

## The Duties and Tasks of the Angels

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

The angels have duties. Each of them has a duty that he is entrusted with, and he does not delay in carrying it out. Rather, he executes it acting on Allaah's order and He doesn't disobey Him. Allaah says: **"(Hell) Over which are angels stern and severe who do not disobey the Commands they receive from Allaah, but do that which they are commanded."**<sup>1</sup>

### Some of their Duties:

**First:** Those who take charge of the Hellfire. They are known as the Guardians of Hell, meaning, those entrusted with the Hellfire and with tormenting its inhabitants.

**Second:** Among them are angels that are entrusted with carrying the Throne of Allaah, as He says: **"Those who carry the Throne (of Allaah) and those around it glorify the praises of their Lord and believe in Him. And they ask forgiveness for those who believe, (saying): 'Our Lord! You encompass all things in mercy and knowledge, so forgive those who repent.'"**<sup>2</sup>

And Allaah says: **"And bearing the Throne of your Lord on that Day will be eight (angels)."**<sup>3</sup>

### The Number of Angels who will Bear the Throne:

The angels that will carry the Throne are four. Then on the Day of Judgement their number will increase to eight. The Throne of Allaah is the greatest of His creations, which will be carried on the Day of Judgement by eight angels. This shows that they are indeed mighty, since they will carry this magnificent Throne, which is the greatest and mightiest of Allaah's creations. This indicates their power and their tremendous composure.

**Third:** Among them are those angels entrusted with revelation. Allaah says: **"He sends down the angels with the Rooh (spirit/revelation) from His Command to whomever He wills from His servants, (saying): 'Warn mankind that there is no deity that has the right to be worshipped except Me, so be dutiful to Me.'"**<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Soorah at-Tahreem: 6

<sup>2</sup> Soorah Ghaafir: 7

<sup>3</sup> Soorah al-Haaqah: 17

<sup>4</sup> Soorah an-Nahl: 2

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The word Rooh (spirit) here means revelation. It is called Rooh because it is the revelation that brings life to the hearts, just as the rain brings life to the earth. In the same sense, it is the created Rooh (spirit) that brings life to the bodies of animals.

Rooh can also stand for the Qur'aan, as Allaah says: **“And thus We have revealed to you (O Muhammad) a Rooh (i.e. Qur'aan) from Our Command.”**<sup>5</sup>

Rooh here stands for the Qur'aan, since it is that which brings life to the hearts of the believers, just as the earth is brought to life by rain. Such is the case with the hearts of the believers – they are brought to life by way of the Qur'aan.

The word Rooh is also used to refer to Jibreel, who is the greatest, most honourable and virtuous of all the angels. He is the one who brought the Qur'aan down from Allaah to Muhammad, as Allaah says: **“The trustworthy spirit (Jibreel) brought it (i.e. the Qur'aan) down – to your heart (O Muhammad) in order that you may be from the warners – in a plain Arabic language.”**<sup>6</sup>

So Jibreel brought the Qur'aan down to the heart of the Prophet (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam), and he in turn conveyed it to his Ummah. In another ayah, Allaah says: **“Say: The holy spirit (Jibreel) brought it down from your Lord.”**<sup>7</sup>

This is referring to the angel Jibreel – he is the holy spirit.

### The Attributes of Jibreel:

Allaah has described Jibreel with great characteristics, as He says: **“So verily, I swear by the planets that recede (disappear during the day and appear at night). And by the planets that move swiftly and hide themselves. And by the night as it departs. And by the dawn as it brightens. Verily, this is the Word (brought by) an honourable messenger (i.e. angel) – Possessing power and a high rank with the Lord of the Throne. Obeyed (by the angels), trustworthy there (in the heavens).”**<sup>8</sup>

- **The First Attribute: Power:** Allaah says: **“Possessing power and a high rank with the Lord of the Throne.”**<sup>9</sup> The “Lord of the Throne” here refers to Allaah.
- **The Second Attribute: Position:** Allaah says: **“Possessing power and a high rank with the Lord of the Throne.”**<sup>10</sup> This means that he possesses a high position in the sight of Allaah, which no one else has reached.
- **The Third Attribute: Obedience:** All of the angels obey Jibreel by the Permission of Allaah.

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<sup>5</sup> Soorah Ash-Shooraa: 52

<sup>6</sup> Soorah ash-Shu'araa: 193-195

<sup>7</sup> Soorah an-Nahl: 102

<sup>8</sup> Soorah at-Takweer: 15-21

<sup>9</sup> Soorah at-Takweer: 20

<sup>10</sup> Soorah at-Takweer: 20

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- **The Fourth Attribute: Trustworthiness:** This refers to the revelation, such that he doesn't make additions or subtractions to it, but rather, He conveys it just the way that Allaah has revealed it to him.

### The Prophet Muhammad's seeing Jibreel:

Allaah says: **"And your companion is not insane."**<sup>11</sup> This is what the disbelievers claimed about him (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam). **"And indeed he (Muhammad) saw him (Jibreel) in the clear horizon."**<sup>12</sup> Muhammad (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) saw Jibreel on the horizon twice.

**The First Time:** This was in the valley of Makkah. The Prophet Muhammad (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) lifted his head and saw him in the sky and he had 600 wings. Each one of his wings blocked the horizon.

**The Second Time:** Allaah says: **"And indeed he (Muhammad) saw him (Jibreel) at a second descent – near the lote-tree of the utmost boundary."**<sup>13</sup> This occurred during the night in which the Prophet (sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) ascended to the heaven and saw him in his natural state.

These are the attributes of Jibreel. Allaah says: **"Verily, this is the Word (brought by) an honourable messenger (i.e. angel)."**<sup>14</sup>

This means: Even though the Qur'aan is the Speech of Allaah, it is ascribed to Jibreel here, since he is the one who conveyed it to Muhammad. So he is conveying from Allaah, for he dictated it to our messenger, Muhammad, conveying it from Allaah. However, it is the Speech of Allaah. Speech is only attributed to the one who states it originally, not to the one who says it conveying it from someone else. However, the Speech of Allaah has been attributed to Jibreel here from the perspective of his conveying it.

**Fourth:** There are angels entrusted with other duties:

**1. Mikaa'eel:** He is responsible for the raindrops that fall down from the sky. He moves them around and causes the rain to descend wherever Allaah commands.

**2. Israafeel** is responsible for blowing on the Trumpet. This will be at the time when Allaah wants to resurrect the creatures from their graves. The bodies will be brought forth from the graves and reassembled. Then the only thing remaining (to be integrated) will be the soul. It is at this point that Israafeel will blow on this horn, due to Allaah's Command, and the souls will float to their respective bodies, which had come out and risen from their graves. Then they will walk to where Allaah orders them to go. Allaah says: **"The Day when they will come out of the graves quickly as if they were racing to a goal."**<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Soorah at-Takweer: 22

<sup>12</sup> Soorah at-Takweer: 23

<sup>13</sup> Soorah an-Najm: 13-14

<sup>14</sup> Soorah at-Takweer: 19

<sup>15</sup> Soorah al-Ma'aarij: 43

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And Allaah says: **“They will come forth with humbled eyes from (their) graves as if they were locusts spread about. Hastening towards the caller, the disbelievers will say: ‘This is a hard day.’”**<sup>16</sup>

These are the three angels that are responsible for life. Jibreel is responsible for bringing the revelation, which brings life into the hearts. And Mikaa’eel is responsible for the raindrops, which bring life to the earth after its death. Israafeel is responsible for blowing on the trumpet, which will bring life to the bodies (on the Day of Resurrection). This is why when the Prophet (sallAllaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) would get up for prayer at night, after saying the opening Takbeer, he (sallAllaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) would say in his opening supplication: “O Allaah! Lord of Jibreel, Mikaa’eel and Israafeel, Originator of the heavens and the earth...”

These are the greatest angels due to the magnitude of their duties.

**Fifth:** There are also angels that are put in charge of the fetuses in the mothers’ wombs. This has been reported in the hadeeth of Ibn Mas’ood (radyAllaahu ‘anhu), in which he said: “The Messenger of Allaah (sallAllaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) narrated to us – and he is the truthful one who is believed – saying: **‘Verily the creation of each of one of you is brought together in his mother’s womb for forty days in the form of a seed, then he is a clot of blood for a like period, then a morsel of flesh for a like period. Then the angel is sent to him and commanded with four matters – to write down his means of livelihood, his life span, his actions, and whether he will be happy or unhappy.’**” Allaah sends this angel to him to carry out this great important task.

**Sixth:** There are angels that are in charge of taking the souls when their prescribed time is over. There is the Angel of Death (Malak-ul-Mawt) about whom Allaah says: **“Say: ‘The Angel of Death, who is set over you, will take your souls.’”**<sup>17</sup>

The Angel of Death has assistants that will aid him, as Allaah says: **“Until when death approaches one of you, Our messengers (i.e. the Angel of Death and his assistants) take his soul, and they never neglect their duty. Then they are returned to Allaah, their Master, the Just Lord.”**<sup>18</sup> So taking the soul at the time of death is ascribed to the angels, to the Angel of Death and also to Allaah.

**“It is Allaah who takes away the souls at the time of their death.”**<sup>19</sup> Death is ascribed to Allaah here because He is the One who orders it to occur. It is ascribed to the angels because they are the ones who physically carry that out by gathering the soul and leading it out of the human’s body until it reaches his throat. And it is also ascribed to the Angel of Death – “Say: **‘The Angel of Death, who is set over you, will take your souls’**” – because he

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<sup>16</sup> Soorah Al-Qamar: 7-8

<sup>17</sup> Soorah As-Sajdah: 11

<sup>18</sup> Soorah al-An’aam: 61-62

<sup>19</sup> Soorah az-Zumar: 42

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is the one in charge of seizing the souls after they have been rounded up in the last stage (of death).

**Seventh:** There are also angels in charge of recording the deeds of the son of Aadam (i.e. humans), as occurs in the hadeeth: **“You are constantly being frequented (in successive shifts) by angels at night and angels during the day.”** Allaah says: **“And verily, there are guardians (i.e. angels recording your deeds) over you – Honourable, recording (your deeds). They know all that you do.”**<sup>20</sup>

### Every human being has two angels with him:

Every human amongst us has two angels that are responsible over him – an angel on his right side recording his good deeds and another on his left side recording his bad deeds. Allaah says: **“When the two receivers receive (i.e. record his deeds) from his right side and his left side, sitting. Not a word does he utter, except that there is a watcher by him ready (to record it).”**<sup>21</sup>

These guardian angels accompany a human being whether he is on a journey or sitting at home – they are next to him at all times under all conditions – during his prayer, while he is prostrating, etc. – they accompany him and do not leave him alone except under specific circumstances, such as when the person is relieving himself (in the bathroom). So these angels record his statements and his actions.

### The angels record People’s Intentions and Objectives:

It has been related that the angels also record a person’s intentions and inner objectives, which are located in the heart. Whatever he intends to do, they record it. This is why a person is rewarded for having good intention, since it is an action of the heart, while he is punished for evil intentions, since the intention is an action of the heart.

These angels are put in charge of recording a person’s deeds from the time that he reaches the age of puberty – the age of discernment – to the time when Allaah takes his soul in death. And they record against him everything that he does in his life – whether that is in the form of intentions, actions, statements, or other than that.

### The Status of the Fajr and ‘Asr Prayers amidst the other Prayers:

The Prophet (sallAllaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said: **“You are constantly being frequented (in successive shifts) by angels at night and angels during the day. And they gather together during the ‘Asr Prayer and during the Fajr Prayer.”** This is why these two prayers are the greatest of all prayers. Allaah says: **“Verily, the recitation of the Qur’aan in the early dawn (i.e. Fajr Prayer) is witnessed (by the angels).”**<sup>22</sup> He is referring here to the Fajr Prayer,

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<sup>20</sup> Soorah al-Infitaar: 10-12

<sup>21</sup> Soorah Qaaf: 17-18

<sup>22</sup> Soorah al-Israa: 78

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which the angels of the night and the angels of the day attend. They gather together to witness the Fajr prayer along with the Muslims and listen to the Qur'aan that is recited in prayer. They also gather together during the 'Asr Prayer, where Allaah asks them, even though He is most knowledgeable of the answer: **"In what state did you leave My servants?" The angels reply, saying: "We came to them while they were praying and we left them while they were praying."** This means that they descended while we were praying 'Asr and they attended the prayer along with us. And then they rose back up (to the heavens) while we were praying Fajr.

Due to this, it has been determined that the 'Asr Prayer is the "Middle Prayer" that Allaah has encouraged us about, where He says: **"Guard strictly the (five daily) prayers, especially the middle prayer (i.e. 'Asr)."**<sup>23</sup> He means by this the 'Asr prayer since that is the prayer that the (guardian) angels of the night and the angels of the day attend.

### A Call to those who fall short:

So where are those who hold back from attending the Fajr Prayer, sleeping (instead) in their beds and not witnessing this great event every night with the angels of the Most Merciful? This is such that these angels inform about these attendees (of the Fajr Prayer) while in the most highest of gatherings, saying: **"We came to them while they were praying and we left them while they were praying."**

What benefit has this person who refrains from going to the Fajr Prayer and instead prefers sleep gained from his actions? And what benefit has this person who misses out on attending the 'Asr Prayer, due to laziness, preferring sleep or some other deed, gained from his actions?

It is stated in the hadeeth that: **"Whoever misses the 'Asr Prayer, it is as if he lost his family and wealth."** And in another hadeeth it states: **"...then he has nullified his actions."** This means that he has taken the prayer out of its proper time. So if he takes it out of its proper time, he has missed it.

**Eight:** There are also angels that are responsible for protecting humans from perils. A human being is prone to walk into dangers every day. However, Allaah entrusts angels that guard and protect him from these dangers during his lifetime, which Allaah has ordained for him. This earth, which a human being walks upon every day, contains many dangers. There are wild beasts, snakes, scorpions, not to mention transgressors from among humans – enemies and oppressors. However, Allaah has placed these angels around the human being. Allaah says: **"He has those (angels) who constantly surround him – from before him and behind him, protecting him by the Command of Allaah."**<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Soorah al-Baqarah: 238

<sup>24</sup> Soorah ar-Ra'ad: 11

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Therefore, so long as Allaah has decreed that this individual will be safe from harms, these angels will protect and guard him, and no human will be able to harm him. But if Allaah desires to bring an end to his appointed time, He removes them from him – one from before him and one from behind him.

**“Verily, Allaah will not change the condition of a people until they (first) change the condition of themselves. And when Allaah desires a bad end for a people, there is no turning it back.”<sup>25</sup>** So if Allaah’s Divine Pre-Decree comes to pass and He desires to put an end to this person, the angels that constantly surround him withdraw themselves from him because they do not refrain from carrying out Allaah’s Command. These are the angels that constantly surround a person.

**Ninth:** There are also angels that have responsibilities in this universe that only Allaah has knowledge of. There are angels that are put in charge of the seas and angels put in charge of the days. There are angels responsible for the winds and angels put in charge of carrying out many other duties.

All of the events that occur in the universe and which constantly transpire within it on a daily basis are only by Allaah’s decreeing that. As for the angels, they carry out whatever tasks Allaah orders them to execute.

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<sup>25</sup> Soorah ar-Ra’ad: 11