SAMPLE

Angels: The Messengers of the Unseen

Mala'ika (مَلائِكَة) in the Quran

Aira Aurora

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Introduction

The Quran opens a window onto a world that is everywhere around us yet entirely beyond our perception. That world is the unseen — *al-ghayb* — and among its most prominent inhabitants are the angels. The very first article of faith in Islam, after belief in Allah, is belief in the unseen, and belief in the angels is an inseparable part of that. The Quran states it plainly: "The righteous are those who believe in the unseen" (2:3), and the angels are among the foremost realities of that unseen world.

Angels are mentioned throughout the Quran — in the story of creation, in the delivery of revelation, in the recording of human deeds, in the moment of death, in the trials of the grave, in the events of the Day of Judgment, and in the eternal life of Paradise and Hell. They appear at every major turning point in the Quranic narrative, from the first chapter of human existence to the last. They are the invisible agents of Allah's will — not independent powers, not rivals to the divine, but servants created to execute, deliver, protect, and record.

This book is the first in the Unseen sub-series of the NurOne project. It explores the angels as the Quran presents them: their nature, their ranks, their missions, their relationship with the prophets and with ordinary human beings, and the lessons their existence holds for the believer. The Quran does not provide a systematic treatise on angels — there is no single chapter dedicated to them in full. Instead, the Quran weaves their presence into its stories, its commands, its warnings, and its descriptions of the afterlife. This book gathers those threads and presents them as a coherent picture.

The Quranic treatment of angels is both majestic and restrained. Majestic because the angels are described as beings of immense power and number — "none knows the hosts of your Lord except Him" (74:31). Restrained because the Quran consistently subordinates them to Allah. They do not act independently. They do not deserve worship. They are, as the Quran says, "honored servants who do not precede Him in speech and act by His command" (21:26-27). The Quran even rebukes those who called the angels female — "has your Lord chosen for you sons and taken for Himself daughters from among the angels? Indeed, you say a great saying" (43:16). The angels are servants, and their servitude is the first lesson they teach.

The approach of this book is straightforward: it follows the Quran's own method. Rather than imposing an external framework on the topic, it gathers the Quranic verses about angels where they appear — in the stories of the prophets, in the descriptions of the Day of Judgment, in the commands and

warnings — and lets them speak in their own context. The result is not a theology of angels but a portrait: the angels as the Quran itself presents them, in their own words and their own actions. Where the Quran is silent, this book is silent. Where the Quran is explicit, this book is explicit. Where the Quran hints, this book notes the hint and does not go beyond it.

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Chapter 1: The Nature of Angels — Created from Light

The Quran does not state in a single verse what angels are made of. It does, however, describe their attributes, their functions, and their relationship to Allah in enough detail to form a clear picture. The primary Arabic word for angels in the Quran is *mala'ika* (مَلائِكَة), the plural of *malak* (مَلَك). The word is related to a root meaning "to send" or "to entrust with a message" — and indeed, the angels are first and foremost messengers.

Created Servants

The Quran describes the angels as servants of Allah, created by Him and subject to His command. They are not co-eternal with Allah, not independent, and not objects of worship. The Quran makes this explicit in the words of Allah addressing the angels: "Do they not see that whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth and the angels and the prophets and the righteous — all are among His creation?" The angels belong to the created order. They have a beginning. They were brought into existence by the will of Allah.

The Quran does not specify the material from which angels were created. The well-known Hadith that states "angels were created from light (*nur*)" is not found in the Quran itself, though it is reported in the collections of Muslim and others. The Quran refers to Allah as the "Light of the heavens and the earth" (24:35), but it does not directly state that angels are made of light. What the Quran does emphasize is their spiritual, non-physical nature: they are not of flesh and bone, they do not eat or drink (as shown in the story of Ibrahim's angelic guests, who did not eat — 11:70), and they are not visible to human beings unless Allah enables sight.

Number and Power

The Quran indicates that the angels are vast in number — beyond human reckoning. In the description of Hell, the Quran states: "Over it are nineteen" (74:30), referring to the angels appointed over Hell, and then adds: "And We have not made the keepers of the Fire except angels, and We have not made their number except as a trial for those who disbelieve — to assure those who were given scripture and to increase those who believe in faith, and that those who were given scripture and those who believe will not doubt, and that those in whose hearts is disease and the disbelievers will say: what did Allah intend by this example? Thus does Allah leave astray whom He wills and guides whom He wills. And none knows the hosts of your Lord except Him" (74:31). The phrase "none knows the hosts of your Lord except Him" is a statement of

their vast, uncountable multitude.

The Quran also describes the angels as possessing great power. In the story of the destruction of the people of Lut, the angels who visited Ibrahim were entrusted with the power to destroy an entire city. Jibril is described as possessing immense strength. The Quran describes the angels who support the believers in battle as "three thousand angels sent down" (3:124) and mentions that Allah could send even more. The power of the angels is not their own — it is derived entirely from Allah's command.

Wings

The Quran explicitly mentions that angels have wings. In the description of the "Owner of the Throne," the Quran says: "All praise is for Allah, the Originator of the heavens and the earth, who made the angels messengers having wings — two, three, or four. He increases in creation what He wills. Indeed, Allah is powerful over all things" (35:1). This is the clearest Quranic statement about the physical form of angels: they are winged beings, though the number of wings varies. The Hadith literature reports that Jibril has six hundred wings, but the Quran does not specify any individual angel's wing count beyond the general statement in 35:1.

The wings are not described in detail in the Quran. They are a sign of the angels' nature — beings that traverse the heavens and the earth, moving between the divine command and the created world. The variation in wing count ("two, three, or four") indicates that angels are not uniform in their form or rank. The phrase "He increases in creation what He wills" suggests that some angels may have even more.

Not Male or Female

The Quran explicitly rejects the pre-Islamic Arab practice of describing angels as female. The Quran states: "And they have made the angels, who are servants of the Most Merciful, females. Did they witness their creation? Their testimony will be recorded, and they will be questioned" (43:19). The Quran also says: "Those who do not believe in the Hereafter name the angels with female names" (53:27). The angels are neither male nor female in the human sense. They do not marry or reproduce. The Quran's rejection of calling them female is part of its broader rejection of attributing daughters to Allah while claiming sons for themselves — a distortion the Quran corrects repeatedly.

Immortal and Sinless

The Quran describes the angels as beings who do not disobey Allah and who do not tire in their worship. The Quran says of them: "They do not precede Him

in speech, and they act by His command" (21:27). It also states: "They fear their Lord above them, and they do what they are commanded" (16:50). The angels are described as "honored servants" (21:26) who are protected from sin by their very nature — they are created to obey.

The sole exception is Iblis, who was among the angels' company when Allah commanded them to bow to Adam. Iblis refused. The Quran states: "And when We said to the angels: prostrate to Adam, and they prostrated, except Iblis. He was of the jinn, and he departed from the command of his Lord" (18:50). This verse is critical because it clarifies that Iblis was not an angel — he was of the jinn, a separate creation, even though he was present among the angels. The sinlessness of the angels remains intact; the rebellion was by a jinni who had been among them.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aira Aurora is an independent researcher and writer specializing in Quranic studies. Her work focuses on close reading of the Quranic text, exploring its themes, narratives, and moral framework with attention to both the original Arabic and the broader human context.

The NurOne master series is her primary project -- a multi-sub-series exploration of the Quran covering prophets, people, places, events, lessons, commands, signs, the unseen, the hereafter, and everyday life. Each book is a close reading of the Quranic verses on a specific topic, presented in clear, accessible language.

Her work is published under the pen name Aira Aurora.

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