



## L3 BEING HUMAN: the Afterlife

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## Angels



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Muhammad receiving his first revelation from the angel Gabriel. Miniature illustration on vellum from the book *Jami' al-Tawarikh* (literally 'Compendium of Chronicles' but often referred to as *The Universal History* or *History of the World*), by Rashid al-Din, published in Tabriz, Persia, 1307 CE. Now in the collection of the Edinburgh University Library, Scotland.

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## Angels in Islam

Mulk – rule, reign, supreme authority, power

Malik – king, sovereign

Malak – angel

Malaki – angelic

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"The Day the heaven shall be rent asunder with clouds,  
and angels shall be sent down descending (in ranks), -

"That Day, the dominion as of right and truth shall be  
(wholly) for (God) most Merciful: it will be a Day of dire  
difficulty for the Misbelievers." [Q 25: 25-6 *al-Furqan* 'The  
Criterion']

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"It was We Who created man, and We know what dark  
suggestions his soul makes to him: for We are nearer to  
him than (his) jugular vein

"Behold, two (guardian angels) appointed to learn (his  
doings) learn (and not them), one sitting on the right  
and one on the left.

"Not a word does he utter but there is a sentinel by him,  
ready (to note it),

"And the stupor of death will bring truth (before His  
eyes): 'This was the thing which thou was trying to  
escape!'

Cont/d

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"And the Trumpet shall be blown: "That will be the Day  
Whereof Warning (has been given)

"And there will come forth every soul: with each will be  
an (angel) to drive, and an (angel) to bear witness.

"(It will be said:) Thou was heedless of this; now have  
We removed by thy vile, and sharpest eyesight this Day!

"And his Companion will say: "Here is (his Record ) ready  
for me!

"(The sentence will be:) "Throw, throw into every  
contumacious Rejecter (of God)!" [Q *Qaf* 50: 16-24]

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But verily over years (are appointed angels) to protect you

Kind and honourable, writing down (your deeds):

They know (and understand) all that ye do.

As for the Righteous, they will be in Bliss;

And the Wicked - they will be in the Fire,

Which they will enter on the Day of Judgement

And they will not be able to keep away therefrom.  
[Q *Infitar* The Cleaving Asunder, 82:10-12]

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### Satan > Shayṭān

"Satan" is derived from the Hebrew word for "adversary," which has as a cognate Arabic shayṭān

"Satan" has several meanings in the Islamic traditions.

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### Shayṭān

Shayṭān refers to a class of jinn with exceptional powers

Satans are also considered to be familiar spirits who accompany and inspire poets and other talented people.

Someone who is possessed by a jinn or a satan is thought to be psychologically deviant, but satans in such cases are not necessarily considered evil.

Satans are also said to bring diseases and cause mischief.

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### Shayṭān

- They are said to be powerless during the fasting month of Ramaḍān except against those who improperly break the fast, and the recitation of the *basmalah* is said to drive them from any room.
- Prophylactic amulets worn to ward off satans are often fashioned in the shape of a hand with five fingers, five being a powerful magic number.
- Satans are said to be ugly, with hooves for feet, and to dwell in dark places and ruins.

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### Iblīs

The chief of the satans is Iblīs, the rebel jinn who refused to bow down to Adam when all the angels were commanded to do so by God (Qur'ān, [15:30–34](#), [17:61](#)), for which he was cast out of heaven and said to be cursed (*rajīm*).

His real punishment is delayed until the day of judgment.

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## Who is Iblīs?

Iblīs is not the ruler of hell—that job is reserved for an angel named Malik—but he will be thrown into hell along with all his host and the rest of the damned on the day of judgment ([26:94–95](#)).

an angel? a jinn?

According to some sources a jinn who is not a Muslim is a satan; if very large and powerful, it is considered to be an 'ifrīt.

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## What does Iblīs represent?

The satan Iblīs represents the power of evil and is an enemy of God and humanity.

Iblīs's disobedience comes from pride: his belief that he was superior to Adam and the other angels.

Theologians point out that Iblīs has no real power over humans that they do not themselves grant by being deceived by his trickery.

He is always whispering in the ears of humans, but they can resist the temptation.

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## Iblis in popular tradition

In popular tradition, he is also the one who instills the propensity to sin into humans at birth

Some sources say that Jesus was preserved from sin by his mother's ability to ward off Satan.

There is also a popular belief that every human is accompanied by both an angel and a satan offering contradictory inspirations.

Did Muhammad have a satan, to whom he taught portions of Qur'an?

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## Satan and hajj

Muslims on pilgrimage are reminded of the existence of Satan through the ritual act of stoning Satan in the form of a stone column

This act that ritually repels the evil in the world and recalls Abraham's stoning of Satan at Mina.

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Stoning Satan at Mina



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Stoning Satan at Mina



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Stoning Satan at Mina



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Stoning Satan at Mina



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## Stoning Satan at Mina



Source: AP Archive, Symbolic stoning of the devil ritual performed in Mina as part of Hajj pilgrimage, AP explains, 6 June 2025  
<https://www.family.com/news/360-degree-0914>

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## Sufism: Satan as serpent

Satan has also been identified with the lower appetites of humans, the so-called *nafs*, and as such has been identified with the serpent.

Mystics who have attained spiritual mastery over the *nafs* can convert the base appetite into something useful, just as Moses's rod was transformed into a snake and back again.

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Distinguish between this world (*al-dunyā*) and the next (*al-ākhirah*)

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## Hell (*jahannam*)



Persian, 15th century: prophet Muhammad, with Buraq and Gabriel.

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### Hell (*jahannam*)

References to hell, in one form or another, are ubiquitous in the Qur'ān, as part of its general eschatological message. Hell has several names.

Hell is linked with fire and heat in its various forms, and is firmly part of the Prophet's message as the eventual residence of those who are wicked and who disregard God's instructions. There are various levels of hell.

Whereas paradise (*jannah*) is a garden replete with lush vegetation, hell is the place of pain and discomfort, and the suggestion is made that the punishment will continue forever.

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The fire, sometimes referred to as Jahannam (the Arabic cognate of the Hebrew word which is the source of English "gehenna"), is often interpreted as having seven gates, leading to the understanding common to several religious traditions that hell has seven levels.

By putting together scattered Qur'ānic passages, one can determine that these gates are intended for different categories of sinners, although there is no consistent picture provided.

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Integral to the message of the Qur'ān and providing the content of the earliest revelations, is the affirmation that God will indeed raise the dead on the day of judgment and that resurrected bodies and souls will be joined for the definitive and inevitable time of assessment and recompense.

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According to the detailed descriptions of popular belief, the judgement to be experienced at the end of time is also indicated by

- the mode of death itself,
- the ability or inability of the dead person in the grave to answer correctly the questions posed by the fearsome angels Munkar and Nakīr ("the denied" and "the denier") immediately after death,
- the degree of comfort or discomfort he or she experiences while awaiting the resurrection.

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- The Qur'an depicts the dread day when resurrected bodies are joined with their souls and brought for judgment before the throne of God that the Qur'ān becomes most eloquent.
- signs of the hour and the events that herald the end of time and of the world,
- the terrifying moment when the trumpet is blown,
- the resurrection itself,

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#### Gardens of Paradise

The faithful there are peaceful and content, enjoying gentle speech, pleasant shade under dark green foliage, fruits, cool drink, and meat as they desire.

They are treated to delicious wine from a shining stream from which they will suffer no ill effects.

They recline on couches, adorned in armlets of gold and pearls and wearing green and gold robes of embroidered silk, waited on by menservants.

Male inhabitants of the garden are said to benefit from the ministrations of the houris, young virgins said to have eyes like precious pearls ...

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Hell has seven gates ([15:44](#)), and the Qur'ān details the horrors sinners will experience there:

- having their skin burned ([4:56](#))
- being stuck on iron hooks ([22:21](#))
- drinking boiling water ([18:29](#))
- drinking pus ([44:16](#)).

The absence of death is something that makes the punishment even worse since it is continual and unceasing, and there is no hope of escape.

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The Qur'ān ([11:107](#)) refers to people staying in hell forever, unless God changes His attitude to them; thus implying a certain possibility of retrieval.

Hell has ranks of punishment appropriate for various sinners, and is clearly modeled on heaven with its different levels.

Heaven seems to be above hell, since the inhabitants of the latter call on those in heaven to pour water down on them, something that God has apparently forbidden ([7:50](#)).

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The inhabitants of hell include:

- Unbelievers
- Polytheists
- Idolaters
- some *jinn*
- the Devil

A long list of crimes condemns one to hell, including even what some may consider quite minor actions like slander or cowardice in battle.

It could not be argued that those punished were not aware of what lay before them since the Qur'ān explains these points in detail.

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The prospect of hell is constantly mentioned and people are warned of the inevitable consequences of their behaviour.

For those actually in hell the prospect of their constant punishment is itself a punishment, as is their sense that they have been abandoned by God.

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#### Sources

The following translation of the meaning of the Qur'ān is used in the lectures (in conjunction with other sources):

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