



The Role of Angels and Spiritual Beings across Abrahamic Traditions: A Comparative Analysis of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

*Ahmad Fuzail Ibn Saeed*¹

*Dr. Salman Arif*²

*Dr. Hafiz Faiz Rasool*³

*Dr. Abbas Ali Raza*⁴

Abstract

Angels and spiritual beings have an important role in the revealed religions. These are considered intermediaries between the God and human realms in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. This study highlights the different roles of these entities in Abrahamic Faiths which have been mainly discussed in the holy books, their interpretations and theological discourses. Angels like Michael and Gabriel are shown as messengers, protectors and agents of divine Judgment in Judaism. These are additionally explained by mystical and rabbinic tradition. In Christianity, their role is as divine worshipers, protectors, and participants in cosmic battles. These are mentioned in the narratives of the annunciation, the Resurrection and revelation. Angel like Jibreel (AS) has the central role in Islamic theology, who conveyed the final book of God (Holy Qur'an) to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The theological discussions in Islam highlight angels' obedience, roles in human accountability and cosmic order. The comparative analysis explore different roles of angels like fallen in Christianity, the seraphim and cherubim in Judiam and the role of spiritual beings like jinn in Islam. The study explores the commonalities and distinctions in the Abrahamic religions. These understandings show how God's intermediaries manifest God's will across Abrahamic religions which are beneficial for mutual appreciation among faiths and developing interfaith dialogue.

Key Words: Angels, Spiritual Beings, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Abrahamic Traditions, Comparative Theology, Inter-faith Dialogue

Introduction

The angels and spiritual beings serve as mediator between God and earthly. These celestial entities perform different roles like delivering messages from God, executing God's will, guiding humanity as well as participating in worship and cosmic system. Abrahamic religions offer unique and interconnected perspectives on these beings through their religious texts and their interpretations. This study examines thoroughly the roles and duties of these spiritual bodies and

¹. Lecturer, Department of Islamic Studies, Virtual University of Pakistan, Lahore. ahmad.fuzail@vu.edu.pk

². Former Research Scholar Yale Divinity School, USA. Former Visiting Assistant Professor, University of Punjab. salmanarif5900@gmail.com

³.

⁴. Assistant Prof. Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Islamic Studies, Lahore Garrison University, Lahore. abbasaliraza@lgu.edu.pk



the logical explanation of their roles. Moreover, the study also explores the commonalities and distinctions among these religions which are necessary to develop comprehensive understanding about these entities.

1. Role of Angels and Spiritual Beings in Judaism

In Jewish tradition angels and spiritual beings are regarded as messengers of God and intermediaries between God and Human. Biblical texts, rabbinic literature and mystical traditions narrate different roles of these beings including divine communication, worship, and protection and maintain cosmic order of the universe.

The Hebrew Bible describes that angels are divine messengers. The word 'angel' is derived from the Hebrew root word mal'akh which means 'messenger'.⁵ This term highlights main function as these intermediaries who convey divine message and will to humans. One of the most iconic angelic encounters is in the story of Abraham AS. Three angels visit him to tell about the birth of Isaac AS and to tell about the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah.⁶ This story shows their role in conveying God's words and will. This also highlights their capacity to have different interactions with physical world. The other role is described as they are also protectors. An angel leads the Israelites through the wilderness: "Behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared."⁷ This narrative makes the belief that angels have also the responsibility to safeguard noble people and to ensure the fulfillment of God's promises. The story of Jacob AS wrestling with an angel leads to his renaming as Israel. It shows the transformative power of angelic encounters.⁸

In Judaism, the role of angels goes beyond their biblical functions. The Talmud describe their duties; that angels deliver divine messages and also participate in praising God. Moreover, they execute God's decisions and serve as witness for human's actions.⁵ The Midrash tells angels also advocates for humanity and pray for God's mercy and forgiveness on their behalf.⁹

In addition to angels, Jewish tradition also recognizes other spiritual beings like the seraphim, cherubim, and ophanim. Each of these has unique attributes and roles. The seraphim are described as fiery being who narrates God's holiness: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory."¹⁰

The cherubim are associated with the Ark of Covenant and divine throne which symbolize the presence and majesty of God.¹¹ The ophanim are described in Ezekiel's vision of the heavenly

⁵ Herbert C. Brichto, "Angels in the Bible," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 2, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (Detroit: Macmillan, 2007), 28.

⁶ Genesis 18:1–15; Genesis 19:1–29.

⁷ Exodus 23:20.

⁸ Genesis 32:22–32.

⁹ Midrash Rabbah, Exodus 21:9.

¹⁰ Isaiah 6:3.

¹¹ Exodus 25:18–22.



chariot. These are mysterious beings which are characterized by their wheels full of eyes which signify God's omniscience.¹²

The important development in Jewish angelology was occurred in post-biblical period specifically during the Second Temple era. The texts like the Book of Enoch and the Dead Sea Scrolls narrate descriptions of angelic hierarchies and their specific roles. The Book of Enoch describes names of specific angels like Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and Uriel. It also assign them distinct roles like warriors, healers, and interpreters of God's realms and mysteries.¹³ This period also introduces the concept of fallen angels which is seen in the narrative of the Watchers who defied God by descending to earth and corrupting humanity.¹⁴

Mystical traditions like Kabbalah develop understanding about the nature of angels and their relationship with God. Kabbalistic teachings describe that angels are emanations for the God's energy which flows via sefirot, the ten attributes of divine. They act as conduits for the energy which transmit God's blessings and influences with physical world.¹⁵ The Zohar is a basic text of Kabbalah. It describes that angels are beings of pure light and assist in the maintenance of cosmic order of the universe.¹⁶

Angels also have specific role in Jewish worship and prayer. The Jewish tradition acknowledges the presence of angels specifically in Kedushah prayer. It mirrors the angelic praise mentioned in Isaiah and Ezekiel.¹⁷ The pray of angelic protection is also a common theme in Jewish prayers. The bedtime Shema includes a plea for God to send His angels to watch over the individual.¹⁸

The angels are featured prominently in Jewish eschatology. They are shown as participants in the final redemption and establishment of divine kingdom in the world. The archangel Michael is described as the defender of Israel in the apocalyptic visions of Daniel: "At that time Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people, shall arise."¹⁹ This role shows the connection between angels and the Jewish people in the history and in the eschatological future.²⁰

Rabbinic literature also describes the distinction between humans and angels. It highlights the status of humanity as bearers of the God's image. Angels are bound naturally to serve and obey God but humans possess free will and the ability to choose right or wrong. This distinction between angels and human is described in a Midrashic tale. Angels protest the creation of humanity and

¹² Ezekiel 1:15–21.

¹³ Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 60b.

¹⁴ Enoch 6–16.

¹⁵ Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), 73–95.

¹⁶ Daniel C. Matt, trans., *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, vol. 1 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 147.

¹⁷ Isaiah 6:3; Ezekiel 3:12.

¹⁸ *Daily Prayer Book*, ed. Philip Birnbaum (New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1949), 254.

¹⁹ Daniel 12:1.

²⁰ Rasool, Hafiz Faiz, Aatur Rehman, Abbas Ali Raza, Muhammad Hamza, Abdul Waheed, and Anwar ul Haq.

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argue that humans will commit sin in the world. God on the other hand defends His decision. He emphasizes the potential of humanity to achieve greatness via repentance and moral effort.²¹

Contemporary Jewish religion engages with the concept of angels and explores their relevance in modern ethics and spirituality. Some Jewish scholars argue that angels are symbolic representations of God's attributes or natural forces. Some scholars interpret them as expressions of the human longing for connection with divine.²² These interpretations show Jewish tradition about the roles and functions of the angels.²³

Overall, in Judaism, the role of angels and spiritual beings is a testament between divine immanence and transcendence. These entities are depicted as messengers and protectors to their participation in mystical and cosmic. Angels reflect the presence of God in the world. Their stories are woven in the fabric of Jewish texts and traditions which continues to inspire awe, devotion with a deep sense of the sacred.

2. Role of Angels and Spiritual Beings in Christianity

The concept of angels and spiritual beings in Christianity is also mentioned in Scripture, tradition and theological discourses. These beings are considered important in Christian cosmology which acts as divine messengers. Moreover, these are considered as agents of God's will and protectors of human. Their additional role is to participate in God's worship and cosmic battle between good and evil. Their description is found in the Old and New Testaments.

The Bible represents angels as celestial beings which were created by God to serve Him. Moreover, they also perform the role to act as intermediaries between God and human. They are described as servants of God which possess supernatural powers. They are given different tasks including delivering divine messages, executing divine decisions and ministering to the faithful. The term 'angel' is derived from the Greek word *angelos* which means 'messenger'.²⁴

The Old Testament describes angels as God's emissaries and emphasizes their role in different events. It is described in the book of Genesis that angels visit Abraham AS to deliver the promise of a son and later proceed to Sodom to warn Lot of impending destruction.²⁵ These interactions with messengers show their function to work as God's messengers and intervene in critical events in history. Jacob's AS vision of a ladder reaching heaven, with angels ascending and descending, also shows their connection between God and earthly.²⁶ Angels are described as protectors and

²¹ Midrash Rabbah, Genesis 8:5.

²² Neil Gillman, *The Jewish Approach to God: A Brief Introduction for Christians* (Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2003), 84.

²³ Rehman, Aatur, Hafiz Muhammad Shahbaz, Fatima Noreen, Hafiz Faiz Rasool, and Abbas Ali Raza. "God's Existence In Primary Islamic Sources: An Analytical Study In View Of New Atheism." *Journal of Positive School Psychology* 6, no. 9 (2022): 26-33.

²⁴ John H. Walton, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 101.

²⁵ Genesis 18–19.

²⁶ Genesis 28:12.



guardians in several biblical texts. The Psalms describes: "For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways."²⁷

This verse reveals the belief that angels are also given tasks to protect people from harm and guide them towards right ways. The concept of guardian angels was later developed in Christian theology which has its roots in the biblical affirmations.

The New Testament also extends the role of angels and present them as participants in life and ministry of Jesus Christ AS. At the annunciation the archangel Gabriel appeared to Mary AS to announce the birth of Jesus AS, describing: "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."²⁸

This event also shows their role in conveying God revelation and making stage for salvation history. Angels also minister to Jesus AS after his temptation in the wilderness and strengthen him during his agony in Garden of Gethsemane.²⁹ These events show their role as helpers of Christ's AS mission and the God's plan of redemption.

Like Judaism, in Christianity angels are also described as worshipers of divine. They praise Him continuously in heaven. The book of Revelation narrates a heavenly vision where multitudes of angels surround the throne of God and sing: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"³⁰ This description shows the role of angels as worshipers and exemplifies the ultimate purpose of all creations.

The New Testament also describes narrate them as agents of God's judgment. In the book of Revelation angels are pour out God's wrath upon earth during the apocalyptic events.³¹ This specific aspect shows angels' role in executing God's justice and maintaining the cosmic order of the universe.³²

Other than angels, Christianity also recognizes other spiritual beings like the archangels, cherubim, and seraphim. Each has distinct roles and characteristics. The archangels include Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael is described in Scripture and Christian tradition. Michael is described as a warrior angel who led the heavenly armies against the forces of evil.³³ Gabriel serves as a messenger of revelations. Raphael is described in the book of Tobit as a healer and guide.³⁴

²⁷ Psalm 91:11.

²⁸ Luke 1:28.

²⁹ Matthew 4:11; Luke 22:43.

³⁰ Revelation 5:12.

³¹ Revelation 8-9.

³² Raza, Abbas Ali, Salman Arif, and Hafiz Muhammad Masood Ahmad. " تعمير شخصیت میں سماجی رویوں کی اہمیت اور " :تقاضے: قرآن و سنت کی روشنی میں تجزیاتی مطالعہ IMPORTANCE AND REQUIREMENTS OF SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR IN CHARACTER BUILDING: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY IN THE LIGHT OF THE QUR'AN AND SUNNAH." PAKISTAN ISLAMICUS (An International Journal of Islamic & Social Sciences) 3, no. 2 (2023): 95-114.

³³ Revelation 12:7.

³⁴ Tobit 12:15.



The cherubim and seraphim, often associated with the throne of God, are described as beings of immense power and majesty. The book of Isaiah portrays seraphim as six-winged beings who proclaim God's holiness: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!"³⁵

Cherubim are depicted as guardians of sacred spaces like the Garden of Eden and the Ark of the Covenant.³⁶ These spiritual beings symbolize the holiness and transcendence of divine.

Christian theology describes the existence of fallen angels which are led by Satan. The Satan rebelled against God and was cast out of the heaven. These beings are also described as demons which oppose divine will and seek to lead humanity astray from the right path. The book of Revelation describes their fall: "And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him."³⁷ The cosmic struggle between good and evil involves angels and demons. It is a recurring theme in Christian eschatology which emphasizes the ultimate triumph of divine kingdom.

The early Church Fathers like Augustine and Thomas Aquinas described the nature and hierarchy of these angels. Aquinas in the work *Summa Theologica*, categorizes angels in nine choirs. Each choir is described with specific roles and functions.³⁸ This hierarchical view influences Christian theology and artistic narration of angels in later periods.

In modern Christianity, the belief about angels continues to reflect devotion and artistic expression. Many Christians describes to experience the presence of angels in their lives. They describe attributing miraculous events and divine interventions to their guidance and protection.³⁹ This Christian belief shows the relevance of angels in spiritual lives of Christians.

The role of angels and spiritual beings in Christianity shows faith, tradition, and theological reflections. They are described as messengers and protectors as well as participating in divine worship and cosmic battles. They also exemplify the interaction between God and human realms.

3. Role of Angels and Spiritual Beings in Islam

The role of angels and spiritual beings in Islam is basic and important foundation of Islamic theology. It is part of Islamic fundamental beliefs which every Muslim has to have belief on it. Angels are described as ‘mala'ika’ in Arabic. These are described repeatedly in the Qur'an and

³⁵ Isaiah 6:3.

³⁶ Genesis 3:24; Exodus 25:18–22.

³⁷ Revelation 12:9.

³⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947), Part I, Q. 108.

³⁹ Peter Kreeft, *Angels and Demons: What Do We Really Know About Them?* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 85.



Hadith. These spiritual beings work as intermediaries between Allah and humanity. They fulfill divine commandments with absolute purity and obedience.

The Creation and Nature of Angels

Angels have been created from nūr (light). The final Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) described: "The angels were created from light, the jinn were created from a smokeless flame of fire, and Adam was created from what has been described to you."⁴⁰ This Hadith shows the ethereal nature of angels and distinguishes them from human and jinn. Angels lack free will unlike human. They exist in a state of complete submission to Allah's will. The final book of God (Qur'an) describes about them: "They do not disobey Allah in what He commands them, but do what they are commanded."⁴¹

Roles and Responsibilities of Angels

The Qur'an and Hadith describe different roles of angels and emphasize their important role in maintaining the divine order in the universe.

1. Messengers of Divine Revelation

The primary role of angels is to deliver Allah's messages to His prophets. The archangel Jibreel AS is considered the most significant. Jibreel is described as Ruh-ul-Amin (The Trustworthy Spirit) in Holy Qur'an: "It is a revelation sent down by the Lord of the worlds, brought down by the Trustworthy Spirit, upon your heart [O Muhammad], so that you may be one of the warners."⁴² Jibreel's responsibility includes revealing the Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) over 23 years.

2. Recorders of Human Deeds

In Islamic theology, every human being is appointed two angels from Allah that are known as Kiraman Katibeen. The duty of these angels is to record their human deeds. The Qur'an describes: "When the two receivers receive, seated on the right and on the left, he does not utter any word except that with him is an observer prepared [to record]."⁴³ This description shows the Islamic emphasis on moral responsibility, accountability for good and evil deeds and the inevitability of Allah's judgment.

3. Guardians and Protectors

Angels also serve as protectors of noble persons. Holy Qur'an describes: "For each one are successive [angels] before and behind him who protect him by the decree of Allah."⁴⁴ This belief in protection reminds believers about Allah's care and omnipresence in their daily lives.

⁴⁰ Sahih Muslim, Hadith No. 2996.

⁴¹ Qur'an 66:6.

⁴² Qur'an 26:192–194.

⁴³ Qur'an 50:17–18.

⁴⁴ Qur'an 13:11.



4. Bearers of Allah's Throne

A select group of angels is tasked with bearing the Throne of Allah. These angels are mentioned in the Qur'an: "Those who bear the Throne and those around it exalt [Allah] with praise of their Lord and believe in Him and ask forgiveness for those who have believed."⁴⁵ Their exaltation of Allah reflects their unique role in sustaining the divine order.

5. Angels of Death and the Afterlife

The angel Malak al-Mawt (Angel of Death) is responsible for extracting souls at the time of death. The Qur'an states: "The Angel of Death will take you who has been entrusted with you. Then to your Lord, you will be returned."⁴⁶ Other angels, such as Munkar and Nakir, question the deceased in the grave, while angels like Ridwan and Malik oversee Paradise and Hell respectively.

Interaction with Humanity

Angels not only fulfill divine tasks but also interact with humans in significant ways.

1. Prayers for Believers

Angels pray for those who perform good deeds. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "The angels invoke blessings upon any one of you so long as he remains in the place where he has prayed and his ablution is not invalidated. They say: 'O Allah, forgive him. O Allah, have mercy on him.'"⁴⁷

2. Support in Battle

The Qur'an narrates instances where angels supported Muslims during battles. At the Battle of Badr, Allah sent angels to assist the believers:

"Remember when you called upon your Lord for help, and He answered you, 'Indeed, I will reinforce you with a thousand angels, following one another.'"⁴⁸

This divine intervention reinforced the believers' faith and morale.

Spiritual Beings: Jinn and Shayatin

While angels are entirely obedient, Islam also acknowledges the existence of other spiritual beings, such as jinn and shayatin (devils). Jinn, created from fire, possess free will and can choose to obey or disobey Allah. The Qur'an highlights their creation: "And the jinn We created before from scorching fire."⁴⁹ In contrast, shayatin, led by Iblis (Satan), actively seek to lead humans astray. The Qur'an warns: "Indeed, Satan is an enemy to you; so take him as an enemy. He only invites his party to be among the companions of the Blaze."⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Qur'an 40:7.

⁴⁶ Qur'an 32:11.

⁴⁷ Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith No. 647.

⁴⁸ Qur'an 8:9.

⁴⁹ Qur'an 15:27.

⁵⁰ Qur'an 35:6.



The role of angels and spiritual beings in Islam is vast and multifaceted, deeply woven into the fabric of Islamic theology and practice. From conveying divine revelation and recording deeds to supporting believers and facilitating the afterlife, angels embody Allah's mercy and justice. Spiritual beings like jinn and shayatin, though different from angels, contribute to the moral and spiritual tests that define human existence. These entities, as described in the Qur'an and Hadith, affirm the profound interconnectedness of the seen and unseen worlds in Islamic belief.

Conclusion

The concept of angels and spiritual beings serves as a cornerstone of the theological narratives in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, reflecting the shared belief in divine intermediaries. Despite differences in interpretation, these beings embody the interaction between transcendence and immanence, illustrating the ways in which God engages with humanity. In Judaism, angels act as protectors, messengers, and cosmic administrators, with additional depth provided by rabbinic and mystical traditions. Christianity extends this framework, portraying angels as worshipers of God, protectors of the faithful, and participants in the cosmic struggle between good and evil. In Islam, angels are central to divine communication, accountability, and cosmic harmony, their unwavering obedience symbolizing submission to God. A comparative analysis reveals both shared and unique elements: all three traditions recognize angels as divine messengers, yet each assigns them distinct roles within their theological systems. This study highlights the enduring relevance of angels in shaping faith, ethics, and spirituality. By examining these roles collectively, the article not only enriches our understanding of Abrahamic traditions but also encourages interfaith dialogue. Such engagement fosters appreciation for the shared spiritual heritage of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, emphasizing the universal quest for understanding the divine through these celestial intermediaries.