

The Role and Place of Governing Angels in Bible

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Abstract:

Angels have allocated a considerable part of Bible's discussions to themselves and since one of the dogmatic principles of the revealed religions is the belief in angels, depiction of the place and attributes of angels can be the indicator of the quality of attitude and worldview and the strength of dogmatic principles of Bible's followers and justify their thought and ideas; For this subject is related with the issues such as: transcendent unity of divine acts and essence and attributes and even unity in obedience, how to record the actions and investigate them in Purgatory and Resurrection and believe in the unseen world and how to connect to that world and how to manage the world by God and the definition of the Kingdom of Heaven and how to divide people's sustenance and their reward and punishment which is the indicator and representative of the position of each religion as compared to other religions. Like Muslims, the followers of Bible regard the existence of angels as one of the articles of faith and among the most important elements of the world of being. And whereas the Old Testament has described the revelation of One God using figures who appear in the Eastern mythological stories, it can be seen that in many cases the Kingdom of Heaven has been depicted by metaphors which match the similes used in Quran like angel's march before God (Fajr, 22) as if God is one of the kings from East. The angels are mentioned a lot in the Bible. In Hebrews it has been said that the numbers of angels is countless and in fact, they cannot be enumerated. Angels also do many things including: the report of the Birth of John... the most important task which is assigned to the angels is worshipping God. (1 Enoch, 40) The other significant task undertaken by angels is mediating between God and man. Intercession is another role assigned to angels. (1 Enoch, 2: 4, 4:9) Sometimes man asks the angels beseechingly to convey his/her request to Divinity. The angels also appear in opposition with "human angels" who wants to act as the prosecutor in Divine Throne. The angels are the media through which God revealed the religious law to Moses. (Job 1:2) specifically refers to the presence of angels in the time of revelation to Moses at Sinai that is expressed in Sabeyni's translation of Deuteronomy. However, there is no sign of angels doctrine in official Judaism. (Harold, 1996, vol 2, p. 956) After the periods of captivity (in Babylon) we see that the tasks of the angels become more specialized and the literary descriptions of the angels become more appropriate with considering their role and place, whether the angels are righteous or they are considered as evil and Satan. (Najib, B to P) The

followers of Bible have evaluated the nature of angels differently proportionate to their rank and duty, then some angels have been considered to be made of fire, some others to be faculty like and some to be immaterial while the others being demons. Due to the diverse and varied expressions offered of angels' tasks in Bible, this issue has been dealt with in Bible in more details and more accurate than Quran. In some cases, some tasks are counted for angels in Bible like teaching language to world nations (Genesis 10: 25) and due to the assignment of contradictive tasks to angels no clear picture is offered of angelic function. The imperfect nature of angels is often emphasized; although they are immortal. (First book of Enoch, 6:15) Their existence is not prior to the creation of the world; they are created on the first day of creation (Book of Job 2:1), or as another source suggests, on the second day. Not only they are unaware of everything but also sometimes they don't have any answer to the questions which are presented to them and they have to confess to their ignorance. (Ezra: 4:51) Of course this matter is due to the usage of metaphoric language and commentators like Antonius Fekri allow the predication of such attributes to angels in comparison to God who is Absolute. And the last point is that because of the metaphorical expressions used in Old Testament and Quran in several cases, they share the same statements of angels. Angels are in communication with "the souls of elements" (the concept which has entered into Judaism under the influence of polytheistic religions). For example, the angel of fire soul, the angel of wind soul, clouds, darkness, snow, thunder, rain and lighting. (Job 2:2) The New Testament has applied the same expressions which were used by Jews following the scriptures and thus it proceeds to introduce the head angels (First Thessalonians 4: 16 and Judas, 9) and Cherubim (Hebrews 9:5) and inhabitants of the empyrean and the owners of the lordship and the chairmanship and the kingdom (Colossians 16: 1) and in the next part it has added the owners of virtue and perfection (Ephesians 1:21), but this hierarchical ranking which is accompanied with different interpretations and degrees does not follow the specific idea but New Testament keeps its pace with Old Testament in a desultory fashion save the followers of the New Testament has arranged them according to Christian revelation. Nowadays the Catholic Church believes that angels are incorporeal creatures and their creation precedes the creation of man. They have hierarchies and are the savior of man. In Christian Church, angels are praised or even worshiped according to traditions like the praise of Michael, the warrior angel. (Mosaheb, 1345, vol 2, p. 1878) In Jewish scriptures, Gabriel who is believed to be made of fire, along with the Michael, Ariel and Raphael is one of the four archangels who hover around the Throne. Moreover, he is known as one of the angels who visited Abraham and also the destroyer of the Sodom. (The village folk of Lot)¹ The idea of Judaism and Christianity about angels as it can be seen is very contradictory and ambiguous. The nature of angels miscellaneously varies through a range of realities from the material to the immaterial and from God to the animals and objects. The lack of a correct and explicit definition of these heavenly creatures made the Sadducees Jewish sect to deny the very existence of angels. Nowadays both reformist movements of contemporary Judaism and some parts of the conservative movement remove all allusions to angels in prayers and liturgies and if they keep some of them, they interpret them in mythological and poetical terms. They believe that the belief in the existence of angels matches not with new understanding of world and God and cannot have any harmony with modern rationalism (Mousavi Garmaroudi, 1387, p. 210). In "Treasures of Talmud", angels have diverse ideas and independence: "even though nine hundred and ninety-nine angels vote to the condemnation of a person and only one angel vote to his/her innocence, the Blessed Divine Essence will turn the scales of justice in favor of him/her" (Kohan, 1382, p. 44-45), it also suggests that angels emerge from the river of fire (ibid, p. 69) (Daniel, 7: 10) Then, though some people like Maimonides have interpreted these contradictive descriptions of angels in

¹" Michael and Gabriel" 2-look at to: judaica encyclopedia

Bible and these descriptions are partly similar to some verses of Quran, but Quran has some privileges over Bible such as, firstly: the text of Quran is far from these conflicts and if there is apparent conflict, it is due to conciseness and generality of Quranic expression, the contradicting cases are much less than the Bible and because its verbatim text is inspirational, it has the capacity to interpret and resolve the conflicts, and secondly: Quran's expression in description of angels is a transcendence expression while the text of the Bible in description of the angels in some cases is very representational that for the people like Maimonides is hard to explain and interpret them, and thirdly: In Quran, angels in all cases are symbols of power and devise of the Lord of All Worlds while in Bible, in some cases, the angels are introduced as rebels. Fourthly, the text of Bible can be compared with our traditional texts not with Quran the text of which is completely revealed in the sense its author is the Almighty God. *This is a message sent down from the Lord of the Words. And if the messenger were to invent our sayings in Our name, we should certainly seize him by right hand, and we should certainly then cut off the artery of his heart, nor could any of you withhold him from Our wrath (AL HAQQAH, 43-47).*

Key Words: Governing, the Bible, the Angels

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