



ANGELS  
ARE EVERYWHERE

WHAT THEY ARE, WHERE THEY  
COME FROM, AND WHAT THEY DO

BY KAREN ROMANO YOUNG

ILLUSTRATED BY  
NATHAN HALE

ALADDIN  
NEW YORK LONDON TORONTO SYDNEY

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*For Mom*

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# ANGELS

ARE EVERYWHERE

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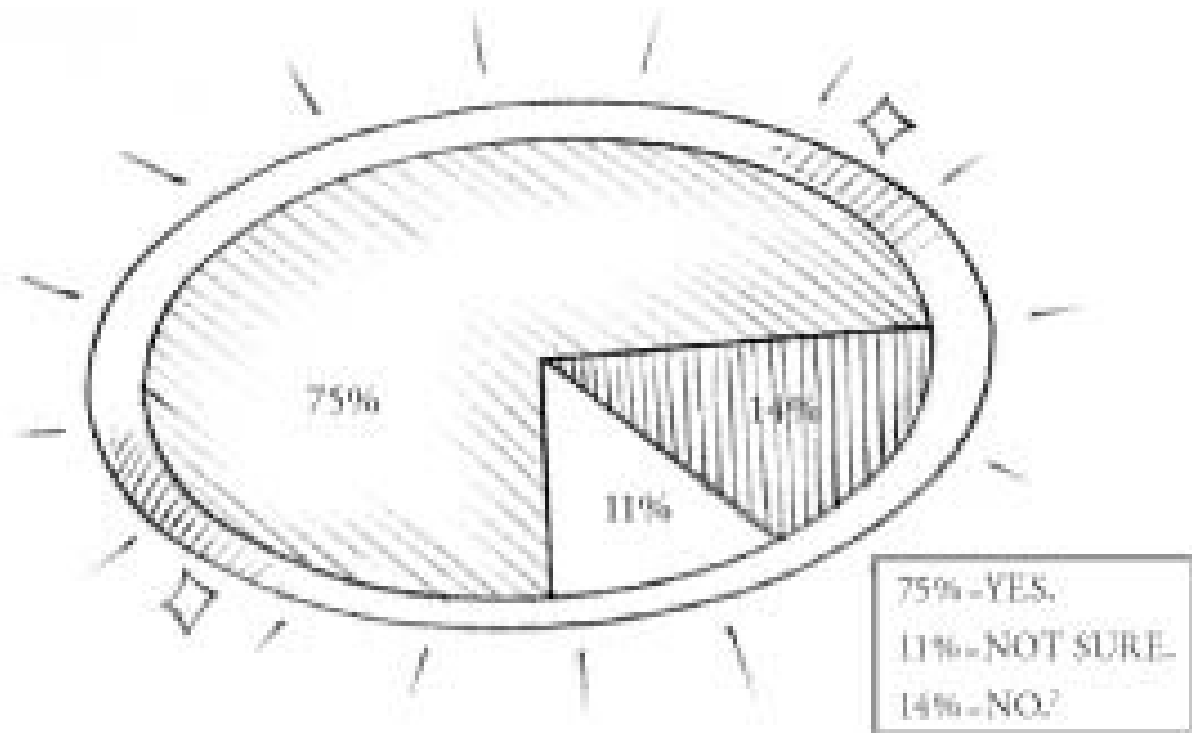
**FOREWORD**  
***Do You Believe in Angels?***

**MOST PEOPLE DO.**

Halo there. If you answered YES to the question above, you're not alone. And that's just one reason that this is a tricky book to write.

1. Seventy-five percent of Americans answered YES when asked if they believed in angels, as reported in a 2007 Gallup Poll. An extra 11 percent thought there *might* be angels; they weren't sure. So you have to be really careful what you say about angels.

**DO YOU BELIEVE IN ANGELS?**



2. Most people know what angels are and what they do. Many people can name and describe angels. Some people even remember meeting angels. But nobody can summon an angel to stand up, show itself, and say "here I am," and there is no other way to prove the existence of angels. Discussions of things outside physical experience can annoy people or make them shut down. So you have to be really careful what you say.
3. For many people, angels are a matter of faith, something they believe in without having any proof. Discussions of faith and personal spirituality can easily offend people. So you have to be really careful.



4. Angels are part of the stories that form the most holy books of many different religions. They are also part of stories associated with religions but not considered to be part of the holy books. Discussions of religions and their outlook on the world can make people angry or make them debate with you. So you have to be ...

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*But if the archangel now, perilous, from behind the stars took even one step down toward us: our own heart, beating higher and higher, would beat us to death. Who are you?—Rainer Maria Rilke, Duino Elegies: 2*

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I have to be honest. I probably can't be careful enough for some people. I don't know what parts of this book are true by many definitions of the word true. I just know that **angelology**—the study of angels—is one of the most fantastic things I've ever come across. The stories are glorious, the art is heavenly, and the ideas of what angels can be—the link between heaven and Earth, heaven and hell, the living and the dead, humans and God—are truly WONDERFUL. And many, many people of different religions (or no religion at all) believe in angels.

So I'm going to tell you what I've found out. And you're going to take it with a grain of salt, because usually when something is considered true or possible by 86 percent of Americans, there's all kinds of proof. Well, with angels, there just isn't.

If you'll excuse the expression, I don't want to fly in the face of facts or faith.

This book is about what we think we know about angels, and why we think we know it, and what it means about us that we think it.

It's also about how believing in something beautiful, mysterious, kind, fierce, and loving changes people. And that is my favorite thing about it. All kinds of people now and in the past—and probably in the future, too—have had their lives changed for the better by angels.

You'll find that this book is full of questions. The answers are always what someone says. The only *facts* involve who gave the answer, and where, and when. The different "experts" are historians, theologians, scribes, storytellers, angelologists, and people who claim to have seen or met angels. What's the real answer? That's up to you to decide. Nobody knows for sure, except the angels.

# 1

## *Angel Lore*

### HOW DO WE KNOW ABOUT ANGELS?

Where do we get our ideas about angels? From stories, and from histories. From books that are sacred (written or dictated by God), possibly sacred, and not sacred.

For a long, long time, people kept track of their histories and stories by word of mouth. These oral traditions (stories told anytime two or more people were together) became part of the books that form the centers of the big four Western religions: Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Islam.

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***MAJOR MESSAGE: Each of the holy books of the big four Western religions includes stories in which angels were sent by God to humans. These are the start of people's understanding of what angels do. But it isn't necessarily the start of angels, which may have roots in folklore, traditions, and stories that came before the holy books.***

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The holy book stories told of beings that traveled by flying. How would *you* describe something you'd never seen before, without comparing it to something else—a bird, a kite, a plane, a spaceship? Which comparison would be most appropriate? Lots of people who have studied the idea of angels think that their image came not just from the holy books, but from stories that were told in different cultures.

The *scriptures* are works believed to definitely have been written by God (through an angel), or by writers who were directed by God. (This kind of writer is called a prophet.) Some other books were written by people who might have been angels or prophets, or might not. These books are called *apocrypha*. One of the most famous apocryphal writers, Enoch, wrote at about the same time that the early Bible was written. He describes his dramatic and glorious visit to the center of heaven, where God is found. Enoch's stories aren't scripture, so many people argue about whether they were true. Along with other apocrypha, Enoch's writings have been used by people researching angels all through history, even if the rabbis, priests, and imams said they are not God's word.

### THE JEWISH ANGELS

Angels are mentioned 103 times in the Tanakh, the Bible of the Jews, which includes the five books of Moses (the Torah), the books of the Prophets (Nevi'im), and the writings (Kethuvim), including the psalms. Powerful, physical, and fierce angels appear to do God's will. They strike down armies, visit with humans, even challenge a man to a

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## ANGELIC IDEA

In a room full of people, talk suddenly halts. To fill the awkward moment, somebody might say, “An angel is walking through the room.”

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wrestling match. Angels talk with Yahweh’s (God’s) prophets, including David, Elias, Daniel, and Zacharias.

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## SHE HEARD AN ANGEL

### *Fifteenth century*

In 1425 Joan of Arc, age thirteen, began to hear the voices of two saints and the archangel Michael, who inspired her to put on armor and lead the army of France against the English. At nineteen she was burned at the stake, condemned as a witch and a heretic (someone who lies about God).

---

Today, Jews believe in angels as guardians, messengers, and intermediaries, beings with the ability to take people’s concerns and prayers to God.

There are now close to fourteen million Jews in the world.<sup>2</sup> The other three major religions are also based on one supreme being—Ahura Mazda, God, or Allah. Stories in

## THE FOUR MAJOR WESTERN RELIGIONS

| RELIGION       | LEADER      | SUPREME BEING            | HOLY BOOK                    | START OF RELIGION                           | BELIEVERS    |
|----------------|-------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|---|--------------|
| Judaism        | Abraham     | Yahweh                   | Tanakh (Bible Old Testament) | 2000 to 1500 b.c.                           | Jews         |
| Zoroastrianism | Zarathustra | Ahura Mazda              | Avesta                       | Around 600 to 1000 b.c. (no definite dates) | Zoroastrians |
| Christianity   | Jesus       | God (Jesus is God’s son) | Bible New Testament          | 30 a.d.                                     | Christians   |
| Islam          | Muhammed    | Allah                    | Qu’ran                       | 622 A.D.                                    | Muslims      |

their holy books—the Avesta, the Bible, the Qu’ran—show God acting to create the world, to send the great flood, to send laws, to send angels.

## THE ZOROASTRIAN ANGELS

Zoroaster, or Zarathustra, lived between 1000 and 600 B.C. in Bactria (in the area of what is now northern Afghanistan). Before Zoroaster, people worshiped many

different beings, such as gods and goddesses, who ruled the sun, the moon, music, health, and so on. But Zoroaster changed the pattern of religion in his part of the world: He said there was only one God.

In Zoroastrianism, the one god, the “wise Lord,” is Ahura Mazda. But Ahura Mazda has help: angels. Early Zoroastrian stories of the seven archangels closely followed those told of the old Babylonian and Assyrian gods, and Judaic and Christian stories adapted bits of these stories into their own traditions.

There are now about three million Zoroastrians in the world.

#### NAMES FOR ANGELS

|                     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| sons of God         | the heavenly host   |
| ministers           | the heavenly army   |
| ministering spirits | hosts               |
| servants            | living creatures    |
| watchers            | spirits             |
| the holy ones       | the court of heaven |

### THE CHRISTIAN ANGELS

Besides the many angel stories in the Old Testament of the Bible, Christians follow the teachings of the New Testament, in which angels are mentioned on nearly every page. Jesus spoke of them fifteen times, telling about their activities and their lives in heaven.

Angels were with Jesus to guide, guard, and encourage him when he was being tempted by Satan in the desert. Angels announced Jesus’s birth, helped him face Satan, and announced his resurrection. They even rolled the stone away from his tomb so he could get out.

#### ANGELS IN YOUR LIFE

Here’s an idea: Just for one day, keep your eyes open for angels. You’ll be surprised how often they come up in conversation (“She’s his guardian angel.” “He’s a perfect angel.”), in stores (everything from angel food cake to lapel-pin angels and magnets that say “Teachers Are Angels”), in music (one expert says that one in ten pop songs mentions angels), on clothes, stationery, stained-glass windows, TV commercials, and much, much more.

Each time you come across an angel, ask yourself what the angel represents in this situation: Protection? Perfection? Kindness? Love? Self-sacrifice?

The Book of Revelation, the last book in the New Testament of the Christian Bible,

has thundering, vivid scenes in which angels do battle against Satan's forces.

There are now more than two billion Christians in the world.

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*And you shall see the angels going round about the throne glorifying the praise of their Lord; and judgment shall be given between them with justice, and it shall be said: All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.*

—The Qu'ran, 39:75

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## **THE ISLAMIC ANGELS**

The Qu'ran, the Muslim holy book, is believed to have been dictated to the prophet Muhammed by the angel Gabriel. Belief in angels is one of the Islamic Articles of Faith; belief in God's messengers is another.

Muslims believe that two angels accompany each person through life. They guide the person, guard him, and keep records of every good and bad thing he does. At the end of life, the angel of death comes to escort the person out of this life. Although none of these angels is visible, their presence can be clearly felt at times through *wahy*, a moment when angels communicate by placing a message directly into a person's mind.

There are now about 1.5 billion Muslims in the world.

All the holy book stories add up to create our western view of what angels are—God's warriors and messengers—and what they mean to us. They are our link to God, bringing out what is best in us and showing us how deeply we are treasured and loved.

## **NONRELIGIOUS ANGELS**

Angels seem to go beyond just one culture, one religion, one role, or one idea.

There are many other religions, of course, and many Western people are devoted to non-Western religions. But the third largest religious "group" in the world (after Christians and Muslims) are described as nonreligious people. They include:

- atheists, people who don't believe in God.
- agnostics, people who don't believe in any particular religion.
- people who believe in the human spirit.
- people who believe in the spirit of the natural universe.

There are more than one billion nonreligious people in the world. Many of them believe in angels of different sorts.

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HE SAW AN ANGEL

*First century*

A “man of Macedonia” appeared to St. Paul at Troas during the night and asked him to come to Macedonia—on the other side of the sea—to help the Macedonians. Many people think the vision was an angel.

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Some other key thinkers and theologians have added to our “picture” of angels too. They include scholars of the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faiths. And they include artists and writers who have provided more and more images of angels up through the Middle Ages. Along with the writers of scripture and apocryphal stories, here are some of the people who have made important additions and subtractions to angel lore:

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#### TV ANGEL

*Touched by an Angel* (1994–2003) was a television show that described encounters modern-day people have with the angels Monica, Tess, and Andrew, telling stories about how angels help people who are struggling at a crossroads in their lives.

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***Enoch.*** Begun in the second century B.C., these are the stories of the prophet Enoch’s journey into heaven. Some say that Enoch was taken to heaven by God, who turned him into the angel Metatron.

***Pseudo-Dionysius*** wrote *De Hierarchia Celestia* in about 500 A.D. This book influenced Christian thinking about the hierarchy and powers of angels. One key idea was that people communicate best with God after their bodies die and their spirits go to meet God.

***Council of 745.*** Pope Zachary and his council went through the angel stories and tossed out all angels that weren’t specifically mentioned in the Bible. Only Raphael, Gabriel, and Michael remained.

***St. Thomas Aquinas.*** In 1259 he lectured about angels at the University of Paris, basing what he said on scripture, apocrypha, and his own understanding of the world. (Unlike other people who wrote about angels, Aquinas never claimed to have seen an angel.)

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#### THEY SAW AN ANGEL

##### ***Twenty-first century***

Michelle McKenzie, who owns a shop called The Littlest Angel in Connecticut, attended an angel communication workshop, where she envisioned her personal angel—a teenage girl—and learned her name. Later, a minister who specializes in clairvoyance (seeing beyond the physical world), told her that he “saw” an angel near her: a teenage girl with the name Michelle had been given. Michelle credits her angel for pushing her to buy her store and to reach out to her customers with kindness, understanding, and information about how they can get in touch with their angels.

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***Death of Faith.*** Beginning in the 1340s, the Great Plague killed most of the population of Europe. People lost faith in the angels, and in God Himself. The Church

responded by trying to figure out who was to



ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

blame. In a period called the Inquisition, suspects were called into church courts and examined carefully for signs that they had been taken over by the devil. Those who seemed “possessed” were condemned to death.

**Birth of Science.** Then came a period of new learning about the universe. At first men of science were condemned, along with their findings. One famous example was Galileo Galilei, the astronomer who reported that Earth revolved around the sun. So the sun was the center of the universe, not Earth.

**John Calvin** (1509–1564) rejected the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas. He agreed that angels carry out God’s work and show people God’s brilliance. But he thought that if God wanted people to know more about angels, and there would be more in scripture about them.

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#### A MOST IMPORTANT ANGEL

##### **Michael:**

- has a name that is a question. According to the Talmud, it means “Who is like God?”
- is said to be the first angel to bow to Adam at God’s command, after Lucifer—the angel nearest to God—refused to bow to Adam and was thrown out of heaven. Now Michael is the most important angel of all.
- is believed by Jehovah’s Witnesses to be Christ<sup>8</sup>.
- is called Mikha’il in the Qu’ran, where he is said to be second to Gabriel. Mikha’il has saffron hair that grows all the way to his feet, and wings like green topaz. He speaks a million languages. He never laughs.
- was sent with Gabriel by God to find clay so that God could make Adam. is often

seen in Christian art dressed in armor and a helmet, carrying a shield and a sword or lance.

- is the guardian angel of Israel. When the fallen angel Samael attacked Michael, pulling him down by his wings, Michael fought back. This story came to be told as St. Michael fighting a dragon.
  - will one day lead an army of angels against Satan, according to John in the Book of Revelation. The war cry of the angels is Michael's name.
  - will weigh souls on Judgment Day, so he carries a scale.
  - is the hero of hundreds of stories told and retold down the years. In England the story of Michael and the dragon was retold with St. George as the hero, replacing the archangel. But Michael himself replaced Greek and Roman gods, so that hilltop temples to the gods Hermes and Mercury were rededicated as chapels to Michael. In Germany, Christians replaced the pagan god Wotan, master of the mountaintops, with St. Michael. St. Michael's mounts—hilltop chapels—are found in many parts of Europe.
  - is celebrated on Michaelmas, September 29.
  - is the angel of healing.
  - is the patron saint of police officers, sailors, soldiers, and paratroopers.<sup>9</sup>
- 

**Emanuel Swedenborg** (1688–1772), a 1700s Swedish chemist, bishop, and theology professor (teacher of religious studies), learned Hebrew so he could study the earliest holy book stories of angels. He said that he had been visited by angels and attacked by devils. He was considered an authority on angels.

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ANGELIC?

In Tibetan Buddhism *devas* is the name for the “emanations” of enlightened beings—the physical manifestations of these spirits who otherwise cannot be seen by people.

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**Rudolf Steiner** (1861–1925) pioneered the Waldorf School system, which aims to feed a child's soul, body, and spirit. He believed in reincarnation—the theory that people's souls pass through different bodies—and that the souls are guided by an angel that stays with them through all the incarnations. Steiner said that people were most aware of their angels in childhood and in old age.

## BRANCHES AND WINGS

Very little was added to angel lore for hundreds of years, up to the twentieth century, when people stopped telling stories about the heavens, and actually began to go there in spaceships.

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BOOK ANGEL

In *Skellig* by David Almond, Michael finds a winged, man-size creature, injured and starving in a garage.



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The Space Age made angel stories come alive again, as people wondered whether even the oldest stories—Ezekiel’s encounter with multi-eyed seraphim, Enoch’s tales of brilliant cherubim and the whirling wheels of angels called “thrones”—were really descriptions of extraterrestrials who came to Earth from other planets.

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#### ANGEL PLACE

Skellig Michael (the name means “Michael’s rock”) is an island—really a giant, sharp rock—in the ocean off County Kerry, Ireland. It is home to a monastery.

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Like angels, aliens seemed to know all about us. They were kind to us. They brought us messages, and blinded us with their strange light. People wanted to know more.

The new knowledge came with the New Age, a twenty-first-century movement that found many people trying to get in touch with their own personal angels. Now adults were taking special classes, clicking on websites, and reading books to learn how to call on their angels for guidance, companionship, and inspiration.

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*[Skellig Michael is] an incredible, impossible, mad place. I tell you the thing does not belong to any world that you and I have lived and worked in; it is part of our dream world.*

—George Bernard Shaw

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#### ART ANGELS

- A *stèle* (a memorial made of stone) found in the city of Ur, 4000–1500 b.c., shows a winged figure descending from one of seven heavens. This is considered the earliest representation of an angel.



- Assyrian palaces were guarded by *karibu*, similar to the angels called cherubim. They had the heads of men, bodies of lions or bulls, and wings.



- An Etruscan tomb featured a painting of a demon, 500 B.C.



- *The Kairos of Trogir*, 300 B.C., was a winged god that looked like the angels envisioned by Christian artists one thousand years later.



- Early angels were made to look like Greek goddesses, particularly Nike, who flew. This famous statue from 190 B.C., called *Winged Victory*, shows Nike.



- The oldest known Christian image of an angel was painted in A.D. 64 or later on the walls of the catacombs, where Christians hid from those who would kill them. Note: There are no wings or halos on the angels, but each saint's image has a *nimbus*, an aura of light that glows around him or her.



- Christian angels were not shown with wings until nearly A.D. 400. By then, they had wings, halos, and an aura of light.



- In 787 the second council of Nicaea made it lawful to show angels in art. When artists looked around for ideas about how to depict angels, they found inspiration in the Greek gods, especially Nike, the Winged Victory, and Eros, or Cupid.
- During the Middle Ages, Christian artists modeled the wings of angels on those of powerful birds.



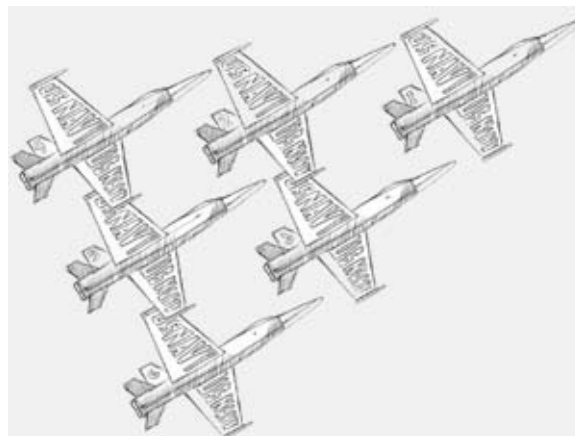
Their wings became larger and more effective-looking.



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### IS THIS AN ANGEL?

The Blue Angels flight precision team (part of the U.S. Navy) is one example of the idea that angels exist on a different plane from mere mortals. Not only are they immortal, but they don't have to worry about the laws of physics, including gravity, time, and space.



## 2

### *Where to Find Angels*

#### WHO'S WHO IN HEAVEN, EARTH, AND HELL?

Our understanding of angels comes from stories. Many of these stories are found in the holy books of the major religions, such as the book of the prophet Ezekiel in the Bible. They are considered holy because they are believed to have been directly written or inspired by God. There are other stories too, such as those told by Enoch, which contain some of the same ideas and events as the holy stories. Were they just “stories”? Or were they histories? Because religious experts through the ages have been unsure of the answer, the apochryphal stories have been set aside. They’re not *in* the holy books, but you might say they’re on a shelf nearby.

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HE SAW ANGELS

#### *Sixth century*

Mohammed told of going to heaven and seeing an angel with seventy thousand heads. Each head had seventy thousand faces, and each face had seventy thousand mouths. Each mouth had seventy thousand tongues speaking seventy thousand languages.

People of most faiths agree that the angels are without number, there are so many of them. The Jewish Kabbalah—Jewish mystical lore—is precise about the number of angels: 49 MILLION.

---

Both Enoch and Ezekiel describe extended tours to the heart of heaven and back. They say that the Almighty God is at the center of the universe. God is surrounded by angels that praise him, do his work, carry his messages, and even go to battle for him.

The Bible begins with creation. In the Book of Genesis, God creates the world as a Paradise. He makes Adam and Eve and gives them the job of naming all living things. But when Adam and Eve disobey God and are cast out of Paradise, the apochryphal story follows them. Paradise—a place where mortal man can live with immortal God—is left behind.

Now the heavens are walled off from humans. Sin and death is something humans experience here in our world, but it doesn’t exist in heaven. The border between heaven and Earth is guarded by the angels. But which angels?

When we use the word *angels*, we are usually talking about ones who are nearest to humans and who have the most interaction with people, watching over us closely and giving us messages. These are actually the angels of the ninth choir. There are eight other heavenly choirs, each with its own kind of angels: seraphim, cherubim, ophanim, dominions, virtues, powers, principalities, and archangels.

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