’ And they gave him glad tidings of a son having knowledge [about Allah and His religion of True Monotheism].﴾

(Qur'an 51:24-28)

<sup>15</sup> Therefore, Muslims should beware of speaking about such matters without knowledge. Those who claim that man originated from animals, monkeys or whatever, should be told the same thing: “Did they witness their creation? Their testimony will be recorded”. And Allah says, ﴿[Allah] made them [Iblees and his offspring] not to witness [nor took their help in] the creation of the heavens and the earth and not [even] their own creation.﴾ (Qur'an 18:51)

In another *aayah* it says:

﴿فَلَمَّا رَأَىٰ أَيْدِيَهُمْ لَا تَصِلُ إِلَيْهِ نَكِرَهُمْ وَأَوْجَسَ مِنْهُمْ خِيفَةً قَالُوا لَا تَحْزَفْ  
إِنَّا أُرْسِلْنَا إِلَىٰ قَوْمٍ لُّوطٍ ﴿٧٠﴾﴾

﴿But when he saw their hands went not towards it [the meal], he mistrusted them, and conceived a fear of them. They said: “Fear not, we have been sent against the people of Loot [Lot].﴾

(*Qur'an* 11:70)

Suyooti narrated from Al-Fakhr ar-Raazi that scholars were agreed that the angels do not eat, drink or get married.<sup>16</sup>

### (vii) They do not get bored or tired

The angels worship and obey Allah, and carry out His commands, without getting tired or bored. They do not feel what humans feel of tiredness and boredom. Allah says, describing His angels:

﴿يُسَبِّحُونَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لَا يَفْتُرُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾﴾

﴿They [i.e. the angels] glorify His Praises night and day, [and] they never slacken [to do so].﴾

(*Qur'an* 21:20)

The meaning of ‘they never slacken’ is they never become weak. In another *aayah* Allah says:

﴿فَالَّذِينَ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ يُسَبِّحُونَ لَهُمُ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَهُمْ لَا يَسْتَمُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾﴾

﴿Then there are those who are with your Lord [angels] glorify Him night and day, and never are they tired.﴾

(*Qur'an* 41:38)

Suyooti inferred that the *aayah* “(and) they never slacken (to do so)” (*Qur'an* 21:20) means that the angels do not sleep; he narrated this view from Al-Fakhr ar-Raazi.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Al-Habaa'ik fi Akhbaar al-Malaa'ik*, Pp. 264.

<sup>17</sup> *Al-Habaa'ik fi Akhbaar al-Malaa'ik*, Pp. 264.

### (viii) The dwelling-place of the angels

The abode and dwelling-place of the angels is in the heavens, as Allah says:

﴿كَأَدُ السَّمَوَاتِ يَنْفَطَّرُكَ مِنْ فَوْقِهِنَّ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ ﴿٥﴾﴾

﴿Nearly the heavens might be rent asunder from above them [by His Majesty], and the angels glorify the praises of their Lord.﴾

(Qur'an 42:5)

And Allah has described them as being with Him:

﴿فَإِنْ اسْتَكْبَرُوا فَالَّذِينَ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ يُسَبِّحُونَ لَهُ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَهُمْ لَا يَسْئَمُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾﴾

﴿But if they are too proud [to do so (i.e., to prostrate to Allah)], then there are those who are with your Lord [angels] glorify Him night and day, and never are they tired.﴾

(Qur'an 41:38)

They come down to the earth by the command of Allah, to fulfil the tasks with which they have been entrusted:

﴿وَمَا نَنْزِلُ إِلَّا بِأَمْرِ رَبِّكَ ﴿٦﴾﴾

﴿And we [angels] descend not except by the Command of your Lord [O Muhammad].﴾

(Qur'an 19:64)

They come down a lot on special occasions, such as *Laylat al-Qadr*:

﴿لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ ﴿٣﴾ نَزَّلُ الْمَلَائِكَةَ وَالرُّوحَ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ أَمْرٍ ﴿٤﴾﴾

﴿The Night of *Al-Qadr* [Decree] is better than a thousand months [i.e. worshipping Allah in that night is better than worshipping Him a thousand months, i.e. 83 years and 4 months].

Therein descend the angels and the *Rooḥ* [Jibreel (Gabriel)] by Allah's Permission with all Decrees.﴾

(Qur'an 97:3-4)

**(ix) The numbers of the angels**

The angels are many; no one knows how many they are except the One Who created them:

﴿وَمَا يَعْلَمُ جُنُودَ رَبِّكَ إِلَّا هُوَ﴾

﴿And none can know the hosts of your Lord but He.﴾

(*Qur'an* 74:31)

If you want to know how many they are, listen to what Jibreel said concerning *Al-Bayt al-Ma'moor* (the Much-Frequented House), when the Messenger (ﷺ) asked him about it, when he reached it on the night of the *Israa'*: This is *Al-Bayt al-Ma'moor*; every day seventy thousand angels pray in it, and they never come back to it.”<sup>18</sup>

In *Shaheeh Muslim* it is narrated from ‘Abd-Allah that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: “On that Day, Hell will be brought with seventy thousand ropes, each of which will be pulled by seventy thousand angels.”<sup>19</sup> Based on this, those who will bring forth Hell on that Day will be forty-nine million angels.

If you study the texts which have been narrated about the angels who are appointed to take care of each person, you will realize how great their number is. There is an angel who is entrusted with the *nutfah*, two angels appointed to write down the deeds of each person, angels whose task is to protect each person, and an angelic companion (*qareen*) to guide a person.

**(x) The names of the angels**

The angels have names, but we only know a few of those names. Below are the verses in which some of the names of angels have been mentioned:

<sup>18</sup> Bukhaari, 6/103, hadith no. 2207. Muslim, 1/146, hadith no. 162. This version is narrated by Bukhaari.

<sup>19</sup> Muslim, 4/2184, hadith no. 2842.

### (a) Jibreel and (b) Mikaa'eel

Allah says:

﴿قُلْ مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِجِبْرِيلَ فَإِنَّهُ نَزَّلَهُ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَهُدًى وَبُشْرَىٰ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٩٧﴾ مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِلَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَجِبْرِيلَ وَمِيكَالَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَدُوٌّ لِلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٩٨﴾﴾

«Say [O Muhammad]: ‘Whoever is an enemy to Jibreel [Gabriel] [let him die in his fury], for indeed he has brought it [this Qur’an] down to your heart by Allah’s Permission, confirming what came before it [i.e. the *Tawraat* (Torah) and the *Injeel* (Gospel)] and guidance and glad tidings for the believers.

Whoever is an enemy to Allah, His Angels, His Messengers, Jibreel [Gabriel] and Mikaa’eel [Michael], then verily, Allah is an enemy to the disbelievers.’» (Qur’an 2:97-98)

Jibreel is the trustworthy *Rooḥ* mentioned in the *aayah*:

﴿نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ ﴿٩٦﴾ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ ﴿٩٧﴾﴾

«Which the trustworthy *Rooḥ* [Jibreel (Gabriel)] has brought down Upon your heart [O Muhammad] that you may be [one] of the warners.» (Qur’an 26:193-194)

And he is the *Rooḥ* whom Allah sent to Maryam:

﴿فَأَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهَا رُوحَنَا ﴿١٧﴾﴾

«Then We sent to her Our *Rooḥ* [angel Jibreel (Gabriel)].»

(Qur’an 19:17)

### (c) Israafeel

Another of the angels is Israafeel, who will blow the Trumpet.

Jibreel, Mikaa’eel and Israafeel are the angels who were mentioned by the Messenger (ﷺ) in the *du‘aa’* with which he opened his prayer at night:

“*Allaahumma Rabba Jibreel wa Mikaa’eel wa Israafeel, Faatir as-samaawaati wal-ard, ‘Aalim al-ghaybi wal-shahaadah, anta tahkumu*

*bayna 'ibaadika fima kaanu fihi yakhtalifoon, ihdinee lima ukhtulifa fihi min al-haqq bi idhnika, innaka tahdi man tasha' ila shiraatim mustaqeem* (O Allah, Lord of Jibreel, Mikaa'eel and Israafeel, Creator of the heavens and the earth, Knower of the unseen and the seen, You judge among Your slaves concerning that in which they differ. Guide me by Your Leave with regard to that in which they differ concerning the truth, for You guide whomsoever You will to a straight path).<sup>20</sup>

#### (d) Maalik

And among the angels is Maalik, the keeper of Hell:

﴿وَأَذُوا بِمَلَائِكُ لِيَقْضَ عَلَيْنَا رَبُّكَ قَالَ إِنَّكُمْ مَرْكُوتٌ﴾

﴿And they will cry: 'O Maalik [Keeper of Hell]! Let your Lord make an end of us.' He will say: 'Verily, you shall abide forever.'﴾

(*Qur'an 43:77*)

#### (e) Ridwaan

Ibn Katheer said: "The keeper of Paradise is an angel called Ridwaan, as is clearly stated in some *aḥaadeeth*."

#### (f) Munkar and (g) Nakeer

And among the angels whose names were mentioned by the Messenger (ﷺ) are Munkar and Nakeer. They are mentioned in the *aḥaadeeth* which talk about the questioning in the grave.

#### (h) Haaroot and (i) Maaroot

And among the angels are two whom Allah called Haaroot and Maaroot. Allah says:

﴿وَمَا كَفَرَ سُلَيْمَنُ وَلَكِنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ كَفَرُوا يُعَلِّمُونَ النَّاسَ السِّحْرَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكِينَ بِأَيْلِ هَرُوتَ وَمُرُوتَ وَمَا يُعَلِّمَانِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ حَتَّى يَقُولَا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ فِتْنَةٌ فَلَا تَكْفُرْ﴾

<sup>20</sup> Muslim 1/534, hadith no. 770 from 'Aa'ishah *Umm al-Mu'mineen*.

﴿Sulaymaan did not disbelieve, but the *Shayaateen* [devils] disbelieved, teaching men magic and such things that came down at Babylon to the two angels, Haaroot and Maaroot, but neither of these two [angels] taught anyone [such things] till they had said, ‘We are for trial, so disbelieve not [by learning this magic from us].’﴾

(*Qur’an* 2:102)

From the context of the *aayah* it is clear that Allah sent them as a test for mankind at some time. Many myths surround them in the books of *Tafseer* and history, for which there is no proof in the *Qur’an* and *Sunnah*. It is sufficient to know about them only what is indicated in this verse.

### ‘Azraa’eel

According to some reports, the Angel of Death is called ‘Azraa’eel. However, this name is not mentioned in the *Qur’an*, or in the *shaheeh aḥaadeeth*.<sup>21</sup>

### *Raqeeb* and ‘*Ateed*

Some scholars mentioned that among the angels are two called *Raqeeb* and ‘*Ateed*, based on the *aayah*,

﴿إِذْ يَنْفَخُ الْمُنْفَخِينَ عَنِ الْيَمِينِ وَعَنِ الشِّمَالِ مُعَيِّدٌ ﴿٧٧﴾ مَا يَلْفِظُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ إِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَيْنٌ ﴿٧٨﴾﴾

﴿[Remember] that the two receivers [recording angels] receive [each human being], one sitting on the right and one on the left [to note his or her actions]

Not a word does he [or she] utter but there is a watcher [*raqeeb*] by him ready [‘*ateed*] to record it.﴾ (*Qur’an* 50:17-18)

What they mentioned is not correct. The words *raqeeb* (watcher) and ‘*ateed* (ready) here are adjectives describing the two angels who are always present and witnessing, who are never away from a person. It does not mean that these are the names of the angels.

<sup>21</sup> *Al-Bidaayah wan-Nihaayah*, 1/50.

**(xi) The death of the angels**

The angels die just as humans and jinn die. This is stated clearly in the *ayah*:

﴿وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَصَعِقَ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا مَنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ نُفِخَ فِيهِ أُخْرَىٰ فَإِذَا هُمْ قِيَامٌ يَنْظُرُونَ﴾ (39)

﴿And the Trumpet will be blown, and all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth will swoon away, except him whom Allah wills. Then it will be blown a second time, and behold they will be standing, looking on [waiting].﴾ (Qur'an 39:68)

The angels are included in this *ayah*, because they are in the heavens. Ibn Kather said in his commentary on this verse:

“This is the second Trumpet-blast, the blast which will cause all creatures to fall unconscious. This will cause all living beings in the heavens and on earth to die, except for those whom Allah wills, as is clearly stated in detail in the famous hadith about the Trumpet. Then He will take the souls of those who are left, and the last one to die will be the Angel of Death. Then only the Ever-Living, Self-Sustaining will be left, Who was the First, and Who Alone will be the Last, Everlasting and Eternal. He will say, ‘Whose is the Sovereignty today?’ three times, then He will answer Himself by saying,

﴿لِلَّهِ الْوَحْدُ الْقَهَّارُ﴾ (40)

﴿It is Allah's, the One, the Irresistible!﴾ (Qur'an 40:16).”

Another verse which indicates that they (the angels) will die is:

﴿كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ﴾ (28)

﴿Everything will perish save His Face.﴾ (Qur'an 28:88)

Will any of them die before the Trumpet is blown? We do not know the answer to that, and we cannot discuss it, because there is no text that can give us a positive or a negative answer. Everything will perish save His Face.



## 2 - ATTRIBUTES

### The angels are honourable and obedient

Allah has described the angels as being honourable and obedient:



﴿In the hands of scribes [angels].

Honourable and obedient.﴾

(Qur'an 80:15-16)

i.e., the Qur'an is in the hands of scribes (*safarah*), i.e., the angels, because they are the emissaries (*sufaraa'*) of Allah to His Messengers and Prophets. Bukhaari said: “*Safarah* refers to the angels. The singular is *saafir*. *Safartu* means ‘I reconciled between them’. So the angels, who bring down the Revelation of Allah are like emissaries who reconcile between the people.”<sup>22</sup>

Allah has described these angels as being “honourable and obedient”, i.e., He has created them honourable, good and noble. Their actions are obedient, pure and perfect. Hence the one who learns the Qur'an by heart should be one whose actions and words are proper and correct.

Bukhaari narrated that ‘Aa’ishah (رضي الله عنها) said: ‘The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: ‘The one who reads the Qur'an when he knows it by heart is like the honourable scribes and the one who reads the Qur'an and tries his best, and it is hard for him, will have two rewards.’<sup>23</sup>

### The modesty of the angels

Among the attributes of the angels mentioned by the Messenger (ﷺ) is their modesty. In the hadith narrated by Muslim in his *Shaheeh* from ‘Aa’ishah it says that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was lying down in his house with his thigh or his shin uncovered. Abu Bakr asked for permission to come in, and he let him in and spoke with him whilst he was in that state. Then ‘Umar sought permission to come in, and he let

<sup>22</sup> Bukhaari, 8/691.

<sup>23</sup> Bukhaari, 8/691, hadith no. 4937. Muslim, 1/549, hadith no. 798. This version is narrated by Bukhaari.

him in and spoke with him whilst he was in that state. Then ‘Uthmaan asked for permission to come in, and the Messenger (ﷺ) sat up and rearranged his garment, then he let him come in and spoke with him. When he left, ‘Aa’ishah said: “Abu Bakr came in, and you did not stir or pay too much attention. Then ‘Umar came in, and you did not stir or pay too much attention. Then ‘Uthmaan came in, and you sat up and fixed your garment.” He said, “How could I not feel shy of a man of whom the angels feel shy?”<sup>24</sup>

The phrase “you did not stir” means you did not welcome him warmly.

### 3 - ABILITIES

#### (1) Their ability to take on different forms

Allah has given the angels the ability to take on forms different from their own. Allah sent Jibreel to Maryam (Mary) in human form:

﴿وَأذْكَرُ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَرْيَمَ إِذِ انْتَبَذَتْ مِنْ أَهْلِهَا مَكَانًا شَرْقِيًّا ﴿١٧﴾ فَأَتَتْهَا فَاتَّخَذَتْ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ حِجَابًا فَأَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهَا رُوحَنَا فَتَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَرًا سَوِيًّا ﴿١٨﴾ قَالَتْ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِالرَّحْمَنِ مِنْكَ إِنْ كُنْتَ قَبِيئًا ﴿١٩﴾ قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَنَا رَسُولُ رَبِّكِ لِأَهَبَ لَكِ غُلَامًا زَكِيًّا ﴿٢٠﴾﴾

﴿And; mention in the Book [the Qur’an, O Muhammad, the story of] Maryam [Mary], when she withdrew in seclusion from her family to a place facing east.

She placed a screen [to screen herself] from them; then We sent to her Our *Rooḥ* [angel Jibreel (Gabriel)], and he appeared before her in the form of a man in all respects.

She said: ‘Verily, I seek refuge with the Most Gracious [Allah] from you, if you do fear Allah.’

[The angel] said: ‘I am only a messenger from your Lord, [to announce] to you the gift of a righteous son.’﴾

(*Qur’an* 19:16-19)

<sup>24</sup> Muslim. 4/1866, hadith no. 2401.

The angels came to Ibraaheem (ﷺ) in human form, and he did not know that they were angels until they told him who they really were. We have quoted above the *aayaat* which speak of that.

The angels came to the Prophet Loot (Lot) in the form of young men with handsome faces and he was grieved on account of them and feared that they may be harmed by his people, for they were an evil people who committed evil actions, and they used to commit sodomy:

﴿وَلَمَّا جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا لُوطًا سِئَاءَ بِهِمْ وَضَاقَ بِهِمْ ذَرْعًا وَقَالَ هَذَا يَوْمٌ عَصِيبٌ﴾

﴿And when Our messengers came to Loot [Lot], he was grieved on account of them and felt himself straitened for them [lest the town people should approach them to commit sodomy with them]. He said: ‘This is a distressful day.’﴾ (Qur'an 11:77)

Ibn Katheer said: “The angels appeared to him in the form of handsome young men as a test and a trial, so that proof might be established against the people of Loot, and Allah might seize them with a mighty punishment.”<sup>25</sup>

Jibreel used to come to the Messenger (ﷺ) in different forms. Sometimes he came in the form of Duhyah ibn Khaleefah al-Kalbi (a *Ṣaḥaabi* who was of handsome appearance), and sometimes in the form of a Bedouin.

Many of the *Ṣaḥaabah* saw him when he came in that form

In *Ṣaḥeeḥayn* (Bukhaari and Muslim) it is narrated that ‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab said:

“Whilst we were sitting with the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) one day, a man came to us whose clothes were exceedingly white and whose hair was exceedingly black. There were no signs of travel on him and none of us knew him. He sat down in front of the Prophet (ﷺ), with his knees touching his, and put his hands on his thighs, and said, ‘O Muhammad, tell me about Islam...’” The hadith states that he asked him about

<sup>25</sup> *Al-Bidaayah wan-Nihaayah*, 1/43

*eemaan* (faith), *iḥsaan* and the Hour and its signs.<sup>26</sup>

Then the Messenger (ﷺ) stated that the one who asked these questions was Jibreel, and that he had come to teach the *Ṣaḥābah* their religion.

‘Aa’ishah saw the Messenger (ﷺ) patting the head of Duḥyah al-Kalbi’s horse and speaking to him. When she asked him about that, he (ﷺ) said, “That was Jibreel, and he sends *salaam* to you.”<sup>27</sup>

The Messenger (ﷺ) told us of a man who killed ninety-nine persons, and when he set out repentant, death came to him when he was half-way to the land to which he was migrating. The angels of mercy and the angels of punishment disputed concerning him, and they referred the matter to an angel who came to them in human form. He (ﷺ) said: “An angel in human form came to them, and they appointed him (to arbitrate) between them. He said, ‘Measure the distance between the two lands (the evil place he was leaving and the good place to which he was headed), and whichever one he is closer to is where he belongs.’” No doubt they appointed him as an arbitrator by the command of Allah, and Allah sent this angel to them in human form. The story is narrated in *Ṣaḥeeḥ Muslim*, in *Baab at-Tawbah* (chapter on repentance).<sup>28</sup>

In the story of the three people from among the Children of Israel whom Allah tested, the leper, the bald man and the blind man, we will see that an angel appeared to them in human form.

Some of the scholars indulged in discussions of how the angels change their form from a rational point of view, and they came up with ideas that are of no value. They should not have indulged in this discussion of this matter of the unseen. Allah has told us that the angels may take on

---

<sup>26</sup> Muslim, 1/37, hadith no. 8. Bukhaari from Abu Hurayrah, 1/114, hadith no. 49. This version is narrated by Muslim.

<sup>27</sup> Aḥmad in *Musnad*, Ibn Sa’d in *Aṭ-Ṭabaqaat*, with a *ḥasan isnaad*. The hadith about Jibreel sending *salaams* to ‘Aa’ishah without her seeing him, is narrated by Bukhaari in his *Ṣaḥeeḥ*, 6/305, hadith no. 3217; 7/106, hadith no. 3768.

<sup>28</sup> Muslim, 4/2118, hadith no. 2766.

different forms, but He has not told us how they do so. These scholars should have been content with what the Messenger of Allah and his Companions were content with, and they should have stopped where they stopped. If you want to read some of the discussions on this issue, see the book by Suyooti, *Al-Habaa'ik fi Akhbaar al-Malaa'ik*.<sup>29</sup>

## (2) Their great speed

The greatest speed known to humans is the speed of light, which is 186,000 miles per second.

But the speed of the angels is greater than that. It cannot be measured by human standards. A questioner would come to the Messenger (ﷺ) and would hardly have finished asking his question before Jibreel would come with the answer from the Lord of Glory, may He be exalted. Today there is no vehicle that can travel at the speed of light, and it would take millions of light years to reach some of the stars that exist in the horizons of this vast universe.

## (3) Their knowledge

The angels have great knowledge that they have been taught by Allah, but they do not have the ability that man has been given, to find out about things:

﴿وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْشِؤُنِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٣١﴾ قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٣٢﴾﴾

«And He taught Adam all the names [of everything], then He showed them to the angels and said, 'Tell Me the names of these if you are truthful.'»

They [angels] said: 'Glory is to You, we have no knowledge except what you have taught us. Verily, it is You, the All-Knower, the All-Wise.'»

(Qur'an 2:31-32)

<sup>29</sup> Pp. 261.

Man is distinguished by his ability to find out about things, and to discover the laws of the universe. The angels know that because they learn it directly from Allah. But what Allah teaches them is far more than what man knows. Among the knowledge that they have been given is the knowledge of writing:

﴿وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكُمْ لَحَافِظِينَ ﴿١٠﴾ كِرَامًا كَتِيبِينَ ﴿١١﴾ يَعْلَمُونَ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ ﴿١٢﴾﴾

﴿But verily, over you [are appointed angels in charge of mankind] to watch you,

*Kiraaman* [Honourable] *Kaatibeen* – writing down [your deeds],  
They know all that you do.﴾ (Qur'an 82:10-12)

We will discuss this in more detail under the heading of *The Angels and Man*.

### **The dispute of the hosts on high**

The angels discuss amongst themselves matters of the revelation of their Lord which are not clear to them. In *Sunan at-Tirmidhi* and *Musnad Ahmad* it is narrated from Ibn 'Abbaas that the Messenger (ﷺ) said: "Last night my Lord – may He be blessed and exalted – came to me in the most beautiful form – he (the narrator) said: I think he said, in a dream – and He said: 'O Muhammad, do you know what the hosts on high dispute about?' I said, 'No.' He put His hand (on my back), between my shoulders, until I could feel its coolness on my chest, and I knew what was in the heavens and what was on earth.

Then He said, 'O Muhammad, do you know what the hosts on high dispute about?' I said, 'Yes, about expiations and actions that raise a person's status. The expiations are staying in the mosque after the prayer, walking on foot to join congregational prayers and doing *wudoo* properly at the time of hardship; and the actions that raise a person's status are spreading *salaam*, feeding people, and praying at night when people are asleep.'

He said, 'You have spoken the truth, Whoever does that will live in goodness and die in peace, and he will be free from any sin, as pure as a

newborn baby.’

He said, ‘O Muhammad, when you pray, say, “*Allahumma inni as’aluka fal al-khayraat wa tark al-munkaraat, wa hubb al-masaakeen, wa an taghfir li, wa tarhamni, wa tatoob ‘alaaya, wa idha aradta bi ‘ibaadika fitnah, fa’qbidni ilayka ghayr maftoon* [O Allah, I ask you for good deeds, avoidance of evil deeds, and love for the poor. (I ask You) to forgive me and to have mercy on me, and to accept my repentance. If You want to test Your slaves, then take me to You (i.e.. cause me to die) without being tested].”<sup>30</sup>

Ibn Katheer said, after quoting this hadith: “This is the famous hadith about the dream. Whoever thinks it happened when the Prophet (ﷺ) was awake is mistaken. It is narrated with different *isnaads* in *As-Sunan*. This hadith is also narrated by At-Tirmidhi from Jahdam ibn ‘Abd-Allah al-Yamaami.

Al-Hasan said: (it is) *ṣaḥeeḥ*. This dispute is not the dispute mentioned in the Qur’an, where Allah says:

﴿مَا كَانَ لِي مِنْ عِلْمٍ بِالْمَلَائِكَةِ إِذْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾﴾  
 ﴿إِن يُوحَىٰ إِلَىٰ إِلَٰهِنَا أَنَّا تَنذِرُ ﴿٧٠﴾﴾  
 ﴿مُبِينٌ ﴿٧١﴾﴾

﴿I had no knowledge of the chiefs [angels] on high when they were disputing and discussing [about the creation of Adam].

Only this has been revealed to me, that I am a plain warner.﴾

(Qur’an 38:69-70)

The dispute mentioned in the hadith has been explained by the Messenger (ﷺ).

With regard to the dispute mentioned in the Qur’an, it is explained in the following *aayaat*:

<sup>30</sup> *Saḥeeḥ Sunan at-Tirmidhi*. 3/9. no. 2580, 2581

﴿إِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي خَلِيقٌ بَشَرًا مِّن طِينٍ ﴿٧٦﴾ فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُمْ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُم سَاجِدِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾ فَسَجَدَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ كُلُّهُمْ أَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾ إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ اسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٧٩﴾﴾

«[Remember] when your Lord said to the angels: ‘Truly, I am going to create man from clay.

So when I have fashioned him and breathed into him [his] soul created by Me, then you fall down prostrate to him.’

So the angels prostrated themselves, all of them,

Except *Iblees* [Satan], he was proud and was one of the disbelievers.» (Qur’an 38:71-74)

The dispute mentioned in the Qur’an was concerning Adam (ﷺ) and the refusal of *Iblees* to prostrate to him, and how he (*Iblees*) argued with his Lord concerning His preferring Adam over him.”<sup>31</sup>

#### (4) They are disciplined and organized in all their affairs

The angels are disciplined in their worship. The Messenger (ﷺ) urged us to follow their example in that. He said, “Why do you not form your rows as the angels form their rows before their Lord?” They said, “O Messenger of Allah, how do the angels form their rows before their Lord?” He said, “They complete the rows and do not leave any gaps.”<sup>32</sup>

On the Day of Resurrection, they will come in organized ranks:

﴿وَجَاءَ رَبُّكَ وَالْمَلَكُ صَفًّا صَفًّا ﴿٢٢﴾﴾

«And your Lord comes with the angels in rows.»


(Qur’an 89:22)

And they will stand in rows before Allah:

<sup>31</sup> See *Tafseer Ibn Katheer*, 6/73-74.

<sup>32</sup> Muslim, 1/322. hadith no. 430.



﴿يَوْمَ يَقُومُ الرُّوحُ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ صَفًّا لَا يَتَكَلَّمُونَ إِلَّا مَنْ أذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمَنُ وَقَالَ صَوَابًا﴾  


«The Day that *Ar-Rooḥ* [Jibreel (Gabriel), or another angel] and the angels will stand forth in rows, they will not speak except him whom the Most Gracious [Allah] allows, and he will speak what is right.»  
*(Qur'an 78:38)*

*Ar-Rooḥ* here refers to Jibreel.

Look at how precisely they carry out commands. In *Saḥeeḥ Muslim* and *Musnad Ahmad* it is narrated from Anas (رضي الله عنه) that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: “I will come to the gate of Paradise and ask for it to be opened. The gatekeeper will say, ‘Who are you?’ I will say, ‘Muhammad.’ He will say, ‘I was commanded not to open it for anyone before you.’”<sup>33</sup>

We may note how precisely they carry out commands by looking at the hadith about the *Israa’*. When Jibreel asked for permission to enter each of the heavens, it was not opened for him until after it was found out who was seeking admission.

### (5) The infallibility of the angels

Suyooṭi narrated from Al-Qaaḍi ‘Iyaad that “Muslims are unanimously agreed that the angels are virtuous believers, and the Imaams of the Muslims are agreed that our belief about the messengers among them is like our belief about the Prophets with regard to their infallibility in the issues which we have referred to above, and that their responsibilities towards the Prophets are like the responsibilities of the Prophets towards their nations.”

Some scholars differed concerning the angels who are not messengers. Some were of the view that all the angels are infallible in the sense that they do not commit sin, based on the *aayaat*:

<sup>33</sup> Muslim, 1/188, hadith no. 197.

﴿يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا فَوْاْ أَنفُسِكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ غِلَاطٌ شِدَادٌ لَا يَعْصُونَ اللّٰهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾﴾

﴿O you who believe! Ward off yourselves and your families against a Fire [Hell] whose fuel is men and stones, over which are [appointed] angels stern [and] severe, who disobey not, [from executing] the Commands they receive from Allah, but do that which they are commanded.﴾

(*Qur'an* 66:6)

﴿وَمَا مِنَّا إِلَّا لَهُ مَقَامٌ مَّعْلُومٌ ﴿١٦٤﴾ وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الصّٰفّٰوْنَ ﴿١٦٥﴾ وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الْمُسَبّحُونَ ﴿١٦٦﴾﴾

﴿And there is not one of us [angels] but has his known place [or position]:

And verily, we [angels], we stand in rows [for the prayers as you Muslims stand in rows for your prayers];

And verily, we [angels], indeed are those who glorify [Allah's Praises, i.e. perform prayers].﴾

(*Qur'an* 37:164-166)

﴿وَمَنْ عِنْدَهُ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ وَلَا يَسْتَحْسِرُونَ ﴿١٦٧﴾ يُسَبِّحُونَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لَا يَفْتُرُونَ ﴿١٦٨﴾﴾

﴿To Him belongs whosoever is in the heavens and on earth. And those who are near Him [i.e. the angels] are not too proud to worship Him, nor are they weary [of His worship].

They [i.e. the angels] glorify His Praises night and day, [and] they never slacken [to do so].﴾

(*Qur'an* 21:19-20)

﴿بِأَيْدِي سَفَرَةٍ ﴿١٥﴾ كِرَامٍ بَرَرَةٍ ﴿١٦﴾﴾

﴿In the hands of scribes [angels].

Honourable and obedient.﴾

(*Qur'an* 80:15-16)

﴿لَا يَمَسُّهُ إِلَّا الْمُطَهَّرُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾﴾

﴿Which [that Book with Allah] none can touch but the purified [i.e. the angels].﴾

(*Qur'an* 56:79)

And there are many similar reports.



























































































































































































