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Angels

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Introduction

Angels are supernatural beings who serve a variety of functions in biblical literature. The term most often used to denote angels in the Hebrew Bible, *mal'ak*, means “messenger.” The Septuagint frequently translates *mal'ak* with the Greek *angelos*, from which the English word “angel” derives. While angels are mentioned several times in the earlier writings of the Hebrew Bible, in the literature of the Second Temple period a veritable explosion of interest in them is found. Jewish writings of this era exhibit a sustained interest in identifying the various ranks and orders of the angels as well as in naming individual angels and delineating their specific functions. The extensive angelological speculation of this period deeply influenced later forms of Judaism and as well as constituting an important element of the Jewish heritage of early Christianity.

General Overviews

The works listed in this section may be consulted as introductions to further study of angels in biblical literature. Van der Toorn, et al. 1999 and Reiterer, et al. 2007 each devote substantial discussion both to conceptions of angels in the Bible and to angels and angel-like figures in the broader ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman contexts. Kim Harkins, et al. 2014 assembles a collection of essays on the Enochic Watchers and their reception in early Judaism and Christianity (cf. the scholarship cited under Fallen Angels). Papaioannou and Giantzaklidis 2016 investigates temple cosmology, which frequently has angelological significance (cf. scholarship cited under Apocalyptic Literature). Frey and Jost 2017 examines the connection between angels and earthly communities as it pertains to liturgy and worship in a variety of Jewish and Christian compositions. The popular German-language journal *Welt und Umwelt der Bibel* provides many short survey articles aimed at the broader public (see Leicht 2008). No comprehensive online resource for scholarship on angels is available. An assortment of websites offers information about angels. As a rule, these should be approached with caution as they often present a mixture of accurate information with unsubstantiated speculation and erroneous details.

Frey, Jörg, and Michael R. Jost, eds. *Gottesdienst und Engel im antiken Judentum und frühen Christentum. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2.446*. Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2017.

This edited volume focuses on the connection to the heavenly world envisioned in numerous Jewish and Christian compositions and the liturgical import of a relationship to the angels. Discussion topics and texts include the Dead Sea Scrolls, the New Testament, Rabbinic literature, and later Christian theological works.

Kim Harkins, Angela, Kelley Coblenz Bautch, and John C. Endres, eds. *The Fallen Angels Traditions: Second Temple Period Developments and Reception History*. Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 53. Washington: Catholic Biblical Association, 2014.

An important collection of essays on the topic, this volume includes studies of the Book of Watchers itself, as well as the subsequent use of the myth in a variety of compositions such as the Qumran Hodayot, *Jubilees*, Revelation, Gnostic texts, and medieval scholastic theology.

Leicht, Barbara D., ed. *Engel: Boten zwischen Himmel und Erde*. Welt und Umwelt der Bibel 50. Stuttgart: Katholische Bibelwerk, 2008.

A collection of German-language essays offering brief introductory surveys on a wide range of angel-related topics. While there is an emphasis on angelic beings in biblical literature, several other topics, such as winged creatures in the ancient Near East, angels in Christian art, and angels in the Quran, are treated.

Papaioannou, Kim, and Ioannis Giantzaklidis, eds. *Earthly Shadows, Heavenly Realities: Temple/Sanctuary Cosmology in Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Jewish Literature*. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2016.

These essays explore the relationship between heaven and earth from the perspective of temple cosmology, symbolism, etc. Texts surveyed include Akkadian, Hittite, and Canaanite works, the Hebrew Bible, Second Temple Period compositions, the New Testament, and Rabbinic literature.

Reiterer, Friedrich V., Tobias Niklas, and Karin Schöpflin, eds. *Angels: The Concept of Celestial Beings—Origins, Development and Reception*. Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook 2007. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007.

This extensive collection of articles includes broad surveys and some more-detailed essays treating conceptions of angels in the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, Second Temple and rabbinic literature, Islamic tradition, the ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman worlds, and more.

van der Toorn, Karl, Pieter W. van der Horst, and Bob Becking, eds. *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*. 2d ed. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1999.

A fundamental research tool for the study of angels and other divine beings in the ancient world. This encyclopedia includes entries on every divine being mentioned in the Bible and a treasure of information on divinity and religious belief in the ancient Near East and the Greco-Roman world. Entries provide important bibliographic information as well.

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