

The Angels and their Attributes

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

All praise is for Allaah, Lord of all that exists, and may the peace and blessings be upon our prophet, Muhammad, as well as upon his family and all of his Companions. To proceed:

Indeed, 'Eemaan (Faith) is a great matter, since it is the foundation upon which success in this life and the next rests on. So it is one of the most important levels of the Religion, for when the angel, Jibreel, came to the Prophet (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) in the presence of his Companions, he asked him about Islaam, 'Eemaan, and Ihsaan, saying: "O Muhammad! Inform me about Islaam." The Prophet (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) replied: **"Islaam is to testify that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allaah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allaah; to establish the prayer; to give the Zakaat; to fast in Ramadhan; and to perform the Hajj to the House (Ka'bah) if you are able to."** So he explained Islaam as being the implementation of these five pillars: (1) The two testimonies of Faith; (2) Establishing the Prayer; (3) Giving the Zakaat; (4) Fasting in Ramadhan; (5) Pilgrimage to the Ka'bah. So the angel Jibreel told him: "You have spoken the truth. Now inform me about 'Eemaan." The Prophet (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said: **"It is to believe in Allaah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, the Last Day, and to believe in Al-Qadar – the good of it and the bad of it."** So he (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) explained that 'Eemaan was to believe in these six things: Belief in Allaah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, the Last Day and Al-Qadar – the good of it and the bad of it.

Jibreel continued: "Inform me about Ihsaan." So the Prophet (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) responded: **"Ihsaan is to worship Allaah as if you see Him. But if you don't see Him, then verily, He sees you."** So he (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) clarified that Ihsaan consists of one pillar, which is to worship Allaah as if you see Him. But if you don't see Him, then verily, He sees you.

These are the three levels of the Religion: Islaam, then 'Eemaan, then Ihsaan. Each one of these levels has its own set of pillars.

A pillar is the part upon which something stands on. So the pillar of a house refers to the part upon which that house is established. So 'Eemaan (Faith) rests upon six of these pillars. If one of these pillars is missing, a person is no longer a believer, possessing Faith, since he lacks one of the pillars of Eemaan.

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Therefore, 'Eemaan cannot be established except upon its pillars, just like a building cannot be established except upon its pillars. These six pillars (of 'Eemaan) are mentioned in the noble Qur'aan. Sometimes they are mentioned altogether and other times they are mentioned separately, as Allaah says: **“But rather piety (birr) is he who believes in Allaah, the Last Day, the Angels, the Book and the Prophets.”**¹ Allaah mentions five of the pillars of 'Eemaan in this ayah.

And He says: **“The Messenger (Muhammad) believes in what was revealed to him from his Lord and (so do) the believers – all of them believe in Allaah, His Angels, His Books, and His Messengers. We do not differentiate between any of His Messengers.”**²

He mentions four of these pillars here. And sometimes, He just mentions two of these pillars: Belief in Allaah and the Last Day, as He says: **“Verily, those who believe and those who are Jews and Christians and Sabians – whoever believes in Allaah and the Last Day.”**³

He mentions two pillars in this ayah: Belief in Allaah and the last Day.

As for belief in Al-Qadar (Divine Pre-Decree), then that is mentioned in His statement: **“Verily, We created everything with Qadar (Divine Pre-Decree).”**⁴

And in His saying: **“He has created everything, and assigned its Decree to it.”**⁵

The Meaning of Belief in the Angels:

The subject, which we are focusing on now, is the Belief in the Angels, which is one of the pillars of 'Eemaan. What Belief in the Angels entails is: Believing in their existence and believing in the duties that they carry out in the universe.

So the angels are one of Allaah's creations, which He created for the purpose of worshipping Him and carrying out His orders in the universe. Allaah sends His angels in order to execute His Commands. So they are a creation from the world of the Unseen. We don't see them, yet we believe in them with a firm resolution that doubt cannot penetrate. This is since Allaah has informed us about them, and likewise, His Messenger (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) has informed us about them in such a definitive manner that causes us to believe in them.

What were the Angels created From?

The Angels were created from light, as is reported in a hadeeth that Allaah created the angels from light and He created the devils from fire and He created the humans from dirt. So the angels were created from light.

¹ Soorah al-Baqarah: 177

² Soorah al-Baqarah: 285

³ Soorah al-Baqarah: 62

⁴ Soorah al-Qamar: 49

⁵ Soorah al-Furqaan: 2

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The Attributes of the Angels:

The angels are one of Allaah's creations from the world of the Unseen. No one knows how many in number they are, their manner of being or their natures except for Allaah.

From their Attributes:

First: They are the greatest of Allaah's armies. Allaah says: **"And to Allaah belongs the armies of the heavens and the earth."**⁶ And whilst talking about the guardians of the Hellfire, He mentioned: **"Over it are nineteen (angels)."**⁷ And He says: **"And We have set none but angels as guardians of the Hellfire, and We have not made their number (i.e. 19) except as a trial for those who disbelieve."**⁸

So this means that there are nineteen angels guarding the Hellfire – they maintain it, guard it, kindle it and are entrusted with its affairs.

When one of the disbelievers heard of the number of angels that are guarding the Hellfire, he said, as if to mock their amount: "I will suffice you over them" – meaning if he enters the Hellfire, he will confront them, overpower them and get out of the Hellfire. He said this in order to mock and ridicule, so Allaah refuted them by saying: **"And We have set none but angels as guardians of the Hellfire."**⁹ This means they will not be from among the humans.

So if this person claims that he is strong and that he is able to fight against a number of humans, he will not be able to fight against even one of the angels. Allaah says: **"And We have set none but angels as guardians of the Hellfire."**¹⁰ This means: "We did not make them humans or jinn."

"And We have not made their number (i.e. 19) except as a trial for those who disbelieve, in order that the people of the Scripture may arrive at a certainty and the believers may increase in Faith, and so that no doubts may be left for the people of the Scripture and the believers, and so that those in whose hearts is a disease (of hypocrisy) and the disbelievers may say: 'What did Allaah intend by this example.'"¹¹

So they lie and seek to belittle this number. How can this great Hellfire, which contains all of these creatures, only be maintained by nineteen? Allaah says: **"And We have not made their number (i.e. 19) except as a trial for those who disbelieve."**¹²

⁶ Soorah al-Fat'h: 4

⁷ Soorah al-Mudaththir: 30

⁸ Soorah al-Mudaththir: 31

⁹ Soorah al-Mudaththir: 31

¹⁰ Soorah al-Mudaththir: 31

¹¹ Soorah al-Mudaththir: 31

¹² Soorah al-Mudaththir: 31

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So no one knows the greatness of the angels and no one knows what Allaah has with Him from armies in the heavens and the earth except for Allaah. Neither these disbelievers nor anyone else knows.

Second: The angels have great physical composure, as Allaah mentioned this about them in His saying: **“All praise is for Allaah, the Originator of the heavens and the earth – who made the angels messengers with wings – two or three or four.”**¹³

This means that there are some angels that have two wings, some that have three and some that have four. And there are some angels that have more wings than that, for the Prophet (sallAllaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) saw the angel Jibreel and he had 600 wings – each wing blocking the horizon. This is just one of the many angels that exist. Allaah described him as being mighty in power, as He says: **“He (Muhammad) has been taught (this Qur’aan) by one mighty in power.”**¹⁴ He is referring to Jibreel. **“Free from any defect, then he rose (and became stable).”**¹⁵ This means that he possesses strength and a beautiful appearance.

Third: The angels possess great power, by Allaah’s permission. What indicates their great strength is that if Allaah commands just one of them, then indeed he is able to let out an awful cry in the world, thus destroying the creation, as occurred with the people of Thamood, who were seized by a loud scream. Jibreel unleashed one powerful scream upon them: **“Verily, We sent against them a single sayhah (awful cry), and they became like the dry straw of fences.”**¹⁶

So their hearts ceased to function within their bodies and as a result they died and became like dry straw. It was from the custom of the Arabs that when they would settle in a place, they would gather sticks of wood and make fences to surround their sheep and cattle. These fences would eventually dry up and become pieces of straw. So in spite of Thamood’s power and might, they became like dried-up straws as a result of one loud cry from one of the angels.

Allaah also commanded Jibreel to raise up the towns of the people of Loot – and they were seven cities in which could be found humans, buildings, goods and animals. He carried them on one side of his wing and raised these cities until the (other) angels heard the barking of dogs and the crowing of roosters. Then he overturned them and Allaah caused the earth to swallow them up.

This is an example of the mighty power of the angels.

¹³ Soorah Faatir: 1

¹⁴ Soorah an-Najm: 5

¹⁵ Soorah an-Najm: 6

¹⁶ Soorah al-Qamar: 31