

**The Soul in the Afterlife: Individual Eschatological Beliefs
in Zoroastrianism, Mandaism and Islam**

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“... and who believe in the Revelation sent to thee, and sent before thy time, and (their hearts) have the assurance of the Hereafter. They are in (true) guidance, from their Lord, and it is these who will prosper” (Qur’ān 2:4)

“Say: ‘o People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you...” (Qur’ān 3:64)

„Hiermit versichere ich, dass ich die vorliegende Dissertation selbstständig angefertigt habe und dass ich keine anderen als die angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel benutzt habe. Des Weiteren versichere ich, dass anderweitig keine entsprechende Promotion beantragt wurde und hierbei die eingereichte Dissertation oder Teile daraus vorgelegt worden sind.“

Arash Emadinia

Abstract

The expectation that the soul continues life after leaving the material body is one of the important features of several Middle East religions. These religions state that the fate of the soul depends on the principles of right and wrong behaviours – ‘morality’ – and the quality of the true or false opinions – ‘beliefs’ – that a belief system recognises for the salvation of individuals. This system is generally called ‘moral eschatology’.

These eschatological beliefs are not created in vacuum. This means that they can be influenced by the beliefs that they confront through their history and can be affected by other beliefs in their neighbourhood. Comparison with other religions reveals resemblances between different eschatological beliefs. These resemblances are generally explained by such terms as ‘borrowing’ or ‘syncretism’ which may implicitly deny the ‘independent’ status of individual religions. This may happen because the terms ‘borrowing’ and ‘syncretism’ suggest that the borrowed features have been adopted in their original form without being adapted to the ‘borrowing’ belief system.

The similarities between faith systems categorised under the same religious groups, like Abrahamic religions, seem easy to explain, but some remarkable resemblances between religions that have different backgrounds and histories, like Zoroastrianism, Mandaism and Islam, need to be explained. These three belief systems bear resemblances in spite of their different backgrounds and origin. They confronted one another in late antique times in a distinct geographical area which is called Sasanian Iran, that is to say, modern Iran and Mesopotamia, mainly modern Iraq.

The most important sources of these religions were compiled in late antique times, between the 3rd and 11th centuries CE. These sources sometimes bear similar ideas like the continuation of the life of the soul, the soul-taker (life-taker), interrogation, embodiment of deeds in the Afterlife, Paradise, Hell and an intermediate state between Paradise and Hell etc., that need to be explained.

The resemblances between these three faith systems are here partially by adapting a linguistic theory which is called ‘Sprachbund’. This theory states that the resemblances between languages could be due to three reasons: 1. Genetic retention or original ideas; 2. Parallel development; and 3. Borrowing. According to this theory, when two or more languages share significant traits that are not found in languages from the same families spoken outside the geographical area in which these languages have confronted one another, a ‘Sprachbund’ has been formed. When we refer to religions with different histories and background, but with similar eschatological ideas, like Zoroastrianism, Mandaism and Islam, it seems that this theory may help us to explain the resemblances.

As mentioned above, all these three belief systems have different backgrounds: Zoroastrianism with an Indo-Iranian background, Islam, one of the so called Abrahamic religions, and Mandaism, a religion with gnostic roots or pagan origin. At first sight, it seems that in late antique times, both Mandaism and Islam ‘borrowed’ some of the Iranian eschatological beliefs, apparently Zoroastrian beliefs, after confronting each other in Sasanian Iran. However, the term ‘borrowing’ may implicitly deny the ‘independent’ status of both Mandaism and Islam.

It may be more acceptable to say that both Mandaism and Islam accepted some of the Zoroastrian individual eschatological beliefs, in such a way that they all achieve or serve the Islamic and gnostic overall world view and beliefs. Apparently, in late antique times in Sasanian Iran, the idea of ‘high existence’ or ‘Life beyond’ material life was introduced to the Arab and gnostic communities, and was accepted by their thinkers. However, this acceptance was conducted in such a way as to achieve their own purposes.

It seems that the inspiration drawn from Iranian (Zoroastrian) ideas like the idea of 'Barzakh' (high existence or life beyond) continued after the advent of Islam, when the Arab conquerors were confronted more directly with Zoroastrians, especially through the conversion of Zoroastrians to the new faith by. Some typical Zoroastrian ideas like the embodiment of deeds (Daēnā) and the Zoroastrian idea of the intermediate stage between Paradise and Hell (Hammistagān) may be good examples of this. It should be noted that both being 'inspired by' and 'accepting' the new ideas were in accordance with the maintenance of their Islamic or gnostic natural features, so we see that in spite of the acceptance of some new ideas by Arab and gnostic thinkers the dominant features of both belief systems have been maintained. With regard to the theory of 'Sprachbund,' we can conclude that that Zoroastrianism, Mandaeism and Islam formed a 'Religionbund' through which they share a number of remarkable individual eschatological beliefs.

Key terms: Middle East religions, soul, morality, beliefs, moral eschatology, borrowing, syncretism, inspiration, independent status, Zoroastrianism, Mandaeism, Islam, Sasanian Iran, Indo-Iranian, Abrahamic religion, gnostic, Sprachbund, Barzakh, interrogation, embodiment of deeds, Daēnā, Hammistagān, Religionbund

Abstrakt

Die Erwartung, dass die Seele nach dem Verlassen des materiellen Körpers weiterlebt, ist eines der wichtigen Merkmale mehrerer Nahost-Religionen. Diese Religionen behaupten, dass das Schicksal der Seele von den Prinzipien des rechten und des falschen Verhaltens abhängt – ‚Moral‘ - und der Qualität der wahren oder falschen Meinungen – „Glauben“ -, dass ein Glaubenssystem für die Rettung von Individuen ausschlaggebend ist. Dieses System wird allgemein als ‚moralische Eschatologie‘ bezeichnet.

Diese eschatologischen Überzeugungen entstehen nicht in einem Vakuum. Das bedeutet, dass sie von solchen Überzeugungen beeinflusst werden können, mit denen sie durch ihre Geschichte konfrontiert sind, und von anderen Überzeugungen in ihrer Nachbarschaft betroffen sein können. Der Vergleich mit anderen Religionen zeigt Ähnlichkeiten verschiedener eschatologischer Überzeugungen. Diese Ähnlichkeiten werden in der Regel durch Begriffe wie ‚Kreditaufnahme‘ oder ‚Synkretismus‘ erklärt, die implizit den ‚unabhängigen‘ Status einzelner Religionen infrage stellen können. Dazu kann es kommen, da die Begriffe „Entleihung“ und ‚Synkretismus‘ darauf hindeuten, dass die entlehnten Merkmale in ihrer ursprünglichen Form angenommen wurden, ohne an das Glaubenssystem des ‚Kreditnehmers‘ angepasst worden zu sein.

Die Ähnlichkeiten zwischen Glaubenssystemen, die unter eine religiöse Gruppe wie etwa die abrahamitischen Religionen fallen, scheinen sich leicht erklären zu lassen. Einige bemerkenswerte Ähnlichkeiten zwischen Religionen, die unterschiedliche Hintergründe und Geschichten haben, wie Zoroastrismus, Mandäismus und Islam, müssen jedoch erklärt werden. Diese drei Glaubenssysteme weisen trotz ihrer unterschiedlichen Herkunft Ähnlichkeiten auf. Sie trafen in spätantiken Zeiten in einem ausgedehnten geographischen Gebiet aufeinander, dem so genannten sassanidischen Iran, der die Fläche des modernen Iran und Mesopotamiens, vor allem aber die des modernen Irak umfasste.

Die wichtigsten Quellen dieser Religionen wurden in spätantiken Zeiten, zwischen dem 3. und 11. Jahrhundert CE zusammengestellt. Diese Quellen beinhalten teilweise ähnliche Vorstellungen (wie beispielsweise die Fortsetzung des Seelenlebens, die eines Seelenempfängers, der Befragung, der Verkörperung der Taten im Jenseits, des Paradieses, der Hölle und eines Zwischenzustandes zwischen Paradies und Hölle usw.), die erklärt werden müssen.

Die Ähnlichkeiten zwischen diesen drei Glaubenssystemen sind hier teilweise auf die Anpassung einer sprachlichen Theorie, die als ‚Sprachbund‘ bezeichnet wird, zurückzuführen. Diese Theorie besagt, dass die Ähnlichkeiten zwischen den Sprachen aus drei Gründen bestehen könnten: 1. Genetische Retention oder originelle Ideen; 2. Parallelentwicklung; und 3. Entleihung. Dieser Theorie zufolge wurde ein "Sprachbund" gebildet, wenn zwei oder mehr Sprachen signifikante Merkmale teilen, die nicht in Sprachen aus denselben Familien vorkommen, die außerhalb des geografischen Gebiets gesprochen werden, in dem sich diese Sprachen zusammentreffen. Wenn wir auf Religionen mit unterschiedlichen Geschichten und Hintergründen, aber mit ähnlichen eschatologischen Ideen wie Zoroastrismus, Mandäismus und Islam verweisen, so scheint es, dass diese Theorie uns dabei helfen kann, die Ähnlichkeiten zu erklären.

Wie oben erwähnt, haben alle diese drei Glaubenssysteme unterschiedliche Hintergründe: Der Zoroastrismus mit einem indo-iranischen Hintergrund, der Islam, eine der sogenannten abrahamitischen Religionen, und der Mandäismus, eine Religion mit gnostischen Wurzeln oder heidnischen Ursprungs. Auf den ersten Blick scheint es, dass sowohl der Mandäismus als auch der Islam in den spätantiken Zeiten einige der iranischen eschatologischen Überzeugungen, scheinbar zoroastrianischen Überzeugungen, entlehnten, nachdem sie im sassanidischen Iran

aufeinandergetroffen waren. Der Begriff ‚Entleihung‘ kann jedoch implizit den "unabhängigen" Status sowohl des Mandäismus als auch den des Islam infrage stellen.

Es ist vielleicht akzeptabler zu sagen, dass sowohl der Mandäismus als auch der Islam von einigen der zoroastrischen individuellen eschatologischen Überzeugungen akzeptierten, dass diese den islamischen und gnostischen Weltanschauungen und Glauben dienen. Anscheinend wurde in spätantiken Zeiten im sassanidischen Iran die Vorstellung von ‚hoher Existenz‘ oder eines ‚Lebens jenseits‘ materiellen Lebens in die arabischen und gnostischen Gemeinschaften eingeführt und von ihren Denkern übernommen. Diese Akzeptanz erfolgte jedoch so, dass sie ihre eigenen Zwecke erfüllen konnten.

Es scheint, dass die Inspiration durch iranische (zoroastrische) Vorstellungen wie die von ‚Barzakh‘ (hohe Existenz oder Leben jenseits) nach dem Aufkommen des Islam anhielt, als die arabischen Eroberer direkt auf Zoroastrer trafen, vor allem durch die Konvertierung bzw. Bekehrung von Zoroastrern zum neuen Glauben. Einige typische zoroastrische Vorstellungen wie die Verkörperung von Taten (Daēnā) und die zoroastrische Idee der Zwischenstufe zwischen Paradies und Hölle (Hammistagān) dürften hier als gute Beispiele betrachtet werden. Es sei darauf hingewiesen, dass sowohl die ‚inspirierten‘ und "akzeptierten" neuen Vorstellungen im Einklang mit der Aufrechterhaltung ihrer islamischen oder gnostischen natürlichen Züge standen. Trotz der Akzeptanz einiger neuer Ideen arabischer und gnostischer Denker sehen wir, dass die dominierenden Merkmale beider Glaubenssysteme beibehalten wurden. In Bezug auf die Theorie des "Sprachbundes" können wir darauf schließen, dass der Zoroastrismus, der Mandäismus und der Islam einen ‚Religionsbund‘ bilden, durch den sie eine Reihe von bemerkenswerten individuellen eschatologischen Überzeugungen teilen.

Schlüsselbegriffe: Nahost-Religionen, Seele, Moral, Glauben, moralische Eschatologie, Entlehnung, Synkretismus, Inspiration (Eingebung), unabhängiger Status, Zoroastrismus, Mandäismus, Islam, Sassanidischer Iran, Indo-Iranisch, Abrahamitische Religion, Gnostiker, Sprachbund, Barzakh, Befragung, die Verkörperung von Taten, Daēnā, Hammistagān, Religionsbund

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Abbreviations

- Aog. Asa, KaiKhusroo M. Jamasp. *Aogəmadaēcā: A Zoroastrian Liturgy*. Vienna: Der Oesterreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1982.
- Arb. Arabic
- ATŠ. Drower, E. S. *The Thousand and Twelve Questions: Alif Trisar Šuialia*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1960.
- Av. Avesta
- Avn. Avestan
- AWN. Gignoux, Philippe. *Le livre d’Ardaviraz*, trans. Zhālih Āmūzgār. Tehrān: Intishārāt i Mo‘īn, 1383.
- Bd. Bahār, Mehrdad, trans. *Farnbağ Dādagī: Bundahišn*. Tehrān: Intishārāt i Ṭūs, 1369.
- BKḤ. al-Suyūfī, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn Sābiq al-dīn al-Ḥuḍayrī. *Bušrā al-Ka‘ib bi Liqā’ al-Ḥibīb*. ed. Majdī al-sayid Ibrāhīm. Cairo: Maktabat al-Qur’ān, 1406/1986.
- DAb. Drower, E. S. *Diwan Abatur: or Progress through the Purgatories*. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1950.
- Dd. Jaafari-Dehaghi, Mahmoud. *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*. Paris: Association pour l’Avancement des Études Iraniennes, 1998.
- DFK. Ghazzālī, Abū Ḥamid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī, *al-Durrah al-Fakhirah fi kashf al-Ulūm al-Āakhirah*. ed. Muwafaq u ī al-Jabr. Cairo: Maktabat al-Qur’ān, 1415/1995.
- DhM. al-Baghdādī, Abū Bakr. *Dhikr al-Mawt*. ‘Ajmān: Maktabat al-Qurān, 2002.
- DMx. Tafazzulī, Aḥmad, trans. *Mēnōg ī Xrad*. Tehrān: Intishārāt i Bonyād i Farhang i Īrān, 1354.
- GL. al-Saadi, Qais Mughashash, and Hamed Mughashash al-Saadi. *Ginza Rabba: The great Treasure, An Equivalent Translation of the Mandaean Holy Book*. Drabsha, 2012.
- GR. al-Saadi, Qais Mughashash, and Hamed Mughashash al-Saadi. *Ginza Rabba: The great Treasure, An Equivalent Translation of the Mandaean Holy Book*. Drabsha, 2012.
- ḤBM. Ṭabāṭabā’ī, Muḥammad ḥusayn. *Ḥayāt mā ba’d al-mawt*. Karbalā: al-‘Ataba al-Ḥusayniyya al-Muqaddasa, 2008/1429.
- HN. Mīrfakhrā’ī, Mahshīd, trans. *Hādōxt Nask*. Tehrān: Pazhūhishgāh i ‘Ulūm i ‘Insānī, 2007.
- Ist. al-Ṭūsī, Abī Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan. al-‘Istibṣār, Beirut: Dār al-‘Aḍwā’, 1413/1992.
- Jb. Lidzbarski, Mark. *Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer*. Gissen: Verlag von Alfred Töpelmann, 1915.
- MAkh. Qumī, ‘Abbās. Manāzil Al-‘Ākhira: *Pirāmūn i marg va jahān i pas az marg*. Qum: Dār al-Fikr, 1390.
- MP. Middle Persian
- MYF. al-Qumī, Abī Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ib al-Ḥasan Bābūyih. *Man lā yaḥḍarūh al-Faqīh*, Beirut: Mu’assah al-‘Alamī al-Maṭbū‘āt, 1406/1986.

NP.	New Persian
OP.	Old Persian
Pah. Riv. Dd	Williams, A. V. <i>The Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg</i> . Vols. 1,2, Copenhagen: The Royal Danish Academy of Science and Letters, 1990.
Pahl.	Pahlavi
Q.	Drower, E. S., trans. <i>Qulasta: The Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaeans</i> . Leiden: Brill, 1959.
Qu.	Ali, Abdullah Yusuf, trans. <i>The Holy Qur'an</i> . Wordsworth Editions, 2000.
Qub.	al-Baghdādī, Abū Bakr. <i>Kitāb Al-Qubūr</i> . Medina: Maktabat al-Ghurabā al-Aṣriyyah, 2000.
Riv.	Dhābhara, Bamanjī Na. <i>The Persian Rivayats of Hormazyar Framarz and Others: Their Version with Introduction and Notes</i> . Bombay: K. R. Cama Oriental Inst., 1932.
Šaddar Bd.	Dhabhar, Ervad Bamanji Nasarvanji. <i>Saddar Naṣr and Daddar Bundelesh</i> . Bombay: British India Press, 1909.
Šaddar Nr.	Dhabhar, Ervad Bamanji Nasarvanji. <i>Saddar Naṣr and Daddar Bundelesh</i> . Bombay: British India Press, 1909.
ŠBu.	Muhammad Ibn Ismaill al-Bukhāri, <i>Sahīh Al-Bukhāri</i> . Trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, (Riyadh, Maktaba Dar-us-Salam, 1997).
SDw.	Hāfīz Abu Dawud Sulaiman bin Aṣh'ath, <i>Sunan Abu Dawud</i> , trans. Yaser Qadhi, Riyadh: Maktaba Dar-us-Salam, 2008.
SGh.	Qūchānī, Aqā najafī. <i>Sīzāhat i gharb yā Sarnivisht i arvāḥ ba'd az marg</i> . Isfahan: Gūyā, 1377.
SMj.	Muhammad Bin Yazeed Ibn Majah Al-Qazwīnī, <i>Sunan Ibn Mājah</i> , trans. Nasiruddin al-Khattab, (Riyadh, Maktaba Dar-us-Salam, 2007).
SMu.	Abul Hussain Muslim Ibn al-Hajjaj, <i>Sahīh Muslim</i> , trans. Nasiruddin al-Khattab, Riyadh: Maktaba Dar-us-Salam, 2007.
SNš.	Sidra d-nišmata
SNs.	Hāfīz Abū Abdur Rahmān Ahmad ibn Shu'aib bin 'Ali An-Nasā'i, <i>Sunan An-Nasā'i</i> , trans. Nāsiruddin al- Khattāb, Riyadh: Maktaba Dar-us-Salam, 2007.
STr.	Hāfīz Abū 'Eīsā Mohammad Ibn 'Eīsā At-Tirmidhī, <i>Jāmi' At-Tirmidhī</i> , trans. Abu Khaliyl, Riyadh: Maktaba Dar-us-Salam, 2007.
TAḥ.	al-Ṭūsī, Abī Ja'far Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan. <i>Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām</i> , Beirut: Dār al-Ta'āruf li-Lmaṭbū'āt, 1412/1992.
UKf.	al-Kuliynī, Muḥammad ibn Ya'qūb. <i>Uṣūl al-Kāf ī</i> , Beirut: Manshūrāt al-Fajr, 1428/2007.
Vd.	Vendīdād
Y.	Yasna
Yt.	Yašt
Zādisparam	Rashed-Mohassel, M. T., trans. <i>Vizīdagīhā ī Zādisparam</i> . Tehrān: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, 2006.

1 Introduction

1.1 The research question

Nearly all religious traditions claim to know what will happen at the end of life, and try to describe the ultimate fate of an individual or community, or the entire universe. The word *eschatology* is the designation for the traditions with such claims. It is derived from the Greek word *ta eschata* which means “the last things”. As mentioned, it refers to the events that happen at the end of life and describes the ultimate fate of an individual or a community after one dies according to religious traditions.¹ Eschatological concepts can be classified under different categories, one of which is Individual, and the other Communal or Collective, eschatology. While the former category mainly deals with the fate of a single person, the latter focuses on the fate of the whole community.²

The notion of ‘individual eschatology,’ i.e. the expectation that the soul continues life after leaving the material body, plays an important role in several religions originating in the Middle East. In these belief systems, the fate of the individual’s soul will be dependent on the ‘moral’ (of or relating to principles of right and wrong in behaviour) quality of their life on earth, and ‘beliefs’ (something that is accepted, considered to be true, or held as an opinion: something believed), i.e. the beliefs that religion determines and recognises as the way of salvation. This could be generally called ‘moral eschatology’.³

Similar to many religious ideas, eschatological beliefs are not created in a vacuum; they are surrounded by other eschatological beliefs from other traditions, such that one can find common eschatological ideas within different belief systems. Sometimes, belief systems are categorized under the same religious groups. The resemblances between these faith systems, such as the Abrahamic religions, seem easier to explain, but there are sometimes resemblances

¹ Fred M. Donner, “A Typology of Eschatological Concepts” in: *Roads to Paradise*, ed., Heinrich Biesterfeldt, Sebastian Günther, Vol. 1, (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 757.

² *Ibid.*, 767.

³ Kreyenbroek names it ‘moral eschatology’. For this term see Philip G. Kreyenbroek, “Millennialism and Eschatology in the Zoroastrian Tradition,” in: *Teachers and Teachings in the Good Religion: Opera Minora on Zoroastrianism*, ed., Kianoosh Rezaia (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013), 151-173.

In a private email, he says: “*Morality implies a choice between good and evil for which one can be held responsible. In Zoroastrianism, Mandaism and Islam the fate of the soul depends on whether one has led a good life or not; leading that life is part of one’s moral ‘conduct’. That implies that in Islam, ‘belief’ is seen as a duty, which one either carries out or not. (Unlike the modern Western and perhaps Iranian concept, which would define ‘belief’ as a moral concept, i.e. one which you cannot do much about, and for which you therefore cannot be judged). According the Chambers Dictionary of Synonyms and Antonyms, synonyms of the adjective ‘moral’ include ‘high-minded, honest, honourable, righteous, pure, virtuous,’ all of which can be used of the mind as well as of actions. There is a difference, therefore between the English usage of ‘moral’ and the Persian concept of akhlāq.*”

It is worth mentioning, I think, that one should classify eschatology as ‘moral’ or ‘belief’ eschatology. In a religion like Zoroastrianism where one is free to choose between good and evil, and finally one’s thoughts, words and deeds will be questioned in the Afterlife, ‘moral eschatology’ seems to be appropriate, because according to the definitions, moral implies “of or relating to principles of right and wrong in behaviour”. In a religion like Islam where in the Afterlife, one will be questioned not about ‘moral’ behaviours, but about beliefs (something that is accepted, considered to be true, or held as an opinion: something believed) in Allah, Muhammad, the Quran, Mecca (in Shia, Imams), it could be better to call it ‘belief eschatology’.

between faith systems that have different backgrounds and histories that need to be explained, such as those of Zoroastrianism, Mandaeism and Islam.

Experts in religious studies have tried to explain the possible similarities between certain features found in different belief systems. These have been variously denoted by such terms as ‘borrowing,’ or explained as results of ‘syncretism’ implying “the combination of different forms of belief or practice”⁴ or the post-modern concept of ‘hybridity’ that implies “something heterogeneous in origin or composition.”⁵ A possible objection to these terms, however, is that they appear to imply that one religious system has taken over one or more features originating in another. All of these terms have the great disadvantage of implicitly denying the ‘independent’ status of individual religions. The terms ‘borrowing,’ ‘hybridity’ and ‘syncretism’ also suggest that the borrowed features have been adopted in their original form, without adaptation to the ‘borrowing’ religious system.

The present study tries to compare the individual eschatological beliefs in Zoroastrianism, Mandaeism and Islam. Therefore, the main question that this study deals with is: ‘Is there any similarity between the individual eschatological ideas of Zoroastrianism; Mandaeism and Islam? If so, it will attempt to offer what these similarities can tell us about the process of the reception of elements with ‘external’ origins in these religions’

1.2 The religions in question in this study

The striking similarities between some eschatological ideas in Zoroastrianism, Mandaeism and Islam, in spite of their different backgrounds, invite one to conduct an exact survey. Some key terms in Zoroastrianism like *ruwān* (soul), *Astwihād* (the Angel of Death), *dādwārīh* (judgment), *Činwad puhl* (divider bridge), *wahišt* (Paradise), *dušox* (Hell), *garōdmān* (House of Song, Paradise) and *hammistagān* (an intermediate place between Hell and Paradise); *rūh* (soul), *barzakh* (Limbo), *al-jannah* (Paradise), *al-nār* (Hell), *al-a`rāf* (an intermediate level between Paradise and Hell) in Islam; and the Mandaean *ruha* (spirit), *nišimta* (soul) and *maṭarta* (purgatory), *alma d-nhura* (world of light) and *alma d-hšuka* (world of darkness), suggest some similarities between these religions. As mentioned above, , these similarities are mainly explained by terms such as ‘borrowing’ or ‘hybridity,’ with the premise that such incidents could have occurred in the geographical contact region (which was provided in Sasanian Iran and the early Islamic centuries).

In addition to the above-mentioned reason i.e. similarity of ideas, some other factors underlie this survey:

- 1- The main sources of these religions (except the Qur’ān) as the base for later orthodox beliefs were mostly compiled in the same places, that is, Mesopotamia and Iran. The former was controlled by Iranians for centuries as the political centre of the Sasanian dynasty.
- 2- A large part of these sources was compiled between the 2nd and 11th /or 12th centuries CE (apparently, some Zoroastrian and Mandaean sources had been compiled earlier).

⁴ Merriam Webster Dictionary in: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/syncretism> (accessed 27.03.2017).

⁵ Merriam Webster Dictionary in: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hybridity> (accessed 27.03.2017).

- 3- The main sources of these religions (in contrast to the New and Old Testaments) prominently devote some parts to the Afterlife.
- 4- They share similar principles stated prominently in their main sources such as the concepts of the soul and a kind of existence after departing the material world.

However, it may be wondered why this study does not include some other beliefs such as Judaism, Christianity, Manichaeism and Buddhism, which were active in late Ancient Iran. The most important answer to this question is that the primary sources (scriptures) of these beliefs such as the Jewish and Christian sources were mainly either compiled in different places and eras (such as Christianity and Judaism), or had different viewpoints about the fate of the soul after death, such as those of Buddhism and Manichaeism. For example, in Manichaeism, although Iran and Mesopotamia were the birth place of Mani and his religion, this religion basically preaches incarnation (*Zādmarg*) as the doctrine and core of its individual eschatological beliefs.⁶ In the case of Judaism and Christianity, their main sources do not devote a clear chapter to the fate of the soul in Afterlife.

1.3 The purpose of the study

The present study queries the validity of the above assumptions, and seeks to analyse the precise nature of ‘borrowing’ in these three religions which can be assumed to have developed at least partly in the cultural atmosphere of Iran and Mesopotamia (or ‘Sasanian Iran’) from the 2nd to the 12th century CE.

The study will present a detailed comparison between teachings about ‘individual eschatology,’⁷ as reflected in the written literature of these three religions, and an analysis of similarities and differences between the teachings. It will also try to give an explanatory model for the resemblances that these three faith systems bear. Worthy of mention is the fact that a study of the Islamic term *barzakh*, which is probably of Iranian origin, will play a prominent role in our comparison between these faith systems.

To achieve its aims, this study tries to compare individual eschatological beliefs with respect to death, judgment, Heaven and Hell in these three faith systems. This will be done in three stages, namely (1) selecting data from the most important sources which are accepted as canonical texts to show certain analogies;

(2) Observing their similarities and differences; and (3) explaining the observed similarities and differences as far as possible.⁸ All this is done to achieve the following objectives:

- Recognising similarities and differences
- Explaining the similarities and differences

⁶ J., Kevin, Coyle, “Manichaeism and its Legacy,” in: *NagHammadian and Manichaean Studies*, eds., Johannes, Van Oort, Einar, Thomassen, vol. 69 (Leiden: Brill, 2009); Jason David, Beduhn, *The Manichaean Body in Discipline and Ritual* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

⁷ Eschatological beliefs are divided into two categories: individual and collective. The former refers to the fate of individual souls after death, where they go, what they do and what happens to them, while the latter talks about the fate of humankind and the end of history.

⁸ Michael Stausberg, “Comparison” in: *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, eds., Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (London: Routledge, 2011), 21.

- Analysing the nature of ‘borrowed’ concepts in the religions concerned, with a view to examining the relevance of such concepts as ‘syncretism’ and ‘hybridity,’ and the possible need for a different explanatory model.

1.3 Theoretical framework

1.3.1 Syncretism, hybridity and cultural transmission

Throughout human history, almost nothing has remained without change, especially in human societies, due to interaction and impressionability. The result of contact has sometimes caused many changes, innovations and even the formation of new subjects such as languages, religions, etc.⁹

The processes of interaction, contact, change and innovation have given rise to various academic theories. One of these theories is based on the concept of ‘hybridity’. The term ‘hybrid’ derives from the Latin ‘hybrida,’ and means “anything derived from heterogeneous sources, or composed of different or incongruous elements,”¹⁰ which refers to the mixed or composite character of different elements. This intermixed character of different elements in the world of religions can be the result of *borrowing* which could be the fruit of contact among cultures. Borrowing is the effective factor in the formation of hybridity or syncretism; on the other hand *syncretism* and *hybridity* are the rent of borrowing from others.

The term *borrowing* derives from the verb ‘borrow’ that suggests different meanings in different situations and fields. According to the dictionary the term ‘borrow’ can be defined as follows:

- a) To borrow (money) with the intention of returning the same plus interest, for example to borrow money from the bank.
- b) To appropriate for one's own use, such as borrowing a metaphor from Shakespeare.
- c) Derive, adopt, like traditions borrowed from African polytheism.
- d) In mathematics it means to take (one) from a digit of the minuend in arithmetical subtraction in order to add it as 10 to the digit holding the next lower place.
- e) In the field of languages it means to adopt into one language from another. An example of this could be the English word "entrepreneur" which was borrowed from French.

With regard to the above definitions of the term ‘borrow’, it seems that ‘borrow’ implicitly conveys the concept of control and awareness. It implies that someone has consciously decided to use and adopt something. In the field of religions, it seems that the term *borrowing* implicitly conveys the concept of control and awareness. It can bring to mind the notion that the founder or founders of a belief system have consciously decided to use and adopt some certain features of a belief system in the new belief system that they are establishing. This seems to be to some extent impossible. For example in a religion like Islam, apparently most of the teachings (in the Quran) were formed as a result of the discourses with their audiences and or the environment in which they developed. In this condition, is it possible to say that, for example,

⁹ A good example of this is the formation of Manichaeism. This religion is the result of ‘borrowing’ and adaptation with other religious cultures in the era and area where this religion was founded by Manī – a good example of religious innovations in Late Antiquity.

¹⁰ Oxford English Dictionary in: <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/89809?redirectedFrom=hybrid#eid> (accessed 07.03.2017).

the founder of Islam consciously adopted some features of the active belief systems in his environment, or would it be better to say that it was an unconscious reaction to his society while he has been inspired by some of its common beliefs in his revelations? The latter seems more plausible. The purposes of the new belief system play an important role in the mostly unconscious adaptation of the adopted beliefs; this will be discussed in detail later.

As mentioned before, contact can result in borrowing and borrowing is the key factor in the formation of hybrid outcomes, concepts, products etc. However, it seems that hybridity and syncretism are not always welcomed in the humanities, especially religious studies, due to different reasons. There are fierce arguments against the idea of religious syncretism or hybridity. Most of the opponents and critics are amongst the followers of religions. Basically, they challenge the idea of religious syncretism or hybridity for three reasons:

1. The premise that only certain kinds of religion can be syncretistic.
2. The premise that syncretism is an unacceptable compromise of a clear, received truth, which is the fundamentalist belief.
3. The premise that syncretism is apostasy, a departure from the truth of religion, and a danger to the community of the believers, which is the harshest critique.

In general, it can be stated that all these arguments are made against the idea of religious syncretism due to the fact that syncretism and hybridity implicitly deny the 'independent' status of individual belief systems, most of which claim they are the only undoubtable source of the real truth (religious exclusivism).

The other argument that can be used against the idea of religious syncretism is that, if one accepts that contact can result in borrowing, and borrowing ends in syncretism, syncretism must be inevitable and as a consequence this question is raised: can all religious ideas be borrowed? Are all religious ideas to be legitimately borrowed from one another? Is it possible to accept ideas that are not adaptable to the core teachings of a belief system?¹¹ For example, can Buddhism accept the monotheistic idea of Abrahamic religion while Buddha's teaching denies a creator? It seems that the potentiality of the religion that is going to borrow an idea and the core principles of the two religions involved are two important factors to consider as regards any idea from an outer source. Moreover, each religion has a tendency to define the values and reciprocal ideas that could be compatible. In other words, there must be harmony with the values and purposes of the borrowing belief system and with the functions of that belief system. It can be seen that the function of the belief system can also block any outer idea. In general it can be stated that each belief system has a filtering method against outer ideas to prevent the formation of a conglomerate. This happens mostly to preserve the core principles of each religion, that which constitutes its very truth by its adherents. In general it seems that the idea of religious hybridity and borrowing in comparing religions with the purpose of explaining similarities needs to be redefined, or a new explanatory model needs to be presented, a model that avoids the challenges of religious syncretism on the one hand, and retains the independent status of belief systems on the other.

¹¹ As mentioned before, some claim that only certain kinds of religion can be syncretistic.

1.3.2 Cultural transmission

According to the minimal definition of the word ‘culture’ on which there can be a consensus, culture refers to the arts, beliefs, customs, institutions and other products of human work and thought considered as a unit, especially with regard to a particular time or social group.¹² Apparently, this cultural capital, whatever the definition of the culture includes, can be transmitted from one generation to another.

Cultural learning and cultural transmission are special human forms of social learning in human societies. It may be an all-inclusive set up that makes the passing on of data from people or groups of people to their counterparts possible, but it is essential to know that transmission does not incorporate all the substance of culture and transfer it to all the individuals of a society; rather, it does so for particular instances, generally for those components that are most vital from the perspective of the transmitter and the beneficiary group or are easier to transfer and exchange. It is unique to mankind to transmit knowledge accurately to other individuals in space and time. It can be done by means of such devices as intentional teaching through the formation of individual behaviour.

Some scholars understand cultural transmission as the transmission of knowledge, values and other factors that influence behaviour from one generation to the next.¹³ But it should also be emphasised that the transmission of cultural capital is a special process that takes place in a culture-contact situation.¹⁴ In this exchange, two factors ensure the greatest transmission effects; first the spreading of mental representations from one person to the next, and second, the homogeneity of the transmitters with reference to the transmitted contents.

The concept of ‘cultural transmission’ according to its meaning is a transferring process carrying cultural information from one generation to the next, and from one group to the next as a result of imprinting, conditioning, observation, imitation, or as a result of direct teaching and active contacts. It designates the transmission of culture or cultural elements that are widely distributed like social orientations (e.g., values), skills (e.g., reading and writing), knowledge (e.g., the healing power of certain herbs), and behaviour (e.g., the exchange of rings in a wedding ceremony). The range of this distribution defines the boundaries of the respective culture.¹⁵ As

¹² Merriam Webster Dictionary in: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/culture?src=search-dict-box> (accessed 14.04.2019)

¹³ Ulte Schöpflug, *Cultural Transmission, Psychological, Developmental, Social and Methodological Aspects* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁵ However, it should be mentioned that These these three processes are necessary for any cultural persistence: “1) Transmission from one generation to the next must occur, with the degree of generational uniformity directly related to the degree of institutionalisation; 2) once transmission has taken place, maintenance of the culture must occur, with the degree of maintenance directly related to the degree of institutionalisation; and 3) once maintenance has occurred, cultural resistance depends on the resistance to change, with the degree of resistance directly related to the degree of institutionalisation.”, see Ulte Schöpflug, *op. cit.*, 13. Moreover, to transmit cultural elements two mechanisms play an important role: imitation and conformism. The recipient learns through both passive ways like observation, learning and imitation, and active ways such as teaching processes. He/she conforms and adopts preferentially the cultural traits that are most frequent in the population; the most frequent trait is most likely to be the most adaptive one. Cultural transmission has two components: cognitive and emotional. The cognitive part in the transmission process is constituted by the contents of the transmission: beliefs and folk tales as well as myths. The emotional component comes into play with non-natural beliefs such as religion; it is assumed that the emotionally toned contents have a greater chance of being transmitted, just as they have a higher probability

we noticed, religious beliefs are considered as a part of human cultures and their cultural capital, so they may be transmitted from one generation to other generations.

With regard to the above explanations, it should be stated that from ancient times to the present, there have been some civilisations that tried to expand their territories and as a wanted or unwanted result developed laws, culture, language and beliefs. This resulted in the unification of the defeated cultures which may have led to the formation of a big human society with more similarities, whose rules and orders facilitated communication between different areas. They tried to gather together different groups, tribes, religions, etc., an endeavour which could end in integration and trans-culturalism. The wanted or unwanted condition of togetherness that was provided by some ancient civilizations made contact between different people and ideas possible. This contact provided a foundation for reciprocal influence among people. This is very similar to the modern term ‘globalisation,’ which is the process of integrating nations and peoples politically, economically, and culturally into a larger community.¹⁶

The contact between generations in a society or human branch and the contact between different societies could incite cultural transmission and as a result make possible the transmission of religious ideas as cultural capital. This could be true in the case of Ancient Iran, modern Iran and to some extent Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) with regard to the territory that was controlled by the Sasanians, a suitable area for interaction between belief systems. According to the evidence, the late ancient world was divided between two forces: Sasanian Iran and the Roman Empire. Each consisted of different ethical and religious groups, which were later inherited by the Islamic Empire as the successor of the Sasanians. In that era, because of the available contact region (a geographical region that makes contact between communities, religions, languages, etc. possible) that was established, many different languages, ethical and religious groups were in contact¹⁷; therefore, a potential contact region was available for all the religious communities which could cause interactions, influences, innovations and changes.¹⁸ Considering all these and referring to the religions discussed, these questions come to mind: could the contact region which was established in late Ancient Iran wield influences between Zoroastrianism, Mandaism and Islam in the field of eschatological ideas, and if so, how can this be explained in spite of the fact that these three religions have different historical backgrounds?

It is obvious that social agents such as political and cultural domination with a diversity of motivations and goals call together communication processes to articulate the background for the contact of ethical and religious groups. Apparently, this also holds true in late Ancient Iran. In that era, cultural contact and, consequently, religious contact (religions are a part and surely a very important component of cultures) was inevitable and could result in religious fusions.¹⁹

of being remembered. This greater chance of being transmitted might be derived from emotionality, but it might also be due to the fact that unnatural beliefs such as religion, superstitions, and myths contain minimally counterintuitive concepts. Consequently, they are easily remembered and transmitted, see Ulte Schönplug, op. cit., 23.

¹⁶ Richard Foltz in his book *Religions of the Silk Road: Premodern Patterns of Globalization* (Palgrave: Macmillan, 2010), 2-5 argues for a kind of globalisation in ancient times.

¹⁷ For the religious diversity in Sasanian Iran see: Touraj Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia; The Rise and Fall of an Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co, 2009), 69-97.

¹⁸ Marwan M. Kraidy, *In Hybridity, or Cultural Logic of Globalization* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005), 2.

¹⁹ In the world of religions, it is called syncretism, which is defined as: “*The amalgamation or attempted amalgamation of different religions, cultures, or schools of thought*” or “*The fusion of religious cults or movements in situations of intercultural contacts, [where] religions tend to interact, either spontaneously or by intentional adaptation*”.

Different religions, cultures, schools of thought, intercultural contacts, could simultaneously cause fusion and amalgamation by conscious and or unconscious adaptation. Regarding all these key elements, it seems plausible to say that religions could be influenced as a result of the intercultural contacts of that era. This fact makes no exception for the religions discussed in this study. All this (borrowing and hybridity) could be an explanation for the resemblances that these three faith systems bear; however, as mentioned before, the acceptance of this has the great disadvantage of implicitly denying the ‘independent’ status of individual religions, and in some cases the two concepts can be shown to be inaccurate for some of these religions.

Let’s take a quick look at the religions in question in this study. Zoroastrianism is a religious tradition that was formed in eastern Iran with roots in the Indo-Iranian traditions.²⁰ In the course of history it spread to the western parts of the country and, in contact with western Iranian religions and Elamite beliefs, was fused with some of those beliefs which formed Achaemenid Zoroastrianism.²¹ Although some different layers of beliefs can be seen in Zoroastrianism which formed the state religion of the Sasanians, Zoroastrianism cannot be called a hybrid religion. Zoroastrianism defines itself as a religion based on the spiritual experiences of Zarathustra, and throughout history has persevered in protecting its identity. This identity is centred on some basic principles that were introduced by its founder and have been interpreted through history under different circumstances and different situations by the Zoroastrian clergies.

The second religion in this study is Mandaism. It seems that Mandaism is a religion whose formation is not attributed to any founder or any specific historical person. Among scholars, there has been debate about the origin of Mandaism. On the one hand, some scholars consider it a gnostic interpretation of Judaism which has a mixed character with elements of other beliefs²² like Christianity, Zoroastrianism, the pagan religions of Mesopotamia and Islam.²³ On the other hand, some scholars consider it a reaction by the pagans of Mesopotamia to maintain their old beliefs against the religions active in late ancient Iranian Mesopotamia, especially Zoroastrianism.²⁴ Although it can be stated that Mandaism could be an example of a hybrid religion, the theory of ‘hybridity’ may not be a good explanation for the distinct character of Mandaism as an active religion from ancient times to the present.

The third religion under study here is Islam. It was founded by the Prophet Muhammad, as a new revelation and belief system, in the early 7th century CE in the Arabian Peninsula. Although it originated in Arabic culture after the spiritual experiences of its founder, it developed its boundaries beyond the Arabian Peninsula very quickly and expanded its borders to other territories with different cultures, languages and religions. Such an expansion of the borders made the contact of Islam with other cultures and religions inevitable. Its main text, the

²⁰ For the Indo-Iranian roots of Zoroastrian eschatology see Mitra Ara, *Eschatology in the Indo-Iranian Traditions: The Genesis and Transformation of a Doctrine* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2008).

²¹ Philip G. Kreyenbroek, “On the Construction of Zoroastrianism in Western Iran,” in: *Teachers and Teachings in the Good Religion: Opera Minora on Zoroastrianism*, ed., Kianoosh Rezaia (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013), 10-16. Younger Avestan sources refer several times to some basic sources (Old Avestan sources) that seemingly contain these principles as the core of Zoroastrianism.

²² Kurt, Rudolph, *Die Mandäer: I. Prolegomena: Das Mandäerproblem* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960).

²³ Jennifer Hart provides evidence that the formation of two Mandaean characters, Mary and John, was influenced by these two characters in Islamic tradition. For more information see Jennifer Hart, *The Mandaean, A People of the Book? An Examination of the Influence of Islam on the Development of the Mandaean Literature* (PhD diss., Indiana University, September 2010).

²⁴ See Kevin T. Van Bladel, *From sasanian Mandaean to Šābians of the Marshes* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

Qur'ān, reflects the discourse of its time (the discourse between the new faith and the Arabian pagans, Christians and Jews of Mecca and Medina) around the fundamental principles of the unity of God, the Prophethood of Mohammad and the Resurrection.²⁵ It seems that this discourse continued in later times after encounter with some other beliefs that can be traced in the Islamic traditions which were established after the death of its founder.

As mentioned before, Zoroastrianism, Mandaicism and Islam bear striking individual eschatological resemblances. It seems that cultural transmission can in part be a plausible explanation for these resemblances. Zoroastrianism was the dominant religion in the Iranian empire in late ancient times and many of the Zoroastrian ideas were diffused across the Sasanian Empire. Regarding the evidence, according to Patricia Crone, at least two forms of Zoroastrianism can be detected: first, as the state religion or the religion of the elites and second, as regional Zoroastrianism, the religion of the layman of the cities and mostly rural areas.²⁶ In addition to the state religion, many other different religions, sects and denominations were active in the Sasanian Empire. After the attack of the Arabs, many Iranians continued to practise their old faith, although the state which was the patron of the religion had collapsed. Conversion to Islam did not happen at once, but over several decades or centuries depending on the circumstances, and for different reasons; many Iranian families had enough time to maintain their old mental religious map and transfer it to later generations while gradually converting to the new faith. These Iranian families were the transmitters of Iranian culture and religious beliefs to the generations that grew up in the Islamic era, under the Islamic doctrine which was being spread day by day. Their old beliefs could be transmitted to the next generations by teaching, observation, imitation and other means of cultural transmission.²⁷

Now we return to the late Sasanian era and early Islamic centuries. It seems that some of the Zoroastrian eschatological beliefs were so frequent and accepted by the Iranians to such a degree that they were transmitted to Islamic Iran. With regard to Islam and Muslims, in the beginning of the Islamic era, the generations that had been brought up with Zoroastrian beliefs surely maintained those beliefs that were main parts of their religious mental maps.²⁸ After conversion to Islam they needed to change some fundamental beliefs like acceptance of the unity of God and the prophethood of the Prophet Mohammad, but it is likely that to some extent they

²⁵ About this discourse one can refer to: Angelika Neuwirth, *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike: ein europäischer Zugang* (Berlin: Der Weltreligionen, 2010).

²⁶ If we accept what Patricia Crone states, at least two forms of Zoroastrianism existed in that era, a dominant or state version which is reflected by the Pahlavi books, and the version of Zoroastrianism that could be the religion of the lay people, of which no written sources have been passed to us, but its footprint can be traced in sects and denominations that arose in the Islamic era, see Patricia Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 318.

²⁷ Ulte Schönplüg, *Cultural Transmission, Psychological, Developmental, Social and Methodological Aspects* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3.

²⁸ Two possibilities could also help them to maintain their old beliefs: through learning and observing. The early Zoroastrian generations in early Islamic time learned all the ancient beliefs through these two ways. For example in the case of death and the Afterlife, whenever someone died, they needed to practise the rites that were related to death ceremonies and at the same time they had to hear about the fate of the soul after death, and because this could happen regularly in the neighbourhood, friends and families, and because the most frequent traits are accepted in cultural transmission by the individuals (participants are found to be more likely to choose the most frequent trait when individual learning or information search costs are high), so these beliefs and ceremonies could be transmitted to later generations.

did not change those parts of their religious mental map which formed their belief patterns and allowed them to continue some beliefs and practices without being in direct opposition to Islam.

Later Iranian generations gradually converted to the new faith under different conditions and in different circumstances while maintaining their old religious mental map. In addition to the new Iranian Muslims, the Arab Muslims had been confronted with new faiths (especially Zoroastrianism in Iran) which inevitably led to new questions and ideas.²⁹ It should not be forgotten that the early Islamic centuries are very important as regards the formation of many Islamic beliefs. The transmission of ḥadīṣ, the formation of Islamic jurisprudence, the compilation of many Islamic books and the writing down of the oral Islamic tradition mainly happened in the early Islamic centuries, while many of the conquered lands were still inhabited by non-Muslims who were being raised within their original cultural heritages. In those centuries when orthodoxy had not yet been shaped, the acceptance of many foreign elements of the conquered lands which were compatible with Islamic core teachings seems more likely. Such borrowing can be seen from the existing evidence, and if we accept that some cultural elements of the Iranians fused with Islamic teachings to form the new-born Islamic culture, it is possible that religious beliefs could have taken part in such a fusion too.³⁰

So far, we have seen that Iranian eschatological ideas could be transmitted to the early generations at the start of the Islamic era. At the same time, conversions to Islam started, which made confrontation of Islam with new ideas and beliefs inevitable. Before this, in Mesopotamia the Mandaean (Pre-Mandaean or as van Bladel names them Nāṣoraeans)³¹ had been confronted with some Iranian beliefs too. However, this study does not aim to state that *hybridity* (syncretism) or *borrowing* is the reason for resemblances between these three faith systems, on three grounds: 1. the terms hybrid or syncretic apply to an offensive and controversial subject that can disturb the followers of the related religions; 2. hybridity or syncretism does not show that religious or cultural systems do not borrow or develop outside elements without adapting them to the world-view or premises of the culture in question; 3. other people like fundamentalists regard syncretism as an unacceptable compromise of a clear received truth. On the other hand, syncretism is considered as apostasy, a departure from the true religion, and a danger to the community of believers. Therefore, we have tried to test another theory to explain the eschatological similarities between these three faith systems.

1.3.3 The theory of Sprachbund

So far, we have tried to show that late Ancient Iran and the early Islamic centuries were a suitable epoch for cultural transmission and in particular for religious ideas as an important part of human culture. How could these ideas (Iranian individual eschatological beliefs) have been accepted by Mandaeanism and Islam? And how can this be explained?

²⁹ The influence of Zoroastrianism can be traced in the formation of the many early religious sects and uprisings in the early Islamic centuries of Iran, the combination of the old beliefs and the new ones, see Patricia Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

³⁰ For more information about cultural transmission from Sasanian Iran to the Islamic time see the five-volume book of Muḥammad Muḥammadi Malāyerī, *Tārīkh va Farhang-i Irān dar Durān-e 'Intiqāl as 'Aṣr-i Sāsānī be 'Aṣr-i 'Islāmī* (Tehrān: 'Intishārāt-e Ṭūs, 1375).

³¹ Kevin T. Van Bladel, *From sasanian Mandaeanism to Ṣābiāns of the Marshes* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 89-97.

With regard to the definition of the word culture, languages are also a part of the cultural capital and the means to transfer this capital and can influence one another as religions do. In comparing languages, one can find different types of similarities and differences. There are different explanations for similarities such as accidental similarities, borrowing and genetic drift. As Aikhenvald and Dixon mention, two or more languages can be similar to each other in categories, construction and the types of meanings they use, and in the forms they employ to express them.³² Scholars introduce different types of similarities between languages due to different factors:³³

1. Universal Properties or tendencies: It can be stated that every language has a marker of a clausal negation system.

2. Chance: some occasional coincidences of meaning between forms in different languages can be exemplified as the factor of chance in language similarity.

3. Borrowing or diffusion: when two languages are in contact where a significant proportion of the speakers of one also has some competence in the other, they gradually become similar.

4. Genetic retention: When two languages descend from the same ancestor (language family), they often have similar categories and meanings that are expressed by similar forms.

5. Parallel development (or convergent development): two languages of the same genetic group may share an inner dynamic that pushes them to change, independently, in the same way.

It can be seen that two of the above mentioned factors are related to the languages of the same genetic group (from the same ancestor), and two refer to the factor of chance or universal tendencies. Amongst the mentioned factors, it is number three that refers to the factor of *borrowing*. According to the definitions, in the field of languages, borrowing could mean: to adopt into one language from another.³⁴ The borrowed elements could be within the scope of words, concepts or structures etc. Apparently, borrowing is a legitimate and natural strategy, when languages enter mutual interaction.

One of the theories that explains the term *borrowing* in the field of languages is the theory of *Sprachbund* (linguistic areas). This theory was introduced by Nikolai Trubetzkoy in 1928 to the first International Congress of Linguists. It mostly deals with similarities between languages arising from a genetic relationship or due to language contact; the prominent example is Balkan Sprachbund³⁵. Sprachbund is “generally taken to be a geographically delimited area including languages from two or more language families, sharing significant traits (which are not found in languages from these families spoken outside the area). There must be a fair number of common traits and they should be reasonably distinctive”.³⁶

Scholars have given a broad scope of definitions for the theory of Sprachbund. One of the definitions for ‘Sprachbund’ is that:

“A linguistic area is a geographical area in which, due to language contact and borrowing, languages of a region come to share certain structural

³² Aleksandra Y. Aikhenvald, R. M. W. Dixon, eds., *Areal Diffusion and Genetic Inheritance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1.

³³ Aleksandra Y. Aikhenvald, R. M. W. Dixon, eds., *Areal Diffusion and Genetic Inheritance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1-3.

³⁴ Merriam Webster Dictionary in <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/borrowing> (accessed 15.04.2019)

³⁵ Olga Mišeska Tomić, *Balkan Sprachbund Morpho-syntactic Features*, (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006).

³⁶ Aikhenvald and Dixon, 2006, p.11

*features . . . central to a linguistic area [are] . . . structural similarities shared among languages of a geographical area (where usually some of the languages are unrelated or at least not all close relatives). It is assumed that the reason the languages of the area share these traits is because they have borrowed from one another.”*³⁷

According to other definitions, ‘Sprachbund’ means that:

*“Several languages in a region defined in terms of geography and cultural history acquire features of a particular congruence, irrespective of whether this congruence is determined by common origin or only by a prolonged proximity in time and parallel development.”*³⁸

*“A linguistic area or (Sprachbund) is generally taken to be geographically delimited area including languages from two or more language families sharing significant traits (which are not found in languages from these families spoken outside the area). There must be a fair number of common traits and they should be reasonably distinctive.”*³⁹

Regarding the different definitions for the theory of ‘Sprachbund,’ one factor seems prominent and necessary in the development of this theory: the contact region. The role of the contact area is so important that no contact region means no linguistic area. Language contact occurs in densely populated places where speakers of many languages live together and bi- or multilingualism is common. This theory means that one can find some similar traits between groups of languages that are spoken in the same region (contact area), while they belong to different language families. In other words, one can speak of ‘Sprachbund’ if: “1- at a given time, 2- a continuous geographical region, that 3- is intersected by at least one language boundary, 4- is encompassed by at least one isogloss”.⁴⁰

According to this theory, if in such a situation one trait can be seen to be common between at least three languages, it can be stated that a ‘Sprachbund’ has been formed.⁴¹ However, the most important point in this theory is that although these languages bear resemblances under the

³⁷ Yaron Matras, April McMahon and Nigel Vincent, *Linguistic Areas: Convergence in Historical and Typological Perspective* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 6-7.

³⁸ Yaron Matras, April McMahon and Nigel Vincent, *Linguistic Areas: Convergence in Historical and Typological Perspective* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 4.

³⁹ There are different types of linguistic area:

- 1- incipient ones: only beginning to form and with as yet few shared traits
- 2- moribund and decaying ones: as a result of many changes after the area was actively formed, fewer traits are currently recognisable among the languages
- 3- layered ones: with new layers and old layers
- 4- overlapping ones: with different areas formed on top of one another or overlapping one another at different times for different reasons
- 5- multilateral areas versus unilateral areas
- 6- areas resulting from rapid conquests, to population spread and immigration (traits moving with movement of speakers), others through home-grown, stay-in-place contact (movement of place, but not of people)
- 7- disrupted areas with latecomers, earlier drop-outs, and temporary passer-by

⁴⁰ Isogloss is a boundary line between places or regions that differ in a particular linguistic feature.

⁴¹ As Lady Drower mentions in her book *Water into Wine*, in that era and even beyond it some resemblances in beliefs and rituals are observable, so it can be stated that these beliefs and related rituals had deeply influenced the people in those areas and were widespread.

influence of a dominant trait, they maintain their main characteristics and do not change fundamentally.

According to the definitions, the key elements in this theory are: geographical region (area), any shared features (a fair number of shared distinctive traits) whether from a common origin or parallel development, and different language families. For example, when two or three languages that are from different ancestors- but have been in contact in a geographical region- share a trait that is absent in languages from the same ancestor, it could be stated that they have formed a ‘Sprachbund’ or its English equivalent ‘a linguistic area’. Let us consider a number of languages such as Persian (an Iranian language of the Indo-European Family), Arabic (a central Semitic language) and Turkish (most spoken of the Turkic languages). These three languages could have made contact with one another in Anatolia (the Asian portion of Turkey), and if two of these languages show a feature that is absent in the languages derived from their same genetic language family, it could mean that they have borrowed some features of the dominant language in that area and have jointly formed a ‘Sprachbund’.

As the definitions show, the contact region plays an important role in the formation of Sprachbund (linguistic areas). Further explanations are required to clarify this subject. First of all, it should be mentioned that linguistic areas differ from one another because of the relations between languages. Some linguistic areas are formed as the result of long-term language contact with multilateral diffusion and some due to sudden migration with unilateral diffusion. On the other hand, the Sprachbund can be formed in two ways: some arise as the result of equal situations whereby the contact results in multilateral diffusion and without any developed relationships of dominance; others are the result of sudden migrations which involve the dominance of one group over others and in which the diffusion is unilateral. It is the historical events that cause the direction of the diffusion.⁴²In general, it can be stated that what determines the characteristic features of an area is the relationships languages have within the contact region.

In addition to the mentioned explanations, other agents are also important in the formation of linguistic areas. For example the type of community is an important factor in this respect. While some communities are tightly stitched together internally, closed to social and economic interaction with their neighbours, others are loosely knit, externally open and harbour different types of languages and ethnic groups. Other important factors are the size of the community and the relations within it, as well as its contact with other communities. Also, the degree of lingualism which determines whether the community is multilingual or simply bilingual plays an important role.

The types of language interaction within a contact region are important too, whether the interaction is one language with another, or one language interacting with an already established group. And finally, the language attitude can play an important role, which means the attitudes towards the native language may differ between communities. Also it should be mentioned that Sprachbunds are formed in several ways: “through social networks established by such interactions as trade and exogamy; through the shift by indigenous peoples in a region to the language(s) of invaders; through repeated instances of movement by small groups to different places within the area”.⁴³

⁴² Aikhenvald and Dixon, 2006, p.11

⁴³ Yaron Matras, April McMahon and Nigel Vincent, *Linguistic Areas: Convergence in Historical and Typological Perspective* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 14.

There are different types of linguistic area: 1. Incipient areas commencing to form a linguistic area with few shared traits; 2. Moribund and decaying areas which are the result of many changes after the formation of an area, in which case fewer traits are recognizable among the languages; 3. Layered areas which consist of new and old layers; 4. Overlapping areas where different areas are on top of one another or overlap each other at different times; 5. Multilateral versus unilateral areas; 6. Areas resulting from rapid conquest and migration (in this case the traits move with the movement of the speakers) or home-grown, stay-in-place contact which means the movement of the traits but not of the peoples; 7. Disrupted areas with latecomers, earlier drop-outs and temporary passers-by.⁴⁴ Finally, it should be mentioned that there are two approaches to deal with linguistic areas. The first is that used by historicists who allude to the traits used to characterize genuine borrowing and the second is that used by circumstantialists who watch out for a mass number of shared traits among the languages of a region and enable the conditions to infer the likelihood of diffusion.⁴⁵

Regarding the above explanations, it seems that this theory may help us to explain the similarities among these three faith systems. As mentioned before, Zoroastrianism, Mandaeism and Islam are three belief systems from different backgrounds, but regarding their individual eschatological beliefs developed through Late Antiquity and during the early Islamic centuries, they bear resemblances. As stated before, these three religions have shared the same geographical area (contact region) and era through their history, i.e. the place and time in which they developed a part of their beliefs. Sasanian Iran and, more importantly, Mesopotamia are the areas in which these religions could have made contact with one another. Zoroastrianism as the major Iranian religion before the advent of Islam, and, on the basis of some archaeological and historical evidence, Mandaeism, which was an active religion in the south of Mesopotamia and the adjacent territories in Iran, and finally Islam, the Arabian faith that broadened its borders in a short time, confronted one another in this contact region.⁴⁶ The region made possible the spreading of beliefs that for a long time had formed the eschatological beliefs of the residents of those lands. Many of the converts to the new faith (the majority of the Muslim community) were those who had been brought up in this background, and in accordance with the theory of cultural transmission, their religious beliefs had been transmitted to them as part of their cultural capital. It seems that two factors affected the transmission of some religious beliefs to the next generations during which the oral tradition was an active force for transferring religious beliefs in early Islamic times. First, the religious inheritance of the old faith that was in contact with the beliefs of the new faith had yet not been canonised, and second, followers of the new faith had the potentiality to accept those concepts and ideas that did not contradict the basic principles of their religion. It should be restated that all this could happen to the extent that these ideas did not run counter to their doctrine and core teachings. As will be shown in Chapter Four, the Qur'ān preaches the existence of life after death, the Angel of Death, the presence of the angels near the dying person, and reward or punishment in the Afterlife. In contact with Old Iranian belief

⁴⁴ Yaron Matras, April McMahon and Nigel Vincent, *Linguistic Areas: Convergence in Historical and Typological Perspective* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 13

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 14

⁴⁶ It is true that Mandaeism has these concerns, but the difference between Islam and Mandaeism lies in the originality of the message of Islam.

system which was expanded in Iran and Mesopotamia in the first two Islamic centuries, and had formed the mental map of the Iranians for centuries, Muslims accepted some Zoroastrian eschatological concepts and ideas in order to transform its beliefs into a form, mould or guise familiar to the new generations of its followers who were from Zoroastrian background. Beyond this, the Qur'ān insists that what the Prophet Muhammad preaches is not something new, but similar to the sayings of the previous prophets and divine religions, and insists on the confirmation of the previous religions and what they had said. It also indicates to the followers of other religions the common ideas that they share, so acceptance of the beliefs which did not contradict the Islamic central teachings seems possible. These ideas were mostly transferred orally in the first two centuries, and were gradually accepted in the Islamic traditions and mixed with them in the sayings attributed to the Prophet and his early companions.

In the case of Mandaeism, the pre-Mandaeans, the Jewish gnostic teachings or Mesopotamian pagans had been in contact with Zoroastrianism and Iranian eschatological ideas for centuries. As a result of contact with Zoroastrianism, they were impressed by some of its eschatological ideas which then penetrated into the Mandaean teachings.

To sum up, it can be stated that most human communities have influenced one another throughout history as a result of contact due to different factors. The world of religions is no exception; religions as a part of human culture and as a cultural heritage have been in contact with one another; therefore, they could influence one another. As with languages from different families that can be fused and share similar traits as a result of fusion, some similar traits can be seen in religions as a result of contacts, in spite of their different backgrounds, while each religion could at the same time maintain its independent status. All ideas presented will be clarified in the final chapter of this study.

1.4 Late Sasanian Iran and the status of the religions in question in that era

Late Ancient Iran (Sasanian Iran) was a vast land which encompassed all of modern Iran, Iraq, Armenia, Georgia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and many other lands that generally made it a country of diversities.⁴⁷ Certainly, this divergence caused or brought about different viewpoints, and brought apparently different faith systems in close proximity. While some of these beliefs were founded in Iran like Zoroastrianism, or the beliefs of the religions which were formed and developed in contact with Iranian religions like Manichaeism and Mandaism, some other religious beliefs were imported, such as those of Buddhism, Christianity and later Islam. A prominent historical document for this religious diversity could be the inscription of the great Zoroastrian priest *Kartīr*, which names different religious communities in that era. He names religion communities such as the Jews, Christians, Buddhists, Brahmins, Nasoraean (Pre-Mandaeans) and Manichaeans. Some of these belief systems have survived, and some have vanished. Among these are Zoroastrianism and Mandaism (and later Islam), each with its own particular history, but (as far as Islam is concerned partly) formed or developed in the same territories.



Map showing the approximate extent of the Sasanian Empire and some of the principal sites⁴⁸

Zoroastrianism is one of the oldest religions of ancient times which is deeply informed with the struggle between good and evil forces. In Zoroastrianism, like many other religions, the idea of death and the Afterlife is an important idea which has influenced different dimensions of Zoroastrian life throughout the long history of this religion. What happens to man when he dies? Does he continue life after death? Where does the soul go after death? Is there any system of reward or chastisement? All these are questions that were answered by Zoroastrianism in

⁴⁷ It should be mentioned that here Iran does not mean modern Iran with its political boundaries, but mainly means late antique Iran (the territories which belonged to Sasanian Iran). For the Sasanian territories see Touraj Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia: The Rise and Fall of an Empire* (New York: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2009).

⁴⁸ Eberhard W. Sauer, ed. *Sasanian Persia between Rome and the steppes of Euroasia*, (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 23.

Avestan, Middle Persian and later in Persian sources.⁴⁹ In these references one can find indications on the judgment of the soul, Paradise and Hell and the intermediate place between the two. All these beliefs form the core of Zoroastrian eschatological beliefs. In general, Zoroastrian sources indicate to us the belief in a life beyond the material world.

As mentioned earlier, some religions were originally founded in Iran while some other imported faiths such as the so-called Abrahamic religions flourished and developed in the country. In the so-called monotheist religions or Abrahamic traditions, Judaism,⁵⁰ Christianity⁵¹ and Islam,⁵² death and the Afterlife have an important role too, especially in Islamic sources in which Afterlife, reward and punishment, death and Resurrection are the pillars of belief.⁵³ In the Qur'ān many verses refer explicitly to the world to come and the reward and punishment of the deceased in accord with their beliefs and what they did in the material world.

In addition to the religions mentioned, some gnostic religions like Manichaeism and Mandaism that were developed within the boundaries of Iran were active in the Sasanian era. Obviously, eschatological beliefs are one of the important pillars of many religions and belief systems, sects and denominations; Gnosticism is not an exception in this respect. In gnostic teachings, eschatological beliefs are important pillars of the faith. In world-views such as Manichaeism, gnostic Christianity and typically in Mandaism, a surviving Gnostic religion, a fortunate fate for the soul is the aim of the religion.⁵⁴ In these religions, the soul and salvation in the Afterlife play an important role with many of the religious teachings aiming at the salvation of the soul, the prospective result of which is for it to reach the Realm of Light as its everlasting abode. In Mandaism, the soul, its journey after death and the destiny of the deceased are so important that they are the centre of attention in the most important Mandaean scripture, the *Ginza*.⁵⁵

Regarding the Mandaeans, it is important to mention that it has mostly been presented as a gnostic interpretation of Judaism that was under the influence of some other religions like the Babylonian religious tradition, Iranian beliefs, Christianity and Islam.⁵⁶ But some scholars reject any Jewish origin of Mandaism. Van Bladel states that the latest beginning of Mandaism can go back to the fourth and fifth centuries CE. Before that many new religions (for example, that of Pre-Mandaeans who are called Nāṣoreans) were invented, when the pagans of Mesopotamia tried to form religions that contained both pagan beliefs and the religions in their environment to

⁴⁹ A. V. Williams Jackson, *The Zoroastrian Doctrine of a Future Life from Death to the Individual Judgment* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1926).

⁵⁰ Philip S. Johnston, *Shades of Sheol: Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament* (Leicester: Appollos, 2002).

⁵¹ Wolfgang Beinert, *Tod und Jenseits des Todes* (Regensburg: Pustet, 2000).

⁵² Jane Idleman Smith and Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, *The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁵³ By Islamic sources I mean first of all the Qur'ān which emphasises the Hereafter and Resurrection more than two other Abrahamic sources, the Torah and the Gospels.

⁵⁴ Gnosis is the religion of redemption, the redemption of the soul that is a divine being captured in the material world as the source of evil. For the definition of Gnosis see Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Ancient Religion*, trans. Robert McLachlan Wilson (Edinburgh: T. & T., Clarl Limited, 1983), 113-171.

⁵⁵ No specific academic study devoted to life after death in Mandaism exists so far, which is one of the reasons for undertaking this project.

⁵⁶ Kurt Rudolph explains the different sources of Mandaism and the influences that other religions have had on it; see Kurt Rudolph, *Die Mandäer: I. Prolegomena: Das Mandäerproblem* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960).

protect themselves against the Sasanian rulers and clergy who were against worshipping idols. So, they mixed the different beliefs of their environment to maintain their old beliefs in order to continue their religious life among other beliefs, especially those of the state.⁵⁷ In spite of the arguments about the origin of Mandaism,⁵⁸ it is necessary not to forget that from the third century on, it was a distinct religion that tried to systematise its identity by compiling its literature, and practising its own rituals in Mesopotamia, modern day Iraq, which at that time was a part of the Sasanian territory. This environment could have made the ‘permeability’ of beliefs between Zoroastrianism and Mandaism more likely. As Buckley mentions, according to the evidence of the colophons of Mandaean texts such as *Ginza* and *Qulasta*, the third century CE could mark the beginning of the compilation of some of the Mandaean texts by the Mandaean clergy. She states that at least the compilation of some parts of the most important book of the Mandaeans, *Ginza Rabba*, began in the 3rd century.⁵⁹ In addition to the textual evidence, historical evidence proves that Mandaism was an active religion in Late Antiquity and the early Islamic centuries in Mesopotamia and the Mandaeans even had some centres for their activities during that time.⁶⁰ Historical evidence such as the steles in the southern areas of Iraq, the Manichaean Psalms of Thomas that retell a great part of *Ginza Left*,⁶¹ the inscription of Kartūr, the large number of incantation bowls in Mandaic and Aramaic that show invocation and recourse to the Mandaean deities, and the historical indications of the Mandaeans as a large community living in cities in Iraq and Iran,⁶² can collectively prove the importance of this religious community and the possibility of interchanges between early Mandaeans and Zoroastrians in late ancient times, and Muslims in the early Islamic centuries.⁶³ This vast geographical contact region made many interactions between these religions possible. One can find many similar rites and beliefs among the religions of that era and area. This interaction even continued after the conquest of Iran by Islam.⁶⁴

⁵⁷ If we accept his claims, then the era in which Mandaism was formed will be near to the era in which Zoroastrians began to compile their sources. This means that there was a canonised form of Zoroastrianism at that time that could be more influential on other new religions that tried not to contradict directly the state religion to maintain their old beliefs. For more information see Kevin T. Van Bladel, *From Sasanian Mandaeans to Šābians of the Marshes* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

⁵⁸ For more information about the origin of Mandaism see the different articles in: Geo Widengren, *Der Mandäismus* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982).

⁵⁹ Considering the colophones of the *Ginza* and *Qulasta*, Buckley concludes that Mandaeans tried to distinguish their religion sooner than had been supposed by many scholars; see Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley, *The Great Stem of Souls: Reconstructing Mandaean History* (New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2005).

⁶⁰ One of the Islamic sources indicates the city of ‘*Tib*,’ the cultural centre of the Mandaeans in the Late Antique and early Islamic centuries; see Šahāb al-Dīn ‘abī ‘abd ‘allāh yāqūt ibn ‘abd ‘allāh al-ḥimawī al-rūmī al-bagdādī, *Mu‘jam al-Buldān* (Beirut: Dar Sader, 1977/1497), 4: 52-53.

⁶¹ Torgny Säve-Söderpergh, *Studies in the Coptic Manichaean Psalm-Book: Prosody and Mandaean Parallels* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri, 1949); Peter Nagel, *Die Thomaspsalmen des Koptisch-manichäischen Psalmbuches* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1980).

⁶² For more information about the origin of the Mandaeans and their early history see Sinas Gündüz, *The Knowledge of Life: The Origins and Early History of the Mandaeans and their Relation to the Sabians of the Qur‘ān and the Harranians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

⁶³ Michael G. Morony, *Iraq after the Muslim Conquest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 410-415; Jennifer Hart, *The Mandaeans, the People of the Book? An Examination of the Influence of Islam on the Development of Mandaean Literature* (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2010), 28-48.

⁶⁴ To exemplify such a reciprocal action, I can name the development of the character of John and Mary by Mandaeans under the influence of Islam, some prominent similarities between the Zoroastrians’ and Mandaeans’ death ritual, and the reciprocal actions between Zoroastrianism and Judaism. See Jennifer Hart, *The Mandaeans, the*

Islam is an Arabian religion from the middle of the 7th century CE. It was founded by the Arab Prophet Muhammad. This new religion turns mainly around the idea of monotheism, and the resurrection of the dead at the end of history. The followers of the Prophet Muhammad expanded this new faith right after his death beyond the boundaries of the Peninsula to the two important empires of the time, Iran and Byzantium, in less than two centuries. Except the Qur'ān, which is the revelation to the Prophet Muhammad in the 7th century CE in the Arabian Peninsula,⁶⁵ many early Islamic sources inspired Islamic orthodoxy were compiled in the first three Islamic centuries after the death of Prophet Muhammad. The main early histories and biographies of the life of the Prophet and history of Islam, the most important books of traditions (sayings of the Prophet, his companions and his family) and the early and the most influential interpretations of the Qur'ān in the history of Islam, were all compiled in these centuries, mostly by people from these places (Iran and Mesopotamia).⁶⁶

Contact between Arabs and Iranians cannot be limited to the post-Islamic period, it has its roots in the pre-Islamic era. As mentioned earlier, in late ancient times, Iran was a vast land with ethnic, racial and religious diversity. These religions and ethnicities were not isolated from other religions and groups, but in close contact with one another.⁶⁷ From pre-Islamic times, Arabs were in contact with Iranians. The Arabian Peninsula was a land between the two great empires of Late Antiquity: Iran and Byzantium. At the dawn of Islam, in addition to the pagans and polytheists of the peninsula, some other religious groups were active there, such as the Jews in the towns of the north western Arabian Peninsula *Tabak*, *Tayma* and *Yathrib* (Medina) and, Christianity had an active presence in Yemen, and in northern areas near modern Iraq and Syria. Beside these two groups, some Jewish-Christians called *Nazoreans* were living in the peninsula too. In addition to the peninsula, Arabs were in contact with Iranians in neighbouring lands. The Sasanian capital city was Ctesiphon in Mesopotamia, and there they had some allies like *Nasrīd* from the tribe of *Lakhm* in *al-Hira* in lower Iraq, and some other allies in the north of Oman who were the local governors of Julands.⁶⁸

By the end of the 6th century, almost all the eastern and southern parts of the Arabian Peninsula were under the control of the Sasanians; for example, in 570 CE, the great Khusrū II brought Yemen into his empire. Their cooperation with the Arabs was so strong that he could

People of the Book? An Examination of the Influence of Islam on the Development of Mandaean Literature (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2010); E. S. L. Drower, *Water into Wine: A Study of Ritual Idiom in the Middle East* (London: Murray, 1956); Jacon Neusner, *Judaism and Zoroastrianism at the Dusk of Late Antiquity* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993); Franz, König, *Zarathustras Jenseitsvorstellungen und das Alte Testament* (Vienna: Herder, 1964); George William Carter, *Zoroastrianism and Judaism* (Boston: The Gorham Press, 1918); Lawrence H. Mills, *Avesta Eschatology Compared with the Books of Daniel and Revelations* (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1908).

⁶⁵ For the Qur'ān, its collection and history see John Burton, *The Collection of the Qur'ā* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

⁶⁶ See the tables from page 36 to 39.

⁶⁷ See Shaul Shaked, *Amulets and Magic bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1998). For example, the talismans that were believed to protect people against demons and miseries in Hebrew, Aramaic or Mandaean scripts contain different names of hetero-religions, a good example of the religious interactions in Late Antique Iran.

⁶⁸ Fred M. Donner, *Mohammad and the Believers at the Origin of Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 30-32.

even gather the taxes of *Mecca* and *Yathrib* with the help of local governors.⁶⁹ Arabs of the peninsula were also familiar with Zoroastrianism; there were some non-Iranian converts to Zoroastrianism among the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula, and there were also some Sasanian garrisons along the Persian Gulf and south of the Arabian Peninsula and some Iranian temples too.⁷⁰ Some indications in some early Arabic sources of the word *Zandaqa* among the Arabs of the tribe of *Qurayš* prove the familiarity of Arabs with Iranian beliefs.⁷¹

When the Arabs conquered Mesopotamia, this land was the heir to the Sumerian and Babylonian civilisations, and the Aramaic language was already spoken as the lingua franca besides Persian as the language of governors and Arabic and some other Babylonian dialects. In Iraq, as in the Arabian Peninsula, religious diversity could be seen. Mainly, the Persian ruling elites were Zoroastrians; Christians were in *al-Anbār* and *al-Ḥira*; Jacobites in the centre of Iraq; a Jewish community lived in the capital city and along the Euphrates towards Syria, and also some gnostic communities (these could be the prototype of the religious groups in Iraq and Iran that were later to be called the Mandaeans), Manichaeans and Mazdakites in the south of Iraq in *Maysān*.⁷² Such diversity made contact with other religions and ethics for later Arab Muslims possible.⁷³

It is obvious that Zoroastrianism as the state religion of the Sasanian dynasty was in close contact with Arabs, Islam and Muslims. The conversion of the Iranians did not happen instantly, but was a process that took centuries. Throughout these years, this contact could have been the source of influence and interaction between Islam and Zoroastrianism. It is true that Islam began in Arabia, but the cultures and traditions of other areas played an important role in the formation of Islamic identity, and the contact between Islam and Zoroastrianism surely influenced the formation of this identity.⁷⁴

The invention of the Avestan script in the late Sasanian era⁷⁵ and the compilation and collection of the Zoroastrian Pahlavi sources in the late centuries of Sassanian Iran and early Islamic centuries (Iran and Mesopotamia) can all give evidence as to the importance of this period in the history of this religion. More importantly, Zoroastrianism was not a minor religion, but the state religion of one of the two imperial dynasties of that time, which continued after the Muslims' dominance as one of the major religious communities in the early Islamic era.

⁶⁹ Some of the Arab tribes that were in contact with Sasanians are: *B. Hanifa* in the district of *al-Yamāma* in eastern Arabia, *Lakhmid* in *al-Ḥira* on the fringes of the Iraqi alluvium, in addition to the seminomadic Tanūkh who were dominated by the Sasanians along the west bank of the Euphrates from central Iraq to the Persian Gulf. See Fred McGraw Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 45.

⁷⁰ Jonathan P. Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 47.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Michael G. Morony, *Iraq After the Muslim Conquest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 400-415; Fred McGraw Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 169-170.

⁷³ To exemplify this interaction, one can point to the influences of Christianity in the formation of mystical Islam and Sufism. For more information see Julian Baldick, *Mystical Islam: An Introduction to Sufism* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 15-24.

⁷⁴ On the communications between Zoroastrians and Muslims in early Islamic centuries, see Jamsheed Kairshasp Choksy, *Conflict and Cooperation: Zoroastrian Subalterns and Muslim Elites in Medieval Iranian Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

⁷⁵ According to the viewpoints and research of Philip Kreyenbroek, Zoroastrianism had been orthodoxised before the advent of Islam and Avesta also had been compiled before Arab's conquest, see Michael Stausberg, *Die Religion Zarathushtras: Geschichte-Gegenwart-Ritual*, Vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 2002), 69-83.

1.5 Survey of the relevant sources

This study consults the main sources of these three religions that were mainly compiled from the 2nd to the 12th centuries CE. As mentioned several times, most of these sources were compiled in Sasanian and early Islamic Iran. The following tables provide brief information about each of these early sources.

A: The main Zoroastrian sources

Title of the book	Author	Place of compilation	Date of compilation
<i>Hādōxt Nask</i>	unknown	Probably plateau of Iran	BCE
<i>Vīdēvdād</i>	unknown	Probably plateau of Iran	BCE
<i>Aogəmadaēcā</i>	unknown	Probably plateau of Iran	The Avestan part was mostly compiled BCE
<i>Bundahišn</i>	<i>Farrōbāg Dādagīh</i>	Iran	9 th century CE
<i>Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī Xrad</i>	unknown	Iran	Probably late 7 th century CE
<i>Ardā Wīrāz Nāmag</i>	unknown	Iran	Probably late Sasanian era, but final compilation in 11 th or 12 th centuries CE
<i>Dādestān ī Dēnīg</i>	<i>Manušcihr ī Juwānjamān</i>	Iran	9 th CE
<i>Pahlavi Rivāyat</i> accompanying <i>Dādestān ī Dēnīg</i>	unknown	Iran	the late 9 th or early 10 th century CE
<i>Wizīdagīhā ī Zādspram</i>	<i>Zādspram Juwān Jam</i>	Iran	9 th century CE
<i>Šad Dar Našr, Šad Dar Bundahiš</i>	unknown	Iran	Between 14 th and 16 th centuries CE
The Persian <i>Rivāyats of Dārāb Hormazyār</i>	Several authors	Iran and India	Between 15 th and 18 th centuries CE

B: The main Mandaean sources

Title	Author	Place of compilation	Date of compilation
<i>Ginzā</i> (The right and left <i>Ginzā</i>)	unknown	Mesopotamia (in Iraq or in western parts of Iran)	According to some evidence, some parts of <i>Ginza</i> must have been compiled in the 3 rd century CE, and other parts from the 3 rd century to the 8 th or 9 th century CE
<i>Sidra ḡ-nišmata</i>	unknown	Mesopotamia (in Iraq or in western parts of Iran)	
<i>adrašia ḡ-iahia</i> (Madaeans' book of John)	unknown	Mesopotamia (in Iraq or in western parts of Iran)	Between the 7 th and 9 th centuries CE
<i>Qulasta</i>	unknown	Mesopotamia (in Iraq or in western parts of Iran)	Some evidence implies pre-Islamic compilation possible
<i>Diwan Abatur</i>	unknown	Mesopotamia (in Iraq or in western parts of Iran)	Between the 7 th and 9 th centuries CE
<i>Alf Trisar Šūialia</i>	unknown	Mesopotamia (in Iraq or in western parts of Iran)	Some parts could be pre-Islamic, but mainly between the 7 th and 9 th centuries CE

C: The main Sunni *ḥadīṣ* references⁷⁶

Name	Date of birth	Date of death	Place of birth	Title of the book	Research area
<i>Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn ʿIsmāʿīl (al-Bukhārī)</i>	194 AH/ 810 CE	256 AH/ 870 CE	In east of a territory that once belonged to Sasanian Iran, maybe <i>Bukhārā</i>	<i>Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī</i>	He visited the main centres of traditional teaching from <i>Khurāsān</i> In Iran to Egypt, Syria and Algeria
<i>Abū al-Ḥusayn Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Niyyshābūrī</i>	202-206 AH/817- 821 CE	261 AH/ 875 CE	East of Iran, <i>Niyyshābūr</i>	<i>Ṣaḥīḥ al-Muslim</i>	He travelled to different places like Iran, Iraq, Syria and Egypt to gather the <i>ḥadīṣ</i>
<i>Abū ʿAbd Allūh Muḥammad ibn Yazīd ibn Mājja Qazvīnī</i>	209 AH/ 824 CE	273 AH/ 887 CE	<i>Qazvīn</i>	<i>Sunan ibn al-Mājja</i>	He searched for <i>ḥadīṣ</i> in Iraq, Syria, Mecca and Egypt
<i>Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān ibn Ishāq</i>	202 AH/ 817 CE	275 AH/ 889 CE	He settled in <i>Baṣra</i> , but it seems that he was from a village near <i>Baṣra</i> named <i>Sajistān</i>	<i>Sunan abī Dāwūd</i>	He travelled to many Islamic cities like Mecca, Balkh, Damascus, Cairo and <i>Baghdād</i>
<i>Abū ʿIsā Muḥammad ibn ʿIsā</i>	209-210 AH/ 825 CE	279 AH/ 892 CE	Near the town of <i>Tirmidj</i> ; on the north bank of the Oxus river, now in the southern east part of the Uzbekistan Republic	<i>Sunan al-Tirmidjī</i>	He travelled from Iran to Iraq, Syria and Egypt in search of <i>ḥadīṣ</i>
<i>ʿAbd al-Rraḥmān ibn Šuʿayb ibn Sanān ibn Baḥr ibn Dīnār i Khurāsānī</i>	215 AH/ 830 CE	303 AH/ 915 CE	He was from <i>Nasā</i> , one of the cities of <i>Khurāsān</i>	<i>Sunan al-Nasāʿī</i>	He searched for <i>ḥadīṣ</i> in many places such as Egypt, <i>Baṣra</i> , Damascus, <i>Qazvin</i> and died in Damascus or Ramala

D: The main Shia *ḥadīṣ* references⁷⁷

Name	Date of birth	Date of death	Place of birth	Title of the book	Research area
<i>Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn</i>	385 AH/ 995 CE	459-460 AH/ 1066-1077 CE	From <i>Khurāsān</i> in east of	<i>Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām,</i>	From Iran to Iraq

⁷⁶ Bimān ʿali Dihqān-i Mungābādī, *Tārīkh-i Tadvīn-i Ḥadīṣ va Javāmiʿ Ḥadīṣī* (Tehrān: Nashr-i Hastī Namā, 1383), 61-148.

⁷⁷ Bimān ʿali Dihqān-i Mungābādī, *Tārīkh-i Tadvīn-i Ḥadīṣ va Javāmiʿ Ḥadīṣī* (Tehrān: Nashr-i Hastī Namā, 1383), 171-220.

<i>al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī</i> (<i>Šaykh al-Ṭūsī</i>)			present-day Iran	<i>al-I'stibṣār</i>	
<i>Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn Bābūyih al-Qumī</i> (<i>Šaykh al-Šaddūq</i>)	311 or 320AH/ 923 or 932 CE	381-391 AH/ 997-1001 CE	From <i>Khurāsān</i> in east of present-day Iran	<i>Man lā yaḥḍaruh al-Faqīh</i>	From Iran to Iraq and visited many cities such as: <i>Bukhārā</i> , <i>Niṣābūr</i> , <i>Marv</i> , <i>Ṭūs</i> and <i>Sarakhs</i>
<i>Muḥammad ibn Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī Rāzī</i> (<i>Šaykh al-Kulaynī</i>)	unknown	328-329 AH/ 939-940 CE	From a city (<i>Kulayn</i>) in the south west of <i>Ray</i> , near the present-day <i>Tehrān</i>	<i>Uṣūl al-Kāfī</i>	He studied in cities like <i>Qum</i> and continued his studies in <i>Baghdād</i>

E: The classical Sunni sources

Title	Author	Place of birth	Dates
al-Qubūr Dhikr al_Mawt	Ibn abī al-Dunyā, Abū Bakr 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Ubayd ibn Sufyān ibn al-Quraṣī al-Baghdādī	Baghdād	208AH\823 - 281 AH\894 CE
al_Durrah al_Fakhirah fī kašf al_ 'Ulūm al_ Ākhirah	Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn. Muḥammad al_ Ṭūsī, known as Imām Muḥammad Ḡhazzālī	Ṭūs (Khurāsān)	450AH\1038CE-505AH\1111CE
Bushrā al-Ka'ib bi Liqā' al-Ḥibīb	'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn Sābiq al-dīn al-Ḥuḍayrī al-Suyūṭī known as Jalāl al-Ddīn Suyūṭī	Cairo	849AH\1445CE-911AH\1505CE

F: The classical Shia sources

Title	Author	Place of birth	Dates
Manāzil al- 'Ākhirah	'Abbās Qumī	Qum-Najaf	1875-1941
Al-Ḥayāt mā ba'd al-Mawt	Moḥammad Ḥussayn Ṭabāṭabāī	In a village near <i>Tabrīz</i>	1903-1981
Sīyāhat i Ḡharb	Hassan Najafī Qūchānī	Qūchān	20 th century

1.6 Publications on individual eschatology in Zoroastrianism, Mandaicism and Islam

This part focuses on some important studies carried out by scholars. It is important to mention that much of the research that has so far been done has focused mostly on collective eschatology, especially in the case of Islam and particularly in Shiism. However, from the beginning of Zoroastrian, Islamic and Mandaean studies, books or articles have been published by scholars on individual eschatology.

1.6.1 Studies on individual eschatology in Zoroastrianism

Cursetji Pavry in 1926 devoted a publication to *Zoroastrian Doctrine of the Future Life from Death to the Individual Judgment*, a striking feature of Zoroastrianism. It is a good source for those who are interested in Zoroastrian studies. He quotes from different Avestan and Middle Persian sources about individual and collective eschatology. The footnotes, particularly, provide good references on this subject. Although he points to the influence of Zoroastrianism on different religions, he refrains from pointing out the resemblances.

Mary Boyce is one of the leading authorities on Zoroastrianism in the present century. She has many publications on this faith. In two of her books, she discusses the fate of the soul according to the Zoroastrian tradition. The fourth chapter of the *History of Zoroastrianism* (1975), Volume One, is devoted to death, the hereafter and funeral rites. She tries to trace the development of eschatological beliefs from Indo-Arian times to the Zoroastrian tradition. In addition to the history of Zoroastrianism, she also devotes two parts of her book *Zoroastrians, their Beliefs and Practices* (1979) to the same subject. In both of these books, the historical background and the development of the Zoroastrian eschatological beliefs, individual and collective, can be seen.

Michael Stausberg has published a three-volume series on Zoroastrianism in German, named *Die Religion Zarathustras Geschichte-Gegenwart-Ritual*. In the first volume (2002) three parts are devoted to *Die Jenseitsreise der Seele (Individualeschatologie)*, *Jenseitsreisen und individuelle Eschatologie* and *Individualeschatologie: Die Jenseitsreise der Seele, Himmel/Hölle und Sündenbekenntnisse/Sühneritual*, in which he follows individual eschatological beliefs in Avestan and Pahlavi sources, the experiences of those who travelled to the Hereafter from the Zoroastrian community throughout history according to the sources, and the differences between the accounts of the sources.

A good brief article has been also published by Shaul Shaked (1998) in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. As mentioned, it gives a brief description of both individual and collective eschatology according to the Zoroastrian sources.

1.6.2 Studies on individual eschatology in Mandaeism

One of the oldest but still valuable studies on Mandaean eschatology is an article published by Wilhelm Brandt in 1892, entitled *Das Schicksal der Seele nach dem Tod nach mandäischen und persischen Vorstellungen*, in which he tries to show the similarities and differences between these two religions, and the role of Zoroastrian eschatological ideas in the formation of Mandaean eschatology. As he mentions, many of the Mandaean eschatological beliefs have root in Zoroastrian tradition.

Lady E. S. Drower was one of the most prominent scholars in Mandaean studies. Having lived in Iraq for a long time, she had the opportunity to familiarize herself with the Mandaeans. In her valuable book *The Mandaeans of Iraq and Iran* (1937), two parts are devoted to death and the rites for the souls of the dead, eating for the dead and the Parsi ritual meals. In the first chapter of the third part of this book she quotes a lay Mandaean's account of what happens at death. In this book she mostly reports her direct observations among Mandaeans and Zoroastrians. Her anecdotes describe death rituals rather than eschatological beliefs, but here and there she mentions fragments of eschatological beliefs too. In another publication by Drower

named *Water into Wine: Study of Ritual Idiom in the Middle East* (1956), she tries to draw the attention of the readers to the dispersion of similar traits between religions in Mesopotamia and Iran. In Part Three of the same book, she gives an account of death rituals in Mandaeism and Zoroastrianism and the similarities and differences; here and there she also mentions some eschatological beliefs. She is one of the scholars who say: “*Mandaean rituals are closer to the Mazdaean sources than has hitherto been suspected*” (Drower, 1937, XVIII). She states that the reason for such similarities is the suitable situation for the growth of syncretic beliefs.

“... from earliest times, high roads have run from the uplands of Iran, from the steppes of Asia, from the deserts of Arabia, from the plains of India, through what is now modern Iraq, to the Mediterranean seaboard. From the first its inhabitants have been subject to influences from all quarters of the civilised globe and ruled by race after race. There could be no better forcing ground for syncretistic thought” (Drower, 1937, XIX).

An eminent name in Mandaean studies is Kurt Rudolph. He has many publications, but the most important ones are a two-part book named *Die Mandäer: Prolegomena, Das Mandäer problem* (1960), *Die Mandäer: Der Kult* (1961), and *Theogonie, Kosmogonie und Anthropogonie in den mandäischen Schriften* (1965). Although he accepts some resemblances between Mandaeism and Zoroastrianism eschatology, beliefs and customs, he rejects the importance and role of Zoroastrianism in Mandaeism as Brandt, Drower and Widengren state it. He states that these similarities would not seem strange in a cultural milieu where syncretism was natural and ordinary. He mostly insists on the gnostic and Jewish origin of the Mandaean beliefs. For example, in contrast to Brandt who thinks the ‘Water of Death,’ ‘Watch Houses’ and ‘the court of *Abatur*’ have their roots in Zoroastrianism, he thinks that their origin is in gnostic and Jewish beliefs; however, in Mandaeism he accepts the Iranian origin of the personification of deeds and the belief that everything in the material world has a heavenly image that will be unified with it after death.

On Mandaeism and the effect of Zoroastrianism on Mandaean eschatological beliefs, Kurt Rudolph has also published an article in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* named “Mandaeans iii. Interaction with Iranian Religion” (2008). In this article he mentions the influences of Zoroastrianism on Mandaean beliefs and the resemblances between these two faiths.

In recent years the Mandaeans have been more or less the centre of attention for some scholars in Iran. In the last two decades some publications have focused on the introduction of the Mandaeans to Iranian readers. Most of these publications are the result of direct observations that try to describe and introduce some Mandaean beliefs and rituals.

Salīm Berenjī in 1367AH (1988-89) published a book named *Qum i 'az yād rafteh*. He, as a member of the Mandaean society, tries to introduce Mandaeans as the ‘*Šābians*’ mentioned in the Qur’ān as one of the Peoples of the Book. It is interesting to see how Mandaeans themselves introduce their beliefs and rituals. Although the book is a general introduction to Mandaeism, a small part of it is also related to Mandaean beliefs about the Afterlife and their death rituals.

Another book devoted to Mandaeism is *Tahqīqī dar dīn i šābe'īn i mandā'ī* by ‘*Mas'ūd Forūzandeh*’ (1377 AH; 1998-99). He is one of the Iranian scholars who pay attention to the effect of Iranian beliefs on Mandaeism and the role of Zoroastrianism in the formation of Mandaean beliefs because of their circulation in Mesopotamia. In the 14th chapter of his book, he briefly mentions the fate of the soul according to Mandaean beliefs. The most important part of his book is the Persian translation of the ‘Mandaeans’ Book of the Soul’ which is a good and important source for Mandaean individual eschatology.

Mehrdād 'Arabistānī is an Iranian scholar who has spent time on Mandaean studies in recent years. His book entitled *Ta'mīdīyān i Gharīb* (1387 AH; 2008-9) is one of the academic references for Iranian readers who are interested in Mandaeism. With an anthropological approach he tries to mention how Mandaeans practise their religious beliefs. Some parts of the book focus on the Mandaeans' belief about the Afterlife, but mostly as a means to help to justify the Mandaean death ceremony and rituals.

The latest books on Mandaeism for Iranian readers are two small books compiled by 'Adel Shīrālī' called *Ṣābe'īn i mandā'ī ṣābe'īn i rāstīn* (1389 AH; 2009-10), and *Ṣābe'īn i mandā'ī dar Īrān* (1392 AH; 2013-14). He puts most of his efforts into introducing Mandaeans as the *Ṣābians* of the Qur'ān and one of the Peoples of the Book. He tries to distinguish between Mandaeans and 'Harrānians,' the former as a people of the book and the latter as pagans. In addition to introducing Mandaean beliefs, literature (religious sources) and rituals, in one chapter he mentions the fate of the soul according to the Mandaeans' beliefs.

1.6.3 Studies on individual eschatology in Islam

On Islamic eschatology, especially the collective kind, many books and articles have been published throughout the history of Islamic studies. Some of these studies explain the origin of the accounts explicating the post-death destiny of the soul, and find resemblances between Islamic eschatological beliefs and other religions. It is important to mention that most of these studies have been done on the Sunni sect of Islam, while Shiite Islam has its own account in the books of religious traditions attributed to the Prophet and the Imams.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Louis H. Gray published an article entitled "Zoroastrian Elements in Mohammedan Eschatology" in the journal *Le Museon* (N.S. 3, 1902, pp. 153-84) about Islamic eschatological beliefs in comparison with Zoroastrianism and the similar traits that he thinks have their roots in Iranian beliefs.

In 1941, Ragnar Eklund published a valuable book named *Life between Death and Resurrection According to Islam*. This book focuses on the fate of the soul after death and the development of this belief in its transfer from the Qur'ān to the traditions and classic Islamic sources. In one part of the book he conducts a survey on the meaning of the term *barzakh* and its meaning in early Islamic years among the companions of the Prophet Muhammad, especially *Salmān*.

In 1992, a book edited by Hiroshi Obayashi named *Death and Afterlife: Perspectives of World Religions* was published. It conducts a cross-cultural and historical survey and reflects on beliefs, myths and practices on death and the Afterlife applying different methods such as sociological, archaeological, historical, literary, critical and theological approaches, depending on the culture and the religion as well. A chapter of this book by William C. Chittick is devoted to Islam. It mainly reflects philosophical and mystical interpretations.

Farnāz Ma'ṣūmīyān, an Iranian scholar, published a book in 1995 named *Life after Death: A Study of the Afterlife in the World Religions*. It provides descriptive accounts of the Afterlife based on world religions as well as actual near-death experiences to find parallels between religious beliefs and such experiences. It is a very good source for those who want to become familiar with religious beliefs. No comparison between religions or any inter-religion traces is attested in her book.

One of the most prominent works on Islamic eschatology in recent years is *Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection* by Jane Idleman Smith and Yrone Yazbeck Haddad,

2002. Although it focuses on Sunni Islam, it includes the Qur'ān, traditions and some classical sources. The authors take a historical view, paying attention to pre-Islamic Arabia and other factors which may have contributed to the formation of Islamic eschatological thoughts. It also briefly considers modern eschatological thoughts in the world of Sunni Islam.

Christopher M. Morman in *Beyond the Threshold: Afterlife Beliefs and Experiences in World Religions* (2008) adopts a phenomenological approach to world religions to seek eschatological beliefs. He also tries to find the similarities and impressionability between religions by tracing the evolution of eschatological beliefs in each religion in a historical perspective and comparing these beliefs. In addition, he compares religious thoughts with near-death experiences. He considers eschatological thoughts as cultural materials that enable cross-cultural experiences and the effect of human experience on religious belief systems. He thinks that such cultural materials have an important role in the formation of eschatological beliefs. A chapter of his book involves both individual and collective Islamic eschatological thought and some reflections on Shiite beliefs related to this subject. He also mentions the role of Arabian, Jewish, Christian and Zoroastrian thinking in the formation and development of Islamic eschatology.

The latest publications in Islamic studies on eschatological beliefs are *Locating Hell in Islamic traditions* (2016), edited by Christian Lange, and *Paradise and Hell in Islamic Traditions* compiled by the author. Although the focus of both of these books is not on Islamic individual or collective eschatology, one can find a chapter in the former and some parts in the latter on the fate of the soul in the Islamic tradition.

In the first book a part is devoted to “Time and Space in the Qur'ānic Otherworld.” The author states that “*the Qur'ān suggests that the souls of the dead fall into sleep until the Day of Judgment*” (Lange, 2016, p. 39); but on the next page he refers to the Qur'ānic verses devoted to life after death, between death and resurrection and chastisement or reward in the Afterlife, a paradoxical situation for the reader to decide what the real fate of the soul is: sleep or a spiritual life. However, in the rest of the book he traces the development and growth of Islamic eschatology and the diversity of eschatological thoughts and their understanding throughout Islamic history.

Like the former book a chapter of the book by Tommaso Tesei is devoted to “The *barzakh* and the intermediate state of the dead in the Qur'ān.” It is stated that exegesis seemingly developed a set of views about life after death, while the Qur'ānic belief in this case is ambiguous. The author accepts this notion that “*people will experience nothing during the time which elapses between their death and resurrection*” (Lange, 2016, p. 38) as the main eschatological doctrine of the Qur'ān. As in the traditional exegesis, he chooses the meaning ‘obstacle’ and ‘barrier’ for the Qur'ānic term *barzakh* that has developed through the course of tradition and exegesis in Islamic eschatological accounts. Tommaso Tesei insists on the effect of Christianity on the formation and development of Islamic eschatology.

One of the latest books on Islamic eschatology is a two-volume work entitled *Roads to Paradise: Eschatology and Concepts of the Hereafter in Islam* (late 2016) edited by Sebastian Günther and Todd Lawson. This book consists of different aspects of Islamic eschatology in a worldwide scene. It contains detailed information on Islamic eschatology through theological, philosophical and mystical perspectives on Paradise, Hell and the Afterlife in the Qur'ān, traditions and classical Islamic sources in both Sunni and Shia Islam. Although the book concentrates mostly on universal eschatology, it provides useful information about life after death (*barzakh*) from the different Islamic viewpoints by some scholars of Islamic studies.

1.7 Survey of the chapters

This study is divided into five chapters; the first chapter is devoted to the introduction. The introduction sets out the ‘research question,’ ‘the religions in question’ and ‘the purpose of the study’. After that it presents the theoretical framework, setting out possible theories that could explain the similarities and differences between these faith systems. This part is followed by another part that focuses on the linguistic theory of ‘Sprachbund’ with the intention of establishing an explanatory model for the resemblances among religions from different backgrounds. Subsequently, a survey of the relevant sources that introduces the most important primary sources consulted in this study can be found, as well as some of the publications on individual eschatology in these three faith systems. The introduction ends with the final remarks.

Following the introduction, the second chapter focuses on Zoroastrianism. In the beginning, a brief view of Zoroastrianism is given followed by its perspective on death. Then its eschatological beliefs on different subjects are presented. They all concern the stages of the Afterlife with reference to extant sources.

The third chapter explores life after death in Mandaeanism. After a brief view of this faith, its viewpoint on death is given, and in parallel fashion to the previous chapter, the different stages of the Afterlife according to Mandaean sources are presented.

Chapter four deals with the Afterlife in Islam. After a brief introduction to this faith, the Afterlife and the fate of the soul according to the Qur’ān are introduced. The chapter continues with a consideration of the word *barzakh*, an Islamic term, its meaning and some interpretations according to Islamic sources. It tries to give an etymology for the term. In the next parts, the story of the soul after death is traced according to the traditions and some classical books that are relevant to the Afterlife.

The fifth and final chapter introduces the key concepts of the eschatological ideas in these three faith systems and then compares the eschatological ideas that seem to be borrowed from Zoroastrianism in an analysis of the evidence, and comes to a conclusion.

1.8 Final remarks

This study tries to give a general description of the common elements of most of the eschatological sources. The references are all translations, in spite of the author’s familiarity with ancient Iranian languages (Avestan and Pahlavi) and Arabic.

The research on Islam, as a worldwide religion with many different denominations and sects through history and various interpretations, is limited to Sasanian Iran and between two important Islamic denominations: Sunni and the twelve Imami Shia. The Islamic sources which have been studied in this project were mostly compiled during the first five Islamic centuries, but for the classical sources of Sunnism two sources are exceptions – *al-Durra al-fākhirah* by *Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī* and *Bushrā al-Ka’ib* by *Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūṭī* – for two reasons: first, the importance of the former in Islamic classical sources and secondly, because the latter appears to illustrate the spread of certain beliefs about death and the Hereafter beyond the boundaries of Iran and Mesopotamia in another important Islamic land, Egypt. As regards Shiism, since there is no specific source like the classical Sunni sources, I had to refer to the eschatological sources which were compiled in the 19th and 20th centuries.

All the dates are according to the Gregorian calendar (CE), but when the Islamic date is given, it precedes the Gregorian date and is shown with AH (After Hegira).

The inscription and transcription of both Arabic and Persian sources in this project are after the IJMES transcription system for Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. The Pahlavi transcription is after D.N. Mackenzie,⁷⁸ and the Mandaic transcriptions are after *A Mandaic Dictionary* by E.S. Drower and R. Macuch.⁷⁹

For more familiarity with Mandaean religious terms and expressions, a glossary is attached to the end of the chapter on Mandaeism; however, one can find explanations in footnotes whenever it is thought that the reader needs immediate clarification.

In Chapter 2, because I use the Persian translations of Hādōxt Nask, Bundahišn, Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī Xrad, Ardā Wīrāz Nāmag, Vizīdagīhā ī Zādspram, Šad Dar-e Naṣr and The Persian Rivāyats of Dārāb Hormazyār, I had to translate them into English. In the case of Bundahišn and Ardā Wīrāz Nāmag, I have merely tried to match the Persian with the English translations by Behramgore Tehmuras Anklesaria⁸⁰ and Freydun Vahman⁸¹ respectively, where necessary.

In Chapter 4, all references to the Qur'ān are from the English translation of the Qur'ān by Abdullah Yusuf Ali. It should be mentioned that except Sunni ḥadīṣ and *al-Durrah al-Fakhirah fi kashf al-'Ulūm al-Ākhirah* that have been translated to English, all the other quotations from books referred to in this study have been translated from Arabic or Persian into English by the author.

⁷⁸ D. N. MacKenzie, *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

⁷⁹ E. S. Drower, *A Mandaic Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963).

⁸⁰ Behramgore Tehmuras, *Anklesaria, Zand-Ākāsīh: Iranian or Great Bundahišn* (Bombay, 1956).

⁸¹ Freyedun Vahman, *Ardā Wīrāz Nāmag: The Iranian Divina Commedia* (London, Curzon Press, 1986).

2 Zoroastrianism

2.1 A brief view of Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrianism is the religion of Ancient Iran which claims to have been founded by Zarathustra (Av. *Zarathuštra* or the later pronunciation in Middle Persian Pahl. *Zardu* (*x*)*št*, and in New Persian *Zardošt* or *Zartošt*).⁸² Most scholars believe that he lived in eastern Iran⁸³ where he formed the core of his religion with his early followers.⁸⁴ Although Zoroastrianism originated in eastern Iran, it developed further in the Achaemenids' time, when it came into contact and may have interacted with western Iranian beliefs and the Elamite religion.⁸⁵

Regarding the doctrine of Zoroastrianism, one needs at least to study three sources separately. The first one is the doctrines that are proposed by Gathas (Gāθā), the so-called songs that are attributed to Zarathustra; then, the Young Avestan sources, and finally what Pahlavi sources provide us. The core of Zoroastrianism's doctrine in Gathas is the worship of one Divinity, 'Lord Wisdom' (Av. *Mazdā Ahura*, Old Persian *Ahuramazd*, Pahl. *Ohrmazd/ Hormizd*, NPers. *Ormazd*), as the ultimate source of existence. In this world two opposing forces are active: *Spənta Mainyu* and *Anra Mainyu*. Beside *Mazdā Ahura*, there are some other heavenly beings that are venerated in Zoroastrianism tradition that are called *Aməša.Spənta*, Pahl. *Amahraspand* (Holy Immortals)⁸⁶ and *Yazatas* (Pahl. *Yazd*) which means venerable.⁸⁷

⁸² About the etymology of this name several interpretations have been proposed that are presented here. According to the attempts of some of the scholars, this name could convey five meanings; it probably means "with old/decrepit [better: aging] camels"; "who is driving (can manage) camels"; "who is fostering/cherishing camels"; "who is longing for camels"; "with angry/furious camels," and finally "with yellow camels," see Rüdiger Schmitt, "Zoroaster i. The Name," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/zoroaster-i-the-name> (accessed September 7, 2015).

⁸³ Philip G. Kreyenbroek, "Religions in Iran: Iranian Religions of the Pre-Islamic Period," in: *Teachers and Teachings in the Good Religion: Opera Minora on Zoroastrianism*, ed., Kianoosh Rezaia (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013), 1-3; Mary Boyce, "Avestan People," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/avestan-people> (accessed September 7, 2015).

⁸⁴ As Philip Kreyenbroek states, "any claims about Zarathustra must remain speculative," so dating Zoroaster is difficult and the best way is to place him in pre-history; see Philip G. Kreyenbroek, "Religions in Iran: Iranian Religions of the Pre-Islamic Period," in: *Teachers and Teachings in the Good Religion: Opera Minora on Zoroastrianism*, ed., Kianoosh Rezaia (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013), 2.

⁸⁵ Philip G. Kreyenbroek, "On the Construction of Zoroastrianism in Western Iran," in: *Teachers and Teachings in the Good Religion: Opera Minora on Zoroastrianism*, ed., Kianoosh Rezaia (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013), 10-16.

⁸⁶ Vohu Manah/Vahman (Good Purpose), Aša Vahištā Ardvahišt (Best Righteousness), Xšaθra Vairya/Šahrēvar (Desirable Dominion), Spənta Ārmaiti/Spendārmad (Holy Devotion), Haurvatāt/Hordād (Wholeness), and Amərətāt/Amurdād (Immortality) are called Aməša Spənta, meaning literally Holy/Bounteous Immortal (Pahl. Amešāspand, [A]mahraspand), see Philip G. Kreyenbroek, "On the Shaping of Zoroastrian Theology Aši, VərəθraϷna and the promotion of the Aməša Spənta," in: *Teachers and Teachings in the Good Religion: Opera Minora on Zoroastrianism*, ed., Kianoosh Rezaia (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013), 69-76.

⁸⁷ For more information about Aməša.Spənta, see Bernhard Geiger, *Die Aməša.Spəntas: Ihre Wesen und ihre ursprüngliche Bedeutung* (Vienna: Buchhändler der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaftern, 1916); Johanna Narten, *Die Aməša Spəntas im Avesta* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1982).

“These (are) the two spirits (present) in the primal (stage of one’s existence), twins who have become famed (manifesting themselves as) the two (kinds of) dreams, the two (kinds of) thoughts and words (and) the two (kinds of) actions, the better and the evil. And between these two, the munificent discriminate rightly (but) not the miserly” (Humbach, *Gathas*, 30:3).

According to Gathas, this one supreme God is the creator of the universe, he is the God of knowledge and wisdom, the first and the last (Y.31:8), master of Righteousness who created this world through truth (Y.45:6), the father of the sun and the moon and the creator of the cosmos, that has been created through his sagacity (Y. 31:7-11). In the beginning, *Mazdā Ahura* existed as a divine being worthy of worship and veneration, just, good and wise. He is the source of all goodness, he has fashioned the world and all that is good;⁸⁸ he is the creator of life (Y.50:11).

It is in Younger Avesta sources that Spənta Mainyu’s position is weakened and it is *Mazdā Ahura* or now *Ahura Mazdā* that becomes the rival of the *Ahura Mainyu*.⁸⁹ In the scene that Younger Avestan sources portray, the *Aməša.Spənta* and various *Yazatas* are venerated more prominently. Pahlavi sources, or as one might call it, ‘Pahlavi Zoroastrianism’ is a fully dualistic religion. As *Bundahišn*, a Pahlavi text from the 9th century CE, states, *Ahura Mazdā* and *Ahura Mainyu* (*Ohrmazd* and *Ahremen*), are eternal rivals and opponents. While *Ohrmazd* is all light, and resides in the upper part at the top, his rival is all darkness and dwells in the lowest parts in the bottom. *Ohrmazd* is all knowledge and purity, but *Ahremen* is all ignorance and foolishness. *Ohrmazd* knows that *Ahremen* exists, but *Ahremen* has no knowledge, and is entirely ignorant of the being of *Ohrmazd*. In Pahlavi sources *Amahraspands*’ and *Yazads*’ roles are very prominent; they play the role of the assistants of *Ohrmazd* to confront *Ahremen* and his forces.

Zoroastrianism is a religion which has been mainly based on oral sources for centuries. It was many centuries after the foundation of this religion that the oral sources were written down and compiled to form a text. The most important group of texts in Zoroastrianism is now called *Avesta* (Pahl. *Abestāg*); it is in an Old Iranian language dating from the second to the first millennium BCE, known as the Avestan language. Zoroastrian tradition states that Avesta was first compiled by Zarathustra and was kept without any changes until Alexander’s military attack on Iran in 330 BCE;⁹⁰ however, historical evidence dates the compilation of the Avesta between the 4th and 6th centuries CE.⁹¹ The corpus of Avesta is preserved in five sections: *Yasna*, *Yašt*, *Vīsprad*, *Vīdēvdād* and *Khorde Avesta*, all in the Avestan language, beside the Pahlavi translation of Avesta (*Zand*), and their explanatory passages in Middle Persian written in Avestan script (*Pāzand*). Most of these Avestan sources are liturgical texts in veneration of *Amahraspands* and

⁸⁸ In the Gathas, it seems that Ahura Mazdā created the ‘principles,’ while the ‘fashioner’ or some other being fashioned the individual beings.

⁸⁹ Philip G. Kreyenbroek, “On Spenta Mainyu’s Role in Zoroastrian Cosmogony,” in: *Teachers and Teachings in the Good Religion: Opera Minora on Zoroastrianism*, ed., Kianoosh Rezaia (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013), 97-103.

⁹⁰ Ardā Wirāz Nāmag states: “...and this religion, the whole Avesta and Zand had been written on decorated cow skins in gold and were placed in Staxr i Pābakān in Diznibišt...” in: Philippe Gignoux, *Le livre d’Ardavirāz*, trans., Zhālih Āmūzgār (Tehrān: Intishārāt i Mu’īn, 1383), 42; Mojtabā Minovī, *Nāmeḥ yē Tansar* (Tehrān: Mo’assisiyeh ‘Intishārāt va Chāp i Dānishgāh i Tehrān, 1354), 56.

⁹¹ Aḥmad Tafāzzolī, Zhālih, Āmūzgār, *Tārīkh i Adabiyāt i Irān i Pīsh az Islām* (Tehrān: Intishārāt i Sukhan, 1376), 71; K Hoffmann, “Avestan Language I-III,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/avestan-language#pt1> (accessed October 19, 2015).

Yazads that are recited in liturgies, except *Vīdēvdād* which provides some mythical contexts, prescriptions and penalties concerning purity, disposing of corpses in the ossuaries and treatment of certain animals.

In addition to Avesta as the most important sacred text of the Zoroastrians, a considerable number of sources in middle Persian language (Pahlavi) and later in classical Persian has been compiled. Although some contents of these books date back to Iran before Islam, the final compilations of these texts were made between the 9th and 10th centuries. Most of these texts are concerned with questions of religion. In addition to Avestan and Pahlavi sources, some religious texts were compiled in Persian (in Iran) and in Gujurati (in India) too. These sources will be examined in detail in the section.⁹²

2.1.1 Sources

To carry out this study, three groups of sources are available: Avestan, Pahlavi and Zoroastrian Persian texts. Most of the descriptions of individual eschatology in Zoroastrianism can be found in the sources mentioned below. It should be mentioned that due to the complexity of the Gathas and their uncertain meaning as a source, no reference is made to it in this study. Also, there are few indications as to the individual eschatology in the other YAv texts. Below a short summary of their main characteristics will be given, and then eschatological details will be discussed under several topics relevant to the fate of the soul in the Afterlife.

- **Avestan sources**

Hādōxt Nask: As mentioned earlier, Avesta is the oldest Zoroastrian primary source in an Old Iranian language dating from the second to first millennium BCE. The compositions were orally transmitted and learned by heart until they were probably written down between the 4th and 6th centuries CE in Avestan script, which was developed by priests to write down Avestan texts.⁹³ Beside what scholars now consider the main corpus of Avestan texts, some further Avestan texts accompanied by their Pahlavi translations and commentaries are extant. These include the *Hādōxt Nask* (Av. *hadaoxta-*), an Avestan manuscript accompanied by Pahlavi translation. Apparently, the extant text once formed part of the sixth division (*nask*) of the Sassanian Avesta; the extant text contains three chapters. The first chapter is about the importance of the *Ašəm Vohū* prayer, while other two parts are about the fate of the soul after death in two sub-divisions: the first one is about a righteous soul and the second one focuses on the fate of a wicked soul.⁹⁴

⁹² For more information about the Zoroastrian sources, see Miguel Ángel, Andrés-Toledo. “Primary sources: Avestan Pahlavi” in: *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism*, eds., Michael Stausberg and Yuhān Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina, Anna Tessmann (John Wiley & sons, 2015), 519-528; Daniel J., Sheffield. “Primary sources: New Persian” in: *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism*, eds., Michael Stausberg, Yuhān Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina, Anna Tessmann (John Wiley & sons, 2015), 529-542; Daniel J. Sheffield. “Primary Sources: Gujurati” in: *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism*, eds., Michael Stausberg, Yuhān Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina, Anna Tessmann (John Wiley & sons, 2015), 543-554.

⁹³ Ahmad Tafazzolī, Zhālih Āmūzgār, op. cit., 71.

⁹⁴ Miguel Ángel, Andrés-Toledo. “Primary sources: Avestan Pahlavi” in: *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism*, eds., Michael Stausberg, Yuhān Sohrab-Dinshaw Vevaina and Anna Tessmann (John Wiley & sons, 2015), 522; Ahmad Tafazzolī, Zhālih Āmūzgār, op. cit., 62-63.

Vīdēvdād (Vendīdād or Juddēwdād in Pahlavi): It is a part of the Younger Avesta in twenty-two chapters. The chapters consist of different subjects such as mythical geography of the ancient world, stories of legendary personages, laws of purity, sins, crimes and punishments. It is mostly a juridical book; however, it gives some information about the fate of the soul too. Two chapters are devoted to this subject briefly, Chapters: 7:52-54 and 19:27-33.

Aogəmadaēcā: An Avestan manuscript accompanied by Pahlavi translation; twenty-nine sentences in Avestan language with Pahlavi and later Sanskrit translation. Because of the Pahlavi and Sanskrit translation, its final redaction cannot have been before the 12th century. Its main theme is death; therefore, it could be a liturgy that would have been recited in death ceremonies.⁹⁵

- **Pahlavi sources**

In contrast to the limited number of Avestan sources, most of the Zoroastrian sources, especially the eschatological sources, were composed in Sasanian and post-Sasanian times (between 8th and 10th centuries CE) in Middle Persian, Pahlavi.

Bundahišn (Primordial Creation) or Zand_ Āgāhī (Knowledge on the basis of Zand): A Pahlavi text from 9th century CE. Its author or redactor is *Farrōbāg Dādagīh*. *Bundahišn* is mostly a cosmological text that contains an introduction beside 36 chapters on different subjects such as the contest between *Ohrmazd* and *Ahremān*, the spiritual and material creation by *Ohrmazd* against *Ahremān*, geographical information about mountains, rivers and mythical places, phytology, zoology, ethnography, history, genealogy, predictions and prophecies, astrology and calendar. Part of the book deals with individual eschatology, collective eschatology and what happens at the end of the world.⁹⁶

Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī Xrad (The Judgment of the Spirit of Wisdom): It is a series of questions and answers between an imaginary being which is called *Mēnōg ī Xrad* (the spirit of wisdom) and *Dānāg* (the wise man). It consists of subjects such as pieces of advice, creation, eschatology, astronomy, geography and wisdom. Its date of composition is unknown, but Tafāzzolī states that its compilation date could be in late Sasanian times because there is no indication of Arabs and Islam in it.⁹⁷

Ardā Wīrāz Nāmag (The Book of the Righteous Wīrāz): An ecstatic vision of Heaven and Hell by the righteous *Wīrāz*. This Middle Persian text deals with the subject of the world of souls and deities. It is about the ascension of *Wīrāz* to the Hereafter, and his visit to Heaven, Hell, and the intermediate level between these two. He describes the rewards that the righteous receive and the punishment of evil-doers in Hell. Throughout his journey, he is accompanied by *Srōš* and *Ādur Yazads*, who explain to him the reason for each reward and torment in reply to *Wīrāz*'s questions about the nature of the sins and virtues. This treatise was written to prove the truth of the *Māzdēsna*n (Mazda worshippers) for a special group and to tell them about the fate of the soul after death. It must have been compiled in the late Sasanian era, but the final compilation must have been in the 11th or 12th centuries CE.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Kaikhusroo M. Jamsap Asa, *Aogəmadaēcā: A Zoroastrian Liturgy* (Vienna: Der Oesterreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1982), 9.

⁹⁶ Aḥmad Tafāzzolī, *Zhālih Āmūzgār*, op. cit., 141-145.

⁹⁷ Aḥmad Tafāzzolī, *Zhālih Āmūzgār*, op. cit., 198.

⁹⁸ Aḥmad Tafāzzolī, *Zhālih, Āmūzgār, Tārīkh i Adabiyyāt i Irān i Pīsh az Islām* (Tehrān: Intishārāt i Sukhan, 1376), 169.

Dādestān ī Dēnīg (The Religious Judgment): It is a summary of answers by *Manušcihr ī Juwānjamān*, a Zoroastrian high priest, from 9th CE. The writing style of this book is question and answer. It seems that members of the Zoroastrian community had sent their questions to the author and *Manušcihr ī Juwānjamān* as a high priest had replied to them. The subjects that are discussed in this book are various, such as: religious laws, rituals, creation, metaphysics, Hell and Paradise, Resurrection, admonitions and eschatology.⁹⁹

Pahlavi Rivāyat accompanying Dādestān ī Dēnīg: As is apparent from the title, it is a Pahlavi text accompanying *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*. Its date and author are unknown, but according to some evidence, it could be from the late 9th or early 10th CE.¹⁰⁰ It is about different subjects such as rituals, sacrifices, marriage, evil deeds and good deeds, sins, creation, demotic beliefs, myths, moralities, eschatology and admonitions.¹⁰¹ This text is one of the main sources for the later New Persian text *Šad Dar-e Bundahiš*.¹⁰²

Vizīdagihā ī Zādspram (‘Selections of Zādspram’ or ‘The Anthology of Zādspram’): It was probably written by *Zādspram Juwān Jam* in the 9th century. He was an innovator in religion with different ideas against his co-religionists at his time. The book consists of 35 chapters about different subjects on cosmogony, the life of Zoroaster and eschatology.¹⁰³

- **Persian sources**

Šad Dar-e Našr, Šad Dar-e Bundahiš (One Hundred Gates of Prose, One Hundred Gates of Primordial Creation): These two texts are considered in group of Persian *Rivāyāts* (narrations) which resemble Pahlavi *Rivāyāts* texts. They cover subjects such as religious duties, ceremonies, cosmology, creation, ritual practices and eschatology. The dating and authorship of these texts is uncertain.¹⁰⁴

The Persian Rivāyats of Dārāb Hormazyār: It is a series of letters and formal written correspondences that were exchanged between Iranian Zoroastrians and Indian Zoroastrians, started by a priest from Yazd named *Narīmān Hūšang* in 1475 CE. The exchange of letters between Iran and India lasted about three centuries, and finally they were compiled together, the most important being the *Rivāyats of Dārāb Hormazyār*. They deal with subjects such as rituals, ceremonies, cosmology, eschatology and sayings of Zoroastrian sages.¹⁰⁵

2.2 The five components of man

According to some Zoroastrian sources, man is a combination of several components (forces), some of which play a role in the Afterlife; some of the relevant passages from the Pahlavi books will be given here.

- **Bundahišn**

⁹⁹ Aḥmad Tafāzzolī, Zhālih, Āmūzgār, Tārīkh i Adabiyāt i Īrān i Pīsh az Islām (Tehrān: Intishārāt i Sukhan, 1376), 150-151.

¹⁰⁰ A. V., Williams, *The Pahlavi Rivāyat Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, Part I (Copenhagen, The Royal Danish Academy of Science and Letters, 1990), 8.

¹⁰¹ Aḥmad Tafāzzolī, Zhālih Āmūzgār, op. cit., 153-154.

¹⁰² D. J. Sheffield, op. cit., 532-533.

¹⁰³ Aḥmad Tafāzzolī, Zhālih Āmūzgār, op. cit., 145-146.

¹⁰⁴ Daniel J. Sheffield, op. cit., 532.

¹⁰⁵ Daniel J., Sheffield, op. cit., 533.

According to this Pahlavi text, man as the creature of *Ohrmazd* is a combination of five components, *tan* (material body), *gyān* (wind, breath in and breath out), *ruwān* (*ruwān* and *bōy* are in the body, they hear, see and say), *ēwēnag* (which stands in the sun station) and *frawahar* (which is before *Ohrmazd*).¹⁰⁶ When a person dies, the body decomposes (in Zoroastrianism, it will be eaten by vultures, etc) and goes to earth, *gyān* mingles with wind, and *ēwēnag* goes to the sun station. It is *ruwān* that joins *frawahar*¹⁰⁷ and continues life after death.

- Vizīdagīhā ī Zādspram

Man is a combination of several components, each of which has a special mission, and after death, they have different fates. The author of *Vizīdagīhā ī Zādspram* talks about different components and forces that form the nature of humans. These constructive components of man are: *tan* (body), *frawahar* (guardian angel or soul), *gyān* (soul or ghost), *ruwān* (soul), *bōy* (perception or sense) and *mēnōg* (spirit).

Tan is the flesh and bones; it is likened to the house and the materials that have been used to build it. *Frawahar* is related to the development and growth of the body organs; it helps them to become perfect and to be constant; *gyān* is responsible for keeping the body alive; it is compared to the fire on the throne in the fire temple; it makes the body warm, and helps it to continue life just as the fire in the fire temple makes it warm and light; *ruwān* is compared to a marshal, a disciplinarian, who is in charge of the fire (*gyān*), to watch it and kindle it; when the body is asleep, *ruwān* is awake and comes out of the body and observes its surroundings “*and when the body sleeps, the soul goes out of [it], some go far some stay near [to the body], and observes things*”; *mēnōg* is not comparable to anything in the material world (Rashed-Mohassel, *Zādisparam*, 29:1-3; 29:8). *Bōy* is blended with *gyān*, in fact the perception of *gyān* is because of the *bōy*; when man sleeps, *gyān* remains in the body, *ruwān* goes out of the body, and *bōy* mediates between these two, but after awakening, they gather together to continue life (Rashed-Mohassel, *Zādisparam*, 30:32).

Zādspram supposes that man intercommunicates between the material world and the spiritual world. He asserts an optimistic viewpoint about death: “...*birth to the material world is leaving the spiritual world behind and abandoning the material world is the birth into the spiritual world*” (Rashed-Mohassel, *Zādisparam*, p. 89). It seems that man is originally from the world above and by death he returns back to his origin, since he asserts that by birth man leaves the spiritual world; seemingly, he believes in a spiritual life before birth to the material world. He states that on death, *bōy*, *mēnōg* and *frawahar* leave *tan*; and *gyān*, which is the power of life, vanishes. For a wicked soul, *bōy*, *mēnōg* and *frawahar* leave *ruwān* to the world above and it is *ruwān* who will be tortured, but for the righteous both *ruwān* and *bōy* will be rewarded by *Yazads*.

“For the enumeration [at the third dawn] stōš (=the first third night after death) Nērōsang the angel comes and unifies gyān, bōy, frawahar and ruwān that had been separated and scattered by Astwihād, the worse Wāy and grooms essence and accident (=chihrīg ud ēwēnīg), they will associate with one another the in goodness that reaches them and share their strength and happiness. ...and if he is a sinner, on his way, bōy and frawahar turn away

¹⁰⁶ Mehrdād, Bahār, *Farnbağ Dādagī: Bundahišn* (Tehran: Intishārāt ī Tūs, 1369), 48, para. 34

¹⁰⁷ As mentioned above, according to the Zoroastrian literatures, man is a combination of different components and not a simple being. He is not only body, but soul, conscience and other components. One of these components is *frawahr*, which is interpreted as: man’s immortal soul and guardian angel during his lifetime.

from him. Then ruwān should go alone to Hell with a great regret... ” (Rashed-Mohassel, *Vizīdagīhā ī Zādisparam*, 30:43-44).

- Ṣad Dar-e Naṣr, Ṣad Dar-e Bundahiš

Man is a combination of five constructive components: *jān* (vital force), *ravān* (soul), *akhw* (conscience), *bōy* (the spirit) and *frōhar*. It is said that every one of them has an especial duty in the body. God has entrusted them a certain mission in the body, and he is watching them all the time.¹⁰⁸

“It is said in the Mazdayasnian religion that there are five spiritual things in men. One is called *jān* (vital force), one is called *ravān* (the soul), one is called *akhw* (the conscience), one is called *bōy* (the spirit) and one is called *frōhar* and every one of them has been entrusted with some work in the body of man by God the most High, and it keeps watch (therein) over something” (Dhabhar, *Ṣad Dar Bundaiš*, 98:1-4).

Bōy is in charge of reason, understanding, wisdom, intellect and memory; it controls them to see that they do their tasks correctly and strengthen one another. *Frōhar* is responsible for giving strength to the body; whatsoever man eats, the power must be shared among the organs and whatever is indigestible must be ejected by the body. *Ravān* keeps the body away from evil; it tells the body what to say and what not to say, what to do and what not to do; it keeps reason and the body wise. In dreams, Paradise and Hell are shown to the *ravān*, and it is *ravān* that leads man to goodness or to evil. *Jān* assists the body and supports the five senses; it keeps the body warm and removes disease from body. *Akhw* protects the body from evil and invites all the other components to to goodness, and asks them to avoid evil such as wrath, lust and jealousy. When man dies, *tan* mingles with dust, *jān* joins the wind, *akhū* goes to spiritualities (*mēnōg*), but *ravān*, *bū* and *frōhar* mingle together and will be responsible for enumeration on the bridge. It is also asserted that there will be no punishment for *tan* and *jān*, because they are the instruments of the soul and they follow whatever it orders them. If they were righteous in the material world, they will be in Paradise and if they were evil, they will be in Hell.¹⁰⁹

- The Persian Rivāyats of Dārāb Hormazyār

Man is not only this material body, but a combination of six forces or elements. The first is *Tan* (body), a combination of bones, flesh, blood, veins and vessels, which mingles with earth after death. There will be no torment for the body, because it has been only an instrument. The second element is *Jān* (the vital force); it will join the wind after death and, as with the body, there will be no punishment for the vital force. *Axw* is the third force in the human combination and after death goes to Paradise with other *mēnōgān* (spiritual beings), because he commits no sin in the body and remains pure. There remain three other components which after death will be responsible for evil deeds and good deeds, and will be reckoned; they are *rawān* (soul), *bōy* (perception), and *frawahr* (immortal soul). These three elements will be mingled together after death, and according to their righteousness or wickedness, they will go to Paradise or Hell (*Riv.*, Vol. 1, p. 149).

¹⁰⁸ Ervad Bamanji Nasarvanji Dhabhar, *Saddar Naṣr and Daddar Bundeheš* (Bombay: British India Press, 1909), 165.

¹⁰⁹ Ervad Bamanji Nasarvanji Dhabhar, *Saddar Naṣr and Saddar Bundeheš* (Bombay: British India Press, 1909), 166-167.

2.3 The abode of *Frawahrs*

As mentioned above, according to the Zoroastrian sources, man is a combination of different components. He is not only body, but soul, conscience and other components. One of these components is *frawahr*, which is interpreted as: man's immortal soul and guardian angel during his lifetime. To know *frawahr* better, it could be helpful to have a look at one of the oldest parts of Avesta, *Frawardīn Yašt*, the 13th *Yašt* of Avesta which is named after the *frawahrs*, because its main theme is the summoning of *frawahrs* to help the applicant.

About what *frawahrs*¹¹⁰ are, different comments have been made. Because of the diversity of the information that can be inferred from passages of the *Frawardīn Yašt*, they can be summed up in: 1- the spirit of the deceased, 2- the spirit of the ancient heroes and warriors, 3- a numerous band of powerful deities that help *Ohrmazd* in creation, 4- the ancestor spirits and finally 5- a component of human personality that leaves man at death. Whatever *frawahrs* are, they share common features, for example, they are everywhere, in plants, and animals, and even *Oharmazd* and *amahraspandān* have *frawahr*. They form a countless army of warriors; they are strong, mighty, firm, valiant, bravest, faithful, high-girdled and ready to help whenever they receive offerings from people and whenever they are invoked.

The most important characteristic of the *frawahrs* that can be useful in this project is their abode, as *Frawardīn Yašt* states:

“yā. uzbātā. mainiiu.šūtā. frašūsənte. barəšnuuō. auuaṅhe. ašnō.
aməm. paidimnā. hutāštəm. vərəθraynəmca. ahuraδātəm. vanaiṅtīmca.
uparatātəm. saokəmca. barəṭ. auuarətəm. barəṭ. āiiaptəm. ašaonīm. θrafəδəm.
yesniiqm. vahmiiqm. ašāt. haca. yaṭ. vahištāt.”

“Who being called up, spiritually impelled, come from the summit of heaven to help, (who) possess well-built strength and Ahura-created victoriousness and conquering superiority and profit which brings riches, which brings boons, which is righteous, abundant, worthy of worship, worthy of praise according to the best truth” (Malandra, *Yt. 13/42*).

As this Avestan passage indicates, besides earthly living and existence, there must be another level of being or existence in which heavenly beings and spirits reside. The most prominent adjective in this passage is *barəšnuuō* or as Malandra reads it *barəsnuuō* which is derived from the stem *barəšnuu-* (raising, height). It can be inferred that among Avestan people there had been the idea of another world (spiritual existence) with the prominent feature of height, a life beyond this material life, from which spirits and other deities can traffic. This life beyond the earthly life, is a kind of existence (aṅhav_, aṅhu_ from the root √ahu which means: to be, to be available, to exist, to be alive bodily or mentally) with a prominent feature (Avestan adjective *barəz_* and Avestan noun *barəzah_* and *barəšnuu_* height). As mentioned before, *frawahras* may be the spirits of the ancestors that live in the summit of heaven which recalls the high place for the abode of souls after death.

¹¹⁰ For more information about *Frawahr*, see Mary Boyce, “Fravaši,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/fravasi-> (accessed September 11, 2015).

2.4 Zoroastrianism's perspective on Death

As mentioned earlier, Pahlavi sources portray a dualistic cosmology: a world with two rivals, two opposing forces that fight against each other in all aspects of life in spite of the fact that the final victory is of *Ohrmazd*. This dualistic world-view plays an important role in the Zoroastrian perspective on death. To illustrate the context of the Zoroastrian view of death it may be useful to consider the Myth of Creation as found in the Pahlavi text called *Bundahišn* (Primal Creation).

As *Bundahišn* states, *Ohrmazd* is located in light that is called 'Endless Light,' while *Ahremen* dwells in the Realm of Darkness. There is a border between these two that is a space with two faces, one to the world of light and the other to the world of darkness; this empty space is called *Wāy*. Both *Ohrmazd* and *Ahremen* have finiteness and infinity, one in the utmost-high in the 'Endless Light,' and the other one in the abysmal station, in the depths in 'Endless Darkness'. *Ohrmazd* is all knowledge and because of this he is aware of *Ahremen*'s being, but *Ahremen* is not aware of the existence of *Ohrmazd* because he lacks intelligence. When *Ahremen* sees *Ormazd*, light and the ungraspable lustre of *Ohrmazd*, he decides to attack and occupy it on account of his destructive desire and malicious nature, but when he sees the courage and fortitude of *Ohrmazd*, he returns back to his place to create the dark forces to fight and destroy *Ohrmazd*. What *Ahremen* creates is formidable, defiled and full of wickedness, and they do not delight him. *Ohrmazd*- who is all knowledge and knows the end of affairs- offers peace unto the *Ahremen*, but *Ahremen* imagines that this offer is because of *Ohrmazd*'s feebleness and inability, so he does not accept the peace offer and decides to destroy *Ohrmazd* and his creation. Then *Ohrmazd* says: "Oh *Ahremen*! You are not able to do everything that you desire, you cannot destroy me, and you cannot do so unto my creatures too, that they may not return to my ownership." Saying this, he decides to fix a period for contest with *Ahremen*. If *Ohrmazd* does not so, *Ahremen* can attack *Ohrmazd*'s creatures and this conflict lasts forever. He offers a nine-thousand year fixed time because he knows that he would render *Ahremen* useless, by fixing this time. When *Ahremen* accepts *Ohrmazd*'s offer, *Ohrmazd* anaesthetises him by reciting *Ahunawar*.¹¹¹

Meanwhile *Ahremen* is unconscious, *Ohrmazd* first creates *mēnōgīg* (the spiritual creation), then *gētīg* (the material world).¹¹² He creates time, then the spiritual creation and finally the material one. When *Ahremen* regains his consciousness, he faces the creation of *Ohrmazd*; therefore, he begins to create the demons to confront *Ohrmazd*'s creation.

According to *Bundahišn*, *Ohrmazd* first created the *Amahraspands* and *Yazads* as spiritual beings, and then heaven, water, earth, plant, sheep, people, fire and wind as material beings. In opposition to *Ohrmazd*, *Ahremen* created the demons like *Akōman* (evil thought), *Āz* (demon of greed), *Xēšm* (demon of wrath), and other demons. While *Ahremen* was unconscious, *Ohrmazd* created material beings but they were immobile. When *Ahremen* regained consciousness and was faced with the creation of *Ohrmazd*, he fainted for three thousand years.

¹¹¹ It is one of the most important Gathic prayers that is recited in almost all situations and in all invocations.

¹¹² The notions *mēnōgīg* and *gētīg* play an important role not only in Zoroastrianism cosmology but in eschatology too: see Shaul Shaked, "The notions 'mēnōgīg' and 'gētīg' in the Pahlavi Texts and their Relation to Eschatology," ActOr 33 (1971), 59-107.

Ohrmazd created *Gayōmard*, the prototype of humankind, whose creation made *Ahreman* angry. One of the female demons, *Jahī*, encouraged *Ahreman* to attack *Gayōmard* and other good creations of *Ohrmazd*. To destroy *Gayōmard*, *Ahreman* created a demon named *Astwiḥād* accompanied by thousands of demons to cause him to die.¹¹³ Death, then, is thought of as one of the evil phenomena produced by *Ahreman*.¹¹⁴ Death is a demonic force operating in the world of Zoroastrianism. In the other words, Zoroastrianism has a negative perspective on death, which is also reflected by the Zoroastrian ceremonies and rites connected with death.¹¹⁵

The primal contest between these two rivals not only plays an important role in Zoroastrian cosmogony in Younger Avestan and Pahlavi sources, but in its eschatology too. Our time, the period of Mixture, is imagined as a battle between *Ohrmazd* and *Ahreman*. At the final stage, the end of the ephemeral world as we know it, these two forces will be separated forever. Man as the creature and assistant of God in this battlefield is capable of choosing good or evil and the fate of his soul, both in the Afterlife and at the End of Time, depends on this choice.

According to another Zoroastrian source, *Pahlavi Rivāyāt*, man should approach goodness and avoid devils because whatever he does will be enumerated after his death. It is as easy to be good and do well as to commit crimes and do sins, but man should avoid wickedness and try to approach the virtues, because everyone who avoids sins will not go to *Duṣox* (the bad existence). It is obvious that all thoughts, words and deeds will be enumerated after death on a balance, and if the merits are as much as a single thread more than the wickednesses, the soul enters Paradise; but if the wickedness is as much as a single thread more than the merits, the soul enters Hellfire.¹¹⁶

“(it is revealed) that when the human soul comes to the Činwad puhl, they put (his) sin and merit into the balance, and if the merit (is) more by as much as a single thread of spindle, they lead him off to Paradise: if his sin (is) more by as much as a single eyelash and (indeed) the tip of that eyelash, then they lead him off to Hell” (Williams, *The Pahlavi Rivāyāt*, Part II, 9:15).

Pahlavi Rivāyāt asserts that it is the arch-demon that created death: *“One of those (things is) when he [i.e. Ahreman] created death, men died...”* (Williams, *Pah. Riv. Dd.*, Part II, 13a: 8).

¹¹³ The creation of the universe is divided into three stages: 1- Primal creation (*bun-dahišn*) when evil and goodness have not been mixed with each other and all the creation is pure and good. 2- Mixing of good and evil (*gumēzišn*) in the material world which is the creature of *Ohrmazd*. 3- Separation (*wizārišn*) is the time when *Ohrmazd* defeats *Ahreman* forever and separates evil from goodness. The whole story of creation and the contest between *Ohrmazd* and *Ahreman* can be followed in: Mehrdad Bahār, *Farnbağ Dādagī: Bundahišn* (Tehrān: Intishārāt ī Ṭūs, 1369), 33-56.

¹¹⁴ One of the honours of the earth is when a righteous man walks on it, works on it and makes a house there. When earth is deprived of such an honour, this makes it regret. Moreover, as mentioned before, death is a demonic phenomenon and it may be because of such a viewpoint that the author states that all creatures, from the divine world or the material world, grieve on the death of a righteous man (*ahlaw*), because it may mean that *Ahreman* has defeated *Ohrmazd*'s forces.

“...the soul of the righteous undergoes pain while it departs from the world. After departure, until it has passed through that frightful account, it+laments. After the judgment it is joyful in its own place, and since its relatives who are in the material world have not realised +the spiritual mysteries, and have not known its place, they are glwhyyk (?) full of grief (for them) in a worldly manner, and arouse the yazadān+to pity (them).” (*Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, 21:2)

¹¹⁵ Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees* (Bombay: British India Press, 1922), 51-74.

¹¹⁶ A.V. Williams, *The Pahlavi Rivāyāt Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* (Copenhagen: The Royal Academy of Sciences and Letters, 1990), 2: 18.

He created death to harm and damage the creatures of *Ohrmazd*. He supposed that by creating death he could hurt *Ohrmazd* because people would vanish (Williams, *Pah. Riv. Dd.*, Part II, 13a: 6-9). On the contrary, *Ohrmazd* said:

“So long as all people in the world are alive, then for them there are three kinds of necessity. If they are healthy and they have no illness or punishment, then they need all the goodness of the material world. If there is distress and misfortune for them, then it is necessary for them that [lit. ‘when’] their souls go from their bodies. And when their souls stood at the (point of) severance (from the body) and (were) free of the worldly cares [lit. without hope in / of the material world], then thereafter the blessedness of their souls (is) more desirable than anything (else)” (Williams, *The Pahlavi Rivāyāt*, Part II, 13b:1-4).

2.5 The demon of death (*Astwihād*) and *Way ī Wattar*

As mentioned above, according to *Bundahišn*, *Ahremen* created demons and amongst them, *Astwihād*, to confront *Ohrmazd*’s good creation and *Gayōmard* (the prototypal man) by leading him to death; therefore, it is better to call him the ‘demon of death’. *Astwihād* (Av. *Astō.vīdāθtu*, lit. “He who dissolves the bones, bone-breaker and divider of the body”)¹¹⁷ is one of the companions of *Ahremen*,¹¹⁸ who is associated with *Wāy ī Wattar* as reasons for death. When Zarathustra wants to know the reason for death, *Ahura Mazdā* replies that this is the function of *Astwihād* and his companion, the evil wind *Vāyu* (*Vd.* 5:8-9).

In Zoroastrian sources, there is an Avestan manuscript accompanied by Pahlavi translation that is called *Aogāmadaēchā*. Apparently, it is a collection of blessings recited in honour of the soul of the departed person. It consists of 29 sentences in Avestan with a Pahlavi translation from later times. It talks about the inevitability of death and warns man not to forget death. *Aogāmadaēchā* asserts that *Astwihād* has been made for killing; he breaks corporeal beings into small pieces (*astwihād wizārīhēd astōmandān wišōbagīh*); no one can escape from him; he is not deceivable and does not accept bribery or gifts to postpone death; he does not substitute someone for another’s death, and he takes man away whether he wants or not.¹¹⁹ When people see him they quiver because they cannot confront him. According to *Aogāmadaēchā*, *Astwihād* or *Way ī Wattar* (the Evil Wind) is in charge of taking souls. He has been created for this purpose; no one can escape him; he does not accept bribes or gifts; he does not substitute someone instead of another person and he takes the soul whether a man desires it or not. Throughout history, there have been many people amongst the renowned ones who would have liked to escape death or postpone it, such as the Turanian king *Frāsyāk* (*Frāsyāb* افراسياب) or (*Dahāk* ضحاک) by digging tunnels or building abodes below the earth, but death surrounded them

¹¹⁷ M. F. Kanga, “*Astwihād*,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/astwihad-av> (accessed September 8, 2015).

¹¹⁸ In a 16th century Zoroastrian source, it is attested that *Ahremen* is only like a servant and cannot bring on death before the destined time of a man. It is God who has entrusted to *Ahremen* the task of depriving a man of his life at the destined time. See Jivan Jamshedji Modi, *The Persian Farziat-Nameh and Kholaseh i Din of Dastur Darab Pahlān* (Bombay: Anklesaria, 1924), 50.

¹¹⁹ Kaikhusroo M. Jamasp Asa, *Aogāmadaēcā: A Zoroastrian Liturgy* (Vienna: Der Oesterreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1982), 70, §§ 57-60.

everywhere they went.¹²⁰ No one can free himself from the demon of death; he is destructive and no one in depths or above in the skies can oppose him. Sometimes *Astwihād* is treated as equal to another demon, for example, one of the Pahlavi sources identifies and equates *Astwihād* with *Way ī wattar* (the Evil Wind). It asserts that *Stawihād* is the evil wind who takes life; it also says: “when his hand touches a man, causes him a deep sleep, when he shadows over him, it results in fever, when he looks in his eyes he drives away the life, and they call it death.”¹²¹

Bundahišn also refers to the life-taker(s) that take part in soul-taking, and the soul’s reaction when it encounters the life-taker. According to this Pahlavi source, *Ahreman* and his forces have been in charge of taking souls since the beginning of the creation. In the beginning God created the prototype of man, but *Ahreman* attacked and killed him. When *Ahreman* attacked *Gayōmart* to take his life, life escaped from the feet to the breast and other organs and then from the breast it went to the shoulders, then from the shoulders to the head and finally it left the body; and this is the reason for the pale face when life leaves the body (Bahār, *Bd.*, p. 69-70, paras.73-74).

Not only *Ahreman*, but also his companions are destructive too. In the beginning of the creation it was *Ahreman* who took the soul, but later it is *Astwihād* and or *Way ī wattar* (the Evil Wind) who does so. When *Astwihād* touches people, he causes a deep sleep; if he shadows over man, he causes fever and if he meets people face to face and eye to eye, he causes death (Bahār, *Bd.*, p. 121, para. 186). Another demon that is relevant to death and is one of the co-workers of *Astwihād* is *Wizarš dēw*. He frightens people in those three days and nights after death, when souls wander on the earth; he dwells at the gate of Hell (Bahār, *Bd.*, p. 120, para. 184).

2.6 A brief account of the soul’s experiences in the Afterlife

Before describing and illustrating the Zoroastrian narrative about the fate of the soul after death by examining individual relevant passages in the Pahlavi books, a general sketch is drawn in the following paragraphs which in the next part will be illustrated fully.

Death comes finally upon man, his flesh and bones will be food for dogs and birds and it is the soul that will be responsible in the Hereafter.¹²² It is recommended to store good thoughts, words and deeds in order that they become useful in the spiritual world after death (Tafāzzulī, *DMx.*, 1:96-97). The author of *Mēnōg ī Xrad* is apparently pessimistic about material life and wants man not to rely on life, because at the end, the body will be torn by dogs and birds (Tafāzzulī, *DMx.*, 1:110-113). According to the Zoroastrian sources, there are two kinds of existence, *mēnōg* and *gētīg* (material and spiritual).¹²³ It is stated that this material world is not the last stage of life, and life continues after death in the spiritual world.

As mentioned before, Zoroastrian sources state that man is a combination of several components. One of these components is Phl. *gyān* (vital force) that gives man the essential power to live; the second one is Phl. *ruwān* (soul), Phl. *axw* (mind) is the third one; the fourth one is Phl. *bōy* (perception or sense), *frawahr* or *fraward* is the fifth component of man, his

¹²⁰ Kaikhusroo M. Jamasp Asa, *Aogəmadaēcā: A Zoroastrian Liturgy* (Vienna: Der Oesterreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1982), 70-76.

¹²¹ Mehrdad Bahār, *Farnbağ Dādagī: Bundahišn* (Tehrān: Intishārāt i Țūs, 1369), 121.

¹²² Aḥmad Tafāzzolī, *Mēnōg ī Xrad* (Tehrān: Intishārāt i Bonyād i Farhang i Irān, 1354), preface, 22.

¹²³ On these two existences see Shaul, Shaked, “Gētīg and Mēnōg,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/getig-and-menog> (accessed September 28, 2016).

immortal soul and guardian angel, and finally, all of these components are placed in a mould that is called *Tan* (body).¹²⁴

When man dies, the body mingles with dust, the vital force goes to wind, the mind goes to the spiritual world, but the soul, perception and *frawahar* mingle with one another and will be accountable for reckoning on the bridge. There will be no punishment for the body and vital force, because they are the instruments of the soul and they do whatever other components order. If they were righteous, they will be in Paradise and if they were evil, they will be in Hell.¹²⁵

At the time of death, the dying person is surrounded by both good and evil forces. On one side demons and on the other side *Yazads* quarrel with each other to grasp the soul. When man dies and the soul leaves the body, it does not depart from this world right away, and stays in the material world for three days and nights. During these times, it wanders between the place in which it left the body and where the body is located. It is in search of the body and hope that it could enter the body once again. In these three days and nights, the soul of the righteous sees his body eaten by animals, but he does not suffer, but the evil-doer suffers when he sees that his body is being eaten by the animals and regrets because of the opportunities that has missed.

Dādestān ī Dēnīg states that when someone passes away, his soul – his animating vital soul and the sense of feeling – leaves the material body, stays outside of the body and observes what happens to the body in the ossuary (*Astōdān*)¹²⁶ (Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dd.*, p. 65). When the body is carried to the tower of silence to be eaten by dogs and birds, the soul observes what animals do with its material body and how they tear it. This destruction is not felt by the body, but by the soul and perception that has left the body which was like a garment they wore before death. The wicked soul wishes to return to corporeal life according to the *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*.

“That wicked (soul) is again desirous of the corporeal life when he sees that wonderfully-constructed body which was his garment, and (his) character [xōg] which was with him for a long time, are destroyed, for this reason: ‘Because I did not redeem (my) sins and did not store righteousness during (my) bodily life and worldly existence’; and also by considering this: ‘I could have redeemed (my) sins and saved (my) soul through (my) long connection with this body. Now I am separated from everyone and (from) the joy of the world, and (from) the great hope for heaven, and I have found a hard reckoning and greater fear. And its tearing is as grievous for that body as if a

¹²⁴ Some sources like Bundahišn, Selections of Zadspram and Sad Dar i Naṣr Sad Dar i Bundahišn refer to the constructive components of man and their duties. See Mehrdad Bahār, *Farnbağ Dādagī: Bundahišn* (Tehrān: Intishārāt ī Tūs, 1369), 48; M. T. Rashed-Mohassel, *Vizīdagīhā ī Zādisparam* (Tehrān: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, 2006), 77-79; Ervad Bamanji Nasarvanji Dhabhar, *Saddar Naṣr and Daddar Bundehesh* (Bombay: British India Press, 1909), 165-168.

¹²⁵ Zoroastrian sources give different accounts on this case; for example, while Zadspram states that after death *bōy*, *ruwān*, *frawahr* and *gyān*, which were taken by the demon of death, will be united and experience the same things that *ruwān* experiences (Rashed-Mohassel, *Vizīdagīhā ī Zādisparam*, p.87), Bundahišn states that *frawahr* and *ruwān* will be united after death (Bahār, *Farnbağ Dādagī: Bundahišn*, 48).

¹²⁶ In Zoroastrianism, any contamination of the four elements (water, fire, earth and air) is severely prohibited; especially the corpse, which has been possessed by demons, should not be buried, cast into water or cremated (Vd. 1:13; 7:1-9, 25-27, 54-59;1:17; 7:74; 7:25-27), instead it should be carried to a high place, where wild animals such as dogs, vulture and crows clean the bones, and then the bones can be exposed to the sun and rain and after that they can be carried to places built for keeping them away from dogs, wolves, foxes and rain (Vd. 7:49-51; 8:33-34, 45-46; 5:6; 6:49-5), see A. Sh. Shahbazi, “Astōdān,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/astodan-ossuary> (accessed September 14, 2015).

treasury outside (i. e. the body?) and the treasure and +garment inside (it) (cf. soul?) with +weapon and armour were widely made inactive and destroyed (?)” (Jaafari-Dehaghi, Dādestān ī Dēnīg, 15:3-4).

It seems that both the righteous and the wicked suffer when they see their torn body; however, a believer who believes in the renovation¹²⁷ of life and body forgets his sorrow caused by the demons surrounding him, and the fear and pain of his body, but a non-believer sorrows over the loss of his body (*uš darrēnišn owōn garān bawēd ān tan rāy*).

“Why do dogs and birds tear the construction (i.e. body) since at the end the body and vital soul will be united together at the resurrection?” (Jaafari-Dehaghi, Dd., 15:6).

As mentioned above, having left the world, the soul will be surrounded by two forces, on one side *Yazads* and on the other side demons. It is like a new-born baby and therefore requires care.¹²⁸ It is like a child that is surrounded by dangers; the soul will be surrounded by *Ahremen* and demons that try to take it to Hellfire. When the first three days and nights have passed, the soul must go on trial. It will be judged by *Yazads* and reckoned for any *kirbag* (virtue) or *bazag* (sin) which the individual has committed in the material world. This trial is held near a bridge that is called *Činwad puhl*,¹²⁹ a divider bridge which separates the souls of the righteous dead, who cross, from those of the wicked, who fall off, and the judge is *Rašn*, who stands near the bridge with his balance to make up the account. Thoughts, words and deeds are judged, and those who have more merits than sins will be happy; the bridge will become as wide as nine spears, and the soul crosses it. Midway, a fragrance of musk and ambergris comes to it which makes it even happier. Then, he sees a beautiful maiden (*daēnā*) whom he has never seen before; she is the embodiment of his deeds. They go on their way forwards; with the first step he enters the station of the stars, with the next step the station of the moon, with the third step the sun station and finally with the fourth step the soul reaches Paradise (*Av. garō.damāna./garō.nmāna.*, Pahl. *garōdmān.*). The righteous never wish to return to the material world, because they see the comfort and joy in the Hereafter.

In direct contrast to a righteous man, a wicked man will experience something different. During the first three days and nights, he suffers, and when he goes on trial, he will be convicted. Having put the first steps on the bridge, he meets a profligate woman who is the embodiment of

¹²⁷ Renovation refers to the Zoroastrian term 'fraš(a)gird' the restoration of the Ohrmazd creation (good creation) at the end of the time.

¹²⁸ Ervad Bamanji Nasarvanji Dhabhar, *Saddar Naṣr and Daddar Bundehešh* (Bombay: British India Press, 1909), 109.

¹²⁹ About the place and direction of the *Činwad puhl*, it is stated that the divider bridge “*čīnwad puhl*,” on which souls will be distinguished from one another, is located near the peak of *Dāitī* (*cagād ī dāitī*) in *Ērān-wēz*, in the middle of the world. In the vicinity of the peak of *Dāitī*, there is a divine structure (*dār-kirb mēnōg*), that extends from one side of *Alburz* to the peak of *Dāitī* (Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, p.77).

This structure is bi-dimensional. This means that it has a wide side (*frāx*) and a thin and sharp one (*bārīg ī tēz*), simultaneously. It can be either as wide as twenty-seven reeds or as narrow as a razor blade. Depending on the soul which is passing over it, it widens or narrows. It is God and the guard of the bridge who order it to become wide or thin (Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, p.77).

The status of the bridge varies for people; this means that those who try to pass over it do not have the same experiences. While the journey of a righteous soul over the bridge is compared to a person who goes on a journey in spring, accompanied by a perfumed (*hu-bōy*), beautiful (*hu-cihr*) and wonderful (*škeft*) person; when a wicked soul wants to pass over the bridge, he falls down because of the sharpness of the bridge. He feels disgust as if he were passing through a stinking graveyard (Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, 20:6).

his evil deeds. Because of his evil thoughts, words and deeds, he crashes into Hell where he will be punished and tortured by demons.

Life-taker	The status of the soul at the time of death	Interrogation, judges and place of interrogation	The reflection of deeds in the Afterlife	The final habitat
<i>Astvihād</i> or the demon of death	The soul is surrounded by good and evil forces	The soul is judged on <i>Činwad puhl</i> by three <i>Yazads</i> (<i>Mihr</i> , <i>Sroš</i> and <i>Rašn</i>)	The most important effect of deeds in the Afterlife is embodiment of the deeds in the guise of a beautiful or ugly maiden (<i>Daēnā/Dēn</i>)	Paradise <i>Hammēstagān</i> Hell

The brief story of the soul according to the Zoroastrian sources

2.7 The first experiences of the soul in the Afterlife

- Hādōxt Nask

As stated before, *Hādōxt Nask* is one of the important sources that deal with the subject of the status of the soul after leaving the material world. It is a dialogue between *Ahura Mazdā* and Zarathustra, who asks what happens after death to righteous and wicked souls respectively. *Ahura Mazdā* states that when man dies, his soul does not leave the body immediately. It stays with the body for three days and nights, during which he begins to experience the conditions of the Afterlife. After leaving the material body, it sits near his head and recites a part of the Gathas: “*Blessed is he, blessed is everyone to whom Ahura-Mazda, the ruler by his own will, should grant (the two everlasting powers)*” (Y. 43:1).

Ahura Mazdā states that in the first night, the righteous soul is in such pleasure that it has never experienced in the material world before. Then Zarathustra asks about the fate of the soul in the second night and he hears the same answer. But at the dawn of the third night, something different happens. The righteous soul feels a sweet fragrance from a tree which comes to him from the south.¹³⁰ A calm aromatic wind, which he has never experienced in the material world, blows to him so that he thinks he can hold it with his nose.¹³¹

When Zarathustra asks *Ahura Mazdā* about the fate of the wicked soul after death, he is told that the wicked soul is in pain and unease right after leaving the body. It wanders around his corpse and recites this verse of the Gathas: “*To what land can I turn to flee, O Ahura-Mazda! To where can I escape?*” After the third night at dawn, the wicked spirit feels a freezing coldness, and a malodorous stink that comes to him from the north.¹³² He cannot tolerate such a stink and says: “*Whence blows the wind, the most stinking wind I have ever inhaled with my nostrils?*”¹³³

- Vendīdād

¹³⁰ South is the abode of Ohrmazd and other divine beings according to the Zoroastrian tradition.

¹³¹ Mahshīd Mīrfakhrā’ī, *Hādōxt Nask* (Tehrān: Institute of Humanities and Cultural Studies, 2007), 61- 62.

¹³² In Zoroastrian tradition, north is the place of Ahreman and other demons.

¹³³ Mahshīd Mīrfakhrā’ī, *Hādōxt Nask* (Tehrān: Institute of Humanities and Cultural Studies, 2007), 65-66.

Vendīdād (*Vd.* 7:52-54) deals with the subject of the Afterlife very briefly. As it states, when man dies two forces surround him; two forces face each other, they fight over the newly departed, because they want to take control of the soul. The following paragraph describes the salvation of a righteous soul. It is stated that the soul of a righteous person will not be captured by evil forces; instead, it will be taken with glad tidings to the abode of *Ahura-mazdā* where it will be welcomed with glad tidings.

“When he steps in the best existence, there would be no quarrel between the two forces over the man. Stars, moon and sun will rejoice at his visit with best tidings. I Ahura-mazda rejoice when I visit him and say: Hail O man! That came from the evanescent and dangerous world to this eternal place” (Vendīdād, 7:52).

Vendīdād, Chapter 19, gives more information about death, reward and punishment of the soul after death. Zarathustra asks what happens to man after death, and what happens to man’s deeds when he dies. In reply to Zarathustra’s question, *Ahura-Mazda* portrays a scene in which demons surround *Uruuān* (soul) for three days and nights. During these three days and nights, demons beat the soul and torment it. At the dawn of the third night, when the sun rises, a demon called *Vīzarəš* fastens the wicked souls and takes them furiously to a place which is called *CHinuuuəš. pərətūm (Činwad puhl)*.¹³⁴

- Bundahišn

When the soul is taken out of the body, it does not leave the material world as soon as death comes. After death, for three days and night it wanders around his body, while it is tormented by the demon *Wizarš* and his companions; as a result, it takes shelter in the fire which is lit on his death place or in the *Wahrām Ātaxš* or any other fire temple nearby, and wishes to become alive again, *“Maybe if this blood runs, and the wind [wād] enters the body, it may be possible for me to return to life”* (*Bahār, Bd.*, p. 129, para. 200).

At the dawn of the third night after death, a righteous soul says: *“Happy is he, through whose happiness is the happiness of anyone whatsoever,” that is, I am happy owing to my happiness, every person is happy. “May Ohrmazd give me sovereignty at will!”* (*Bahār, Bd.*, pp. 129-130, para. 200), but the soul of an evil-doer says: *“That body, life and astral body, with whom I have moved with movement, now where shall I go from hence?”* (*Bahār, Bd.*, p. 130, para. 200).

At this moment, the righteous soul feels a sweet wind blowing to him, a fragrance which is the most aromatic of the winds in the world (*weh ud nēktar ud hu-bōyitar ud pērōzgartar az hamāg wādān*), but for the wicked, a frosty wind which is the worst, the most musty and the most stinking wind of all the winds in the world (*gandagtar ud pūdagtar ud a-pērōzgartar az hamāg wādān*) blows to the soul (*Bahār, Bd.*, p. 130, para. 251).

After this, it is the time for soul to be enumerated; all thoughts, words and deeds of the soul will be reckoned there. There is no difference whether it is the soul of a righteous or a wicked person: *“pas barēnd {agar} ān ruwān ō āmār kē ahlaw ud kē-iz druwand”* (*Bahār, Bd.*, p. 130, para. 251).

- Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī Xrad

According to the *Mēnōg ī Xrad*, the soul does not leave the body and the material world as soon as death happens. For three days and nights it sits near its head and body. At the dawn of

¹³⁴Aḥmad Tafāzẓolī, “Činwad puhl,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/cinwad-puhl-av> (accessed September 14, 2015).

the fourth day, the soul must go to the *Činwad puhl*, a place which will be visited by all people, believers or unbelievers. As the Spirit of wisdom portrays the world of spirit, it must be a dualistic world. When someone passes away, he enters a world inhabited by *Yazads* and demons. While the soul is accompanied by divine beings such as *Sroš* the righteous, *Way ī weh*, *Wahman* the strong, satanic forces like *Astwihād*, *Way ī watar*, *Frazēšt* the demon, *Nizēšt* the demon and the evil demon *Xešm* (demon of anger) surround it and oppose the soul too.¹³⁵

- Ardā Wirāz Nāmag

As stated earlier, *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag* is an ecstatic vision of Heaven and Hell by the righteous *Wirāz*. After drinking an intoxicating drink, *Wirāz* ascends to the Hereafter and goes to the *Chagād Dāidīg* and *Činwad-puhl* (*ud ruwān ī Vīrāz az tan ō chagād ī Dāiti [ud] Činwad puhl šud*). In this journey, he is not alone; he is accompanied by two *Yazads*: *Srōš* and *Ādur*. Having stepped into the world of spirits, *Wirāz* begins keeping souls under his observation. He experiences whatever a soul experiences after death. With the first step he goes to the station of the good thoughts, with the second step to the station of the good words and finally with the last step to the station of the good deeds to the *Činwad-puhl*.

“The victorious Srōš, the pious, and Āzar Yazad took my hand, and with the first step, [to the station of] good thoughts, and with the second step [to the station of] good words, and with the third step [to the station of] good deeds; I came to the Činwad Bridge which has been created by Ohrmazd the most watchful and almighty” (Āmūzgār, *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag*, 4:3-5).

He visits the righteous souls in their first three nights after death who are sitting near to their corpse and reciting *Gāhān*: “Well is he by whom that which is his benefit, becomes the benefit of anyone else.” In those three days and nights, the righteous soul will be in extreme comforts and joy that he has never experienced before. At the dawn of the third night a fragrance of sweet-scented plants comes to him from the south, the abode of the *Yazads*. It is more pleasant than any other sweet-scented plants which he had experienced thus far.¹³⁶

- Dādestān ī Dēnīg

Dādestān ī Dēnīg portrays the scene in which man’s soul is taken; moreover, it indicates the reasons of death too. It is believed that man observes what *Astwihād* does to him at the time of death. Leaving the material body causes the soul to endure pain; however, after reaching the final destination, it forgets pains and rejoices.

“...mortal men are able to see the time when he (i.e. Astwihād, the demon of death), puts a noose around the neck. When his (i.e. a man’s) time has come (i.e. at the point of death), he leads him along as companion to the place of death (for) falling down (i.e. destruction). The cause of death (is this): Būšāsp gives up his strength away; because he gives up (his) breath, the faculties which give him strength fail to function and to move properly and the nature which is his own inward physician does not find a clear path. Their path is closed to the recognition of remedies on account of the destruction of their consciousness (i.e. those entrusted with his well-being) and to the remedial duties on account of losing strength. On account of the inactivity of the faculties of the (body), the immortal soul, (which is) the master of the house

¹³⁵ Aḥmad Tafāzzolī, *Mēnōg ī Xrad* (Tehrān: Intishārāt i Bonyād i Farhang i Irān, 1354), 12, 1:114-116.

¹³⁶ Philippe Gignoux, *Le livre d’Ardavirāz*, trans., Zhālih Āmūzgār (Tehrān: Intishārāt i Mu’īn, 1383),

*(in) the body, departs along with the animating life from the impotent body; and the immortal soul like a wise master goes out from the ruined house (i.e. the body) to a well-decorated dwelling” (Jaafari-Dehaghi, Dādestān ī Dēnīg, 22:3).*¹³⁷

Leaving the material world is not easy for the soul. *“The soul of righteous undergoes pain while it departs from the world. After departure, until it has passed through that frightful account, it laments. After the judgment it is joyful in its own place...” (Dd., 21:2).* After leaving the body, two opposite forces start working, one of them is *Yazads* and the other one is *Dēwān* (demons). It seems that the effects of good deeds are so important that, after death, as long as those good effects are in place the demons do not come near to the body and they escape as a sheep who is afraid of a wolf.¹³⁸

Having left the body, the soul wishes to rejoin the body, but after a while *Nasuš*, the contaminating demon, attacks the body and causes the soul to leave *Nasā* (the corpse). At this time, the body starts to decompose and causes pollutions and infections (Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dd.*, 16:4; 6-7).

There is a relation of belonging between the soul and the body, so that it does not want to leave right away after death:

“Because of (its) habit of being a long time in the body undisturbed, the spirit of the body wishes to remain in it even when they release it from its dwelling (i.e. the body); therefore (lit. in this way), the body of the departed ought to be looked after with the least sinfulness” (Jaafari-Dehaghi, Dādestān ī Dēnīg, 16:4).

The soul that had been accustomed to the body remains on earth and wanders around its body for three days and nights. In these first days and nights, it starts assessing its deeds in the material world and feels their consequences. Its life style has affected his death. During these three days and nights, the soul tries to review all its thoughts, words and deeds. It is not sure about what is going to happen to it and it is afraid of the enumeration on the bridge. It thinks about the good deeds that he could have done but did not, and regrets his omissions.

“The souls of the dead and departed are on the earth for three nights. The first night they receive comfort as a result of their good thoughts and sorrow as a result of their evil thoughts. The second night they receive pleasure as a result of (their) good words and trouble and punishment as a result of (their) evil words; and the third night they receive help as a result of (their) good deeds and punishment as a result of (their)+evil deeds” (Jaafari-Dehaghi, Dādestān ī Dēnīg, 19:2).

- Pahlavi Rivāyāt

Pahlavi Rivāyāt continues the story of the soul with the dialogue between *Ohrmazd* and Zarathustra. Zarathustra asks *Ohrmazd* what happens to man when he dies. *Ohrmazd* in reply to Zarathustra’s question about the fate of the soul after death says that the soul remains where it has left the body, near the head. It is also stated that according to religion, when the soul of the righteous observes animals tearing his body, this does not bother him or harm him; but the souls of evil-doers, when they see that their bodies torn and eaten by wolf, fox, dog and bird, suffer a

¹³⁷ Mahmoud Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* (Paris: Association Pour l’Avancement des Études Iraniennes, 1998), 81.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 69.

lot and feel that pain and blame in the bodies with which they have committed sins (Williams, *Pah. Riv. Dd.*, Part II, p. 51).

“If I had devoured all the creations of Ohrmazd, (even) then this punishment and affliction would be enough for me. And he moans to the body, he says: ‘O thieving, wicked body, great wealth was amassed by you in the material world, and today your sons and brothers and kinsmen are fighting over it. And you did nothing at all of good for me, who am the soul, and those (relatives) do nothing at all of good for you and they do not perform even one Drōn (service) for your soul. And I am weeping in Hell in the hands of demons, and I must endure the affliction until the future body; and dog and bird and wolf and fox devour you here. And (as for) your wealth which you amassed, then not a thing will come to your aid.’ Whoever commits sin, then this (is) his punishment” (Williams, *The Pahlavi Rivāyāt*, Part II, 24:2).

In these three days and nights, while the righteous soul is in joy and comfort, the wicked suffers and is in pain. The righteous soul, wearing a white garment,¹³⁹ speaks these words:

“It was good for me I did good deeds: I belong to Ohrmazd and according to his wish he therefore treats me with goodness” (Williams, *The Pahlavi Rivāyāt*, Part II, 23:2).

During the first three nights, a pious soul is in all happiness as a live person. At the dawn of the third night, it seems to him that the fragrance of all the plants of the world blows softly to him, he sits and says: *“This smell is so fragrant and so pleasant which the breeze brings to my nose, never in the material world did I experience a fragrance such as this”* He is informed that it blows from Paradise (Williams, *Pah. Riv. Dd.*, Part II, 23:5).

In contrast to the pious souls, the wicked soul, wearing a torn and dirty garment says: *“It was indeed evil for me when I did not perform good deeds. I belong to Ahreman. To what land shall I go? And whom shall I seek? And who shall hold back this affliction from me?”*; in the first three days and nights, he will be in such a suffering and pain as that of a live man who all his life was in pain and torment (Williams, *Pah. Riv. Dd.*, Part II, 23:19). At the dawn of the third night, he feels freezing as if he is in snow, and a foul stinky smell blows to him. He asks about the origin of the stink which he has never experienced before. He is told that this smell comes from Hell (Williams, *Pah. Riv. Dd.*, Part II, p. 49).

- Wizīdagīhā ī Zādisparam

As discussed before, at death, some of those components which had been diffused by the Angel of Death, *Astvihād* or *Wāy* the evil, will be reunited together. At the dawn of the third night after death (*stōš*), *Nērōsang Yazad* brings *gyān*, *bōy* and *frawahar* together and they all benefit from the reward that *ruwān* receives; whereas it is only the *ruwān* of the evil-doer that will be punished in Hellfire. The soul stands near the body because of its interest in its body. When the body is taken to the ossuary, it observes what is done to the body by the animals that are there to tear it. All these events cause it to fear.

“...in those three days after death, [ruwān] stands near the body and looks at the material frame and cries. When he sees dog and bird are accessing body to lacerate it, he fears and shivers, like a ewe who fears the wolf; and he starts disputing with dog and bird: “‘Do not eat my body! That at end

¹³⁹ A.V. Williams, *The Pahlavi Rivāyāt Accompanying the Dādestān ī Dēnīg* (Copenhagen: The Royal Academy of Sciences and Letters, 1990), 2: 47.

Ohrmazd will raise and rebuild my body” (Rashed-Mohassel, Vizīdagīhā ī Zādisparam, 30:32.

In the third night, the soul of the evil-doer, ruwān, when bōy and ruwān separate from each other, argues with bōy and says: “You bōy, you go to the worlds above and leave me alone here?” (Rashed-Mohassel, *Vizīdagīhā ī Zādisparam*, 30:33).

If in the material world one follows good thoughts, good words and good deeds, the soul will be rewarded by being clothed in a garment because of its good thoughts, words and deeds after death; he ascends to the south, while it salutes its body. It salutes the body, as if the body had prepared it for such a salvation. On the contrary, if man follows evil thoughts, evil words and evil deeds, the soul will be clothed in a dark garment and enters the darkness to the north while it curses the body because it is the body who has caused it misfortune (Rashed-Mohassel, *Zādisparam*, 30:48).

The soul does not leave the body as soon as it goes out of it. It remains near the body for the first three days and nights; at the dawn of the third night, a fragrance, which is the most aromatic odour, blows from the south to the soul. It preaches the odour of Paradise (*kē mizdag ī wahištīg dared*). Then, the righteous soul encounters different figures *kirb* (body, form). They are wind body, water body, herb body, maid body, man body, cow and bull body, fire body metal body, stone body and finally the earth body.¹⁴⁰ Each of these *mēnōgān* (spiritual beings) has a responsibility for the soul; they do something to please it. For example, the water body and herb body stand before the soul as a garden full of saplings and blossoms to mark his way. Maid body, man body, cow or bull body, and fire body all stand to (help) the soul to cross the *Činwad puhl* and keep it away from the darkness and smoke of Hell. Stone body and metal body are like a throne decorated with gold (on which the soul can sit) and earth body is the eternal body where the soul resides for ever in joy and happiness (Rashed-Mohassel, *Zādisparam*, 30:52-56).

The author compares a soul after death to a new-born child who needs a father and mother to nourish him and support him; similarly, a soul needs these spiritual figures to receive help and guidance on his way. Perhaps these figures perform the same role for the newcomer soul.

“[In] these three days after death, which the soul is gripped by fear, is similar to those three days before delivery in which the wind is active in the body [the body swells]. On the fourth day, the maid form greets the soul. She helps the soul to pass over the dreadful and awful passage like a mother who passes the child at delivery” (Rashed-Mohassel, Vizīdagīhā ī Zādisparam, 31:2-3).

- Şad Dar-e Naşr, Şad Dar-e Bundahiş

It is attested that the soul stays in the material world for three days and nights and goes to the place where it has left the body in search of it, and wishes: “*Would that I could enter the body once again*” (Dhabhar, *Şaddar Nr, Şaddar Bd.*, p. 168). In these three days and nights, the soul of the righteous sees his body eaten by animals, but he does not suffer; on the contrary, the evil-doer suffers when he sees that his body is eaten by animals and says:

“If priesthood that is in the world had been practised by me, there would have been no affliction and punishment more than this accruing unto

¹⁴⁰These bodies or figures are the embodiment of the deeds that can cause ease or difficulty for the soul in the Hereafter. Cf. the status of the Muslim in the grave, where his prayings, fasts, pilgrimage to Mecca, alms, etc. visit the soul in the grave and protect it against the punishment of the grave by the interrogators of the grave.

me. The soul cries out to the body and says: O vile that thou art! When men were after duties and good works, thou wert in search of wealth and riches; now that wealth and riches are consumed by (thy) sons and daughters and relatives and are carried away by them, and for the sake of me who am the soul, thou didst not do any good work and didst not acquire anything that would have assisted me here. Now, the relatives do not do any duty or meritorious deed for us although thou sufferedst trouble and acquiredst wealth: now they consume (it all) with derision and do not consecrate Darun for us. For thy deeds I shall suffer torment, punishment and retribution and until the resurrection and future existence, I shall be in torment and affliction. In this place, the dog, the crow and the fox gnaw (thee) and tear (thee) to pieces. These riches for which thou wast at pains for so many years do not come to our help” (Dhabhar, Saddar Naṣr and Daddar-e Bundeḥish, pp. 93-94).

A newly departed soul is very sensitive; it is like a new-born baby. Like a child that is surrounded by dangers, a soul is surrounded by *Ahremen* and other demons, because they try to take the soul to Hellfire (Dhabhar, *Ṣaddar Nr, Ṣaddar Bd.*, p. 109). When the three days and nights pass away, the soul will be taken by *Sroš* to the *Činwad puhl* for reckoning whatsoever virtue (New Persian. *kirfa*, Pahl. *kirbag*) or sin (New Persian. *bezeh*, Pahl. *bazag*) he has committed in the material world. Near the bridge, *Rašn* stands with her balance to make up the account. Whoever has more merits than sins will be happy; the bridge will be expanded as wide as nine spears. It seems that it is *Ardwahišt Amahraspand* who is in charge of the widening of the bridge for the righteous. The soul walks on the bridge and midway, a fragrance of musk and ambergris comes to him which makes him happier.

- The Persian Rivāyats of Dārāb Hormazyār

When someone passes away, the soul remains near the body for three days and nights. In these three days and nights, the soul wanders between three places: (1) his *khānag* (house); (2) where the corpse is kept (*nasā khānag*); (3) in *dakhmag* (the ossuary) (*Riv.*, Vol. 1, p. 147). He is like a new-born baby who needs a nanny or nursemaid to take care of him (*Riv.*, Vol. 1, p. 148), because in these three days and nights *Ahremen* and other demons try to harm and torment him. They do their best to take the soul to Hellfire. The soul fears them like a ewe that fears the wolf. *Amahraspands* and *Yazads*, especially, *Sroš* the righteous, try to help the soul during this time (*Riv.*, Vol. 1, pp. 147-148). The soul wishes it could join its body once more, it wishes it could return to its body, and is hopeful to be reunited with its body (*Riv.*, Vol. 1, p. 149). At the dawn of the third day, *Sroš* the righteous takes the soul to the *Činwad puhl* to be reckoned by *Rašn*.

“After three days and nights, Sroš the righteous and victorious comes and takes him to the Činwad puhl, reckoning [trial] is near the Činwad puhl and Yazad Rašn reckons there.”

“It is asserted in the religion that when the soul departs the body, the accursed Ahremen and other demons try to catch him and take him to Hell. The soul shudders like a sheep that shivers in fear of a wolf, it escapes and goes. The accursed Ahremen and other demons run after him to torment him. The afflictions, difficulties, horrors that the soul has during those three days are more than what a sinner experiences in Hell in 9000 years.”

It is asserted that when the soul sees its body being eaten by dog, fox, crow and any other kind of animals, the righteous one will be in comfort and suffers not, but the evil-doer will be in pain, he suffers and says:

“If I had tried to be a priest, I would not have suffered so much as I do now. The body exclaims: O miscreant! You are the one who stored wealth and money when others were performing good deeds and virtues. Your sons, daughters and relatives took your fortune, used it and did not even perform goodness on your side [on behalf of the soul]. You treasured (stored or saved) nothing to be useful and beneficent to you here (after death). Now, none of the relatives does any goodness for me. You [body] suffered and tried hard to make fortune, but now it benefits them. They do not order any *Drōn* (consecrated bread) or *Yašt* (prayer, worship) for me and I am in suffer and pain because of what you [body] did. Until resurrection, I will be for ever in pain and anguish and here dog, crow and fox tear [body] and eat [it] and the wealth for which you suffered a lot will not help you. He says this, cries and leaves there. This [the scene in which the body is eaten] unveils the importance of performing good deeds” (Rivāyats of *Dārāb Hormazyār*, Vol. 1, pp. 148-149).

2.8 On the fate of righteous souls (Judgment and the embodiment of the virtues)

- Hādōxt Nask

As stated before, the newcomer righteous soul in the Afterlife stays with its body for three days and nights, during which he begins to experience the conditions of the after-death world. He is in such pleasure as he has never experienced in the material world before. At the dawn of the third night, something different happens. The righteous soul feels a sweet fragrance from a tree which comes to him from the south. A calm aromatic wind, which he has never experienced in the material world, blows to him so that he thinks he can hold it with his nose. Then his *daēna*¹⁴¹ in the form of a beautiful maiden appears to him.

“Coming with this wind, his religion (=conscience) appears to him in a body of a beautiful maiden, brilliant, white-armed, strong, well-figured, high-statured, tall, with prominent breasts, fair body, noble, glorious, of fifteen years, with a body as beautiful as the most beautiful of creatures” (Mīrfakhrā’ī, *Hādōxt Nask*, p. 62-63, 2:9).

When the soul sees such a beautiful woman, while he is surprised, he asks her: “O Maiden! Who are you that I have never seen anyone as beautiful as you?” The maiden answers:

“Verily, I am, O youth of good thoughts, good words and good deeds, your religion. Everyone has loved you for such greatness, and goodness, and beauty, and fragrance, and victoriousness, and overcoming enemies, as you appeared to me. O youth of good thoughts, good words and good deeds, and good religion you have loved me because of such greatness and goodness, and beauty and fragrance, and victoriousness which overcomes enemies, as I appeared to you. When you saw another person making [*Hauma syrup*] without mixing with milk and... spreading the branches and was making the

¹⁴¹ *Daēna* in Zoroastrianism has at least two meanings: the first is consciousness or religion, and the second one is a female figure that, as the personification of the deeds, appears to the soul and leads it to Paradise. For more information see Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, Vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 238-240; Mansour Shaki, “Dēn,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/den> (accessed September 11, 2015).

herbal [materials or structures] that should be widespread, then you would sit down, chanting Gāthās, and consecrating the good waters, and the fire of Ahura-Mazda, and extolling the pious man coming from near and far. Then you made me, being beloved, more beloved, me being beautiful, more beautiful, me being desirable, more desirable, me being seated in a high place, sitting down in a still higher place, through this good thought, through this good word, through this good deed. Then men afterwards worship me, Ahura-Mazda, the long worshipped and conversed with” (Mīrfakhrā’ī, Hādōxt Nask, p. 63, 2:11-14).

Hearing this, the righteous man goes forward with the first step to the station of the good thoughts and with the second step to the station of good words and with the third step to the station of the good deeds. When the soul steps forward for the fourth time, it steps into the EndlessLight (Av. anayraēšuuu. raocōhuua.).

When the soul steps into the Endless Light (Paradise), all the souls that have passed away before it come to visit it. They all welcome it and start conversing with it:

“The pious one, previously deceased, asks him: O pious man! How did you die? O pious man! How did you come away from the dwellings supplied with cattle and supplied with bird and supplied with success? From the material world to the divine world, from the world full of dangers to the safe world? How did the everlasting blessing become yours? Then said Ahura-Mazda: Ask not him what you ask, who is coming along the frightful, deadly, destructive path, the separation of the body and soul. Of the nourishments, bring him the Spring Oil! That is the food of a youth of good thought, of good words and of good deeds, after death. This is the food for a woman with very good thoughts, very good words and very good deeds, well-earned, obedient to a master and pious, after death” (Mīrfakhrā’ī, Hādōxt Nask, p. 64, 2:16-18).

- Vendīdād

Vendīdād continues the story of the soul with the scene of the interrogation on the bridge. On the bridge, souls will be judged on their deeds in the material world. *Vendīdād* states that there the *baoda* and *uruuāna* (two components of man) will be questioned. After being interrogated, the deceased envisage two different dwellings according to their deeds. A righteous soul meets a spiritual visage, a beautiful and well-formed maiden who is accompanied by two dogs with two golden crowns on their heads. Righteous souls will be welcomed in the House of *Ahura-Mazda* by Holy Immortal *Vohu*. *Manō* (*Wahman* or Good Mind) and other pious souls. He (pious soul) gives off an aroma that causes the Arch-Demon to shudder like a sheep that shivers in fear of a wolf. What happens to the wicked soul is ambiguous in this chapter of *Vendīdād*, but it can be inferred that the follower of falsehood falls into a dark place which is apparently under the bridge.

“...after a man is departed and has passed on, demons possessed by the lie and giving bad gifts tear at the departed. As it become light after the third night, as the brilliant lights up, well-armed Mithra ascends the mountains reaching up into the good breathing space of Order, and the sun comes up. 29 The demon Drag-off leads the soul bound both that of the demon sacrificers possessed by the lie and the short-lived humans. It comes along the paths set in place by Time for both the one possessed by the Lie and the sustainer of order to the ford of the Accountant set in place by Ahura Mazdā. There, they ask

back the consciousness and soul, the share of living beings laid down in the existence with bones. 30 Then she will come with her dogs, beautiful, firm, well-shaped, with her brilliant crown, and her arts and talents. She drags the vile souls of the wicked into darkness. With the breath-souls of the sustainers of Order, she rises above tall Mount Harā, stretches them across the Ford of the Accountant, where those worthy of sacrifice in the world of thought cross over. 31 Up rose Good thought from his golden throne, saying: “When did you come hither to us, O sustainer of Order, from that dangerous existence to this existence without danger? 32 Thus welcomed, the souls of the sustainers of Order go forth to the golden thrones of Ahura Mazdā and the Life-giving Immortals, to the House of Song, the abode of Ahura Mazdā, the Life-giving Immortals and the sustainers of Order. 33 After the sustainer of Order who is to be purified has passed on, the demons possessed by the Lie and giving evil gifts fear his smell just like a ewe frightened by the wolf fears the wolf”¹⁴² (*Vendīdād*, 19:28-33).

- Aogāmadaēcā

The Treatise of Death (*Aogāmadaēcā*) continues its story with the fate of the soul at the dawn of the fourth night, when *Yazads* come towards the soul to make it ready for the judgment near the bridge.

“*Pahl. Likewise, at the third dawn, the dawn of the fourth day, the righteous, strong Srōš, and the just Rašn, and the good Vay, and the victorious Aštāt Yazat, and Mihr of the wide-pastures, and the Fravahrs of the righteous and other spiritual beings who accepted (their) duties, come towards the soul of the deceased. May they make the soul of the deceased pass the Cinvat Bridge easily, spaciouly and courageously*” (Jamasp Asa, *Aogāmadaēcā*, p. 55, §§ 8-9).

There is a gap in the text to see what happens to the soul on the bridge, whether pious or wicked. However, provided that the text is a liturgy which would have been recited in death ceremonies, survivors wish the soul to be welcomed by *Wahman Amahraspand* in the World to come.

“*Phl. May, Vohuman Amahraspand be the intercessor for the soul of the deceased. May he carry (the soul) in the presence of Ōhrmazd and the Amahraspans*” (Jamasp Asa, *Aogāmadaēcā*, p. 56, §§10-11).

According to the text, it can be imagined that *Wahman* is sitting on a golden throne and welcomes the newcomer. In addition to *Wahman Amahraspand*, the souls of the righteous people who dwell in the abode where *Wahman* resides, welcome the soul with food.

“*Av. Vohu Manah stood up from the throne made of Gold. Phl. May Vohuman Amahraspand stand up from the seat made of gold. And may he take forth the hand of the deceased. So may he (Vohuman) put (him) at ease; just as in the world every one who had been much at ease, so also him who had come more freely and more spaciouly.*” “*May the Fravahrs of the righteous offer to the soul of the deceased food consisting of nectar from that which has*

¹⁴² Prods Oktor Skærvø, trsl. & ed., *The Spirit of Zoroastrianism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 181.

been prepared at the time of spring” (Jamasp Asa, *Aogəmadaēcā*, pp. 56-57, §§12-14;15-16).

The righteous soul will be welcomed by *Wahman* and *frawahr* (s) of the pious men with spring butter according to the Avestan text of *Aogəmadaēcā* or water, wine, milk and honey according to its Pahlavi text.

“*Av. ‘As food shall be brought to him the spring butter’; Pahl. ‘Of water, wine, milk and honey’*” (Jamasp Asa, *Aogəmadaēcā*, p. 57, §§15-16).

Beside the food that a pious soul will be given, it is offered precious clothes and a throne on which it can sit.

“*Av. ‘Either such as silver adorned, or such as gold adorned, or such as (adorned) with any of the colours whatsoever’; Pahl. ‘May Vohuman Amahraspand give to the soul of the deceased, golden adorned garments (and) a golden throne’*” (Jamasp Asa, *Aogəmadaēcā*, pp. 57-58, §§ 17).

A righteous soul is very precious, maybe, because of the garments or its glory. It is so glorious that evil forces flee from him when they see him. The Pahlavi text of the *Aogəmadaēcā* states that soul gives off an aroma that frightens *Ahremen* and other demons.

“*Av. ‘After passing away (of a righteous person), the wicked, evil-doing Daēvas are afraid of his scent; in the same way as a sheep, pursued by the wolf, is afraid of the wolf’; Pahl. ‘Just as a sheep, pursued by the wolves, trembles from the smell of a wolf; they who are the demons and the devils tremble at the fragrance of the soul of the deceased’*” (Jamasp Asa, *Aogəmadaēcā*, p. 58, §§ 19).

- Bundahišn

Bundahišn narrates two different accounts about the fate of the soul as follows:

The first account: the soul will be taken for judgment, whether righteous or wicked. On the way, a righteous soul faces various entities.¹⁴³ First, a cow (*kirb* or astral form of a cow), which is fat and full of milk, comes to the soul. Then comes a fifteen-year-old maiden *kanīg* (astral form of a maiden), *hu-kirb* (well-shaped), who is wearing *spēd wistarag* (white clothes) comes to the soul; meeting such a beautiful figure makes the soul happy. Next, a *bōyestān kirb* (garden body) that is *purr-bar* (fruitful), *purr-āb* (full of water) and *Purr-mēwag* (crops) comes to the soul and makes it cheery. These are the signs which the soul envisages on the way to the enumeration (Bahār, *Bd.*, p. 130, para. 251). Then the soul asks them one by one:

“*‘Who art thou, who so seemest to me that all happiness and comfort are owing to thee?’ The body answers: ‘I am, O righteous! thy character [man hēm ahlaw dēn ī tō], the work that thou achievedst; as thou didst that good, I have been here owing to thee’*” (Bahār, *Farnbağ Dādagī: Bundahišn*, p. 130, para. 251).

In reply to the soul’s question, each of these visages says: “*O Righteous! I am your “dēn, those of your deeds. When you were doing good deeds, I have been with you.*” Then the soul is taken to the bridge where souls will be judged. According to *Bundahišn*, all souls must be judged by *Yazads* after leaving the material world at a bridge (Bahar, *Bd.*, p. 129, para. 199). About the location of the bridge, *Bundahišn* states that there is a peak in the middle of the world that is called *Čagād Dāit*; it is as high as a hundred men. On this peak there is a balance with two scales that belongs to the *Rašn Yazad*; one of the scales is on the summit of Mount Alborz (*Harburz*) to

¹⁴³ It is similar to the ‘*Vizīdagīhā ī Zādisparam*’; there, all deeds are embodied in form of spiritual figures.

the south, and the other one, on the base of the mountain to the north. In the middle of it, there is a sharp blade like a sword; its height, length and width equal nine spears; there stand divine deities to purify pious souls; at the top of the bridge, there is a heavenly dog, and Hell is located under the bridge (Bahār, *Bd.*, p. 129, para.199).

When the righteous soul steps on the bridge, it widens, and at the same time *Ādur Farrōbāg*, in the astral form of fire, smites the darkness, and helps him to cross the bridge; the *Yazads* purify him and lead him to the top of Mount *Alborz*. There, *Way ī weh* takes his hand and carries him to his place (Bahār, *Bd.*, pp. 130-131, para. 253).

The second account: in addition to these events, the author of *Bundahišn* states that when the wind blows to the soul, in that wind, a maiden appears to the soul. After the dialogue between the soul and the maiden, she takes the soul to a three-step ladder, with steps of good thoughts, good words and good deeds, that ends with *garōdmān* (House of Song). The soul takes the first step to the *stār-pāyag* (star station), the second step to the *māh-pāyag* (moon station) and the third step to the *xwaršēd-pāyag* (sun station) or Heaven.

“The first step being up to the star-station, the second up to the moon-station and the third up to the sun-station, where the shining abode of harmony is [nazdist gām tā ō star-pāyag ud dudīgar tā ō māh-pāyag ud sidīgar tā ōxwaršēd-pāyag kū garōdmān ī rōšn]” (Bahār, *Farnbağ Dādagī: Bundahišn*, p. 131, paras. 253-254).

- Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī Xrad

A newly dead soul must be judged after death; therefore, it will be taken to a court near a bridge that is called *Činwad puhl*. There, at the bridge, *Mihr*, *Sroš* the righteous and *Rašn* intervene to judge the soul. *Rašn* the just weighs the soul’s deeds with her balance that tends to no one, neither to the righteous nor to the wicked, neither to the lords nor to the kings. It is so fair that it will not turn and has no preference as much as a hair. It takes into account both the lord and king equally (Tafažžulī, *DMx.*, 1:115-122).

After being judged, the soul must cross the bridge. For the righteous the bridge broadens and the righteous soul will cross it easily, while it is accompanied by *Sroš* the righteous. Having crossed the bridge, the soul will be welcomed by a gracious maiden than whom he has never seen before anyone more beautiful in the world. He asks her: *“Who are you that I have never seen any maiden as gracious as you?”* (Tafažžulī, *DMx.*, 1:123-129) The maiden form replies:

“O Young man, I am not a maiden! [I am] your good thoughts, good words and good deeds. In the world when others were worshipping demons, you sat down and worshipped deities when you saw someone oppressing, robbing, disturbing other people and humiliating them, and earning wealth by committing crimes, and when you saw someone who was misjudging, and who taking bribe, and testifying falsely, you restrained and said the truth. I am those good thoughts, good words and good deeds that you thought, you said and you did. I was praiseworthy, but you made me more than what I was. I was precious, but you made me more precious. I was glorious, but you made me more glorious than before” (Tafažžulī, *Mēnōg ī Xrad*, 1:130-139).

After meeting the beautiful maiden, the soul walks onward. It smells a fragrance which is more flavorful than all other fragrances. He asks *Sroš* the righteous about its origin. *Sroš*, the righteous, replies that this fragrance is from Paradise *“ēn wād az wahišt ast kē ēdōn hubōy”* (Tafažžulī, *DMx.*, 1:140-144).

Afterwards, the soul continues on its way: the first step to the station of good thoughts, the second to the station of good words and the third to that of good deeds, and finally with the fourth step it enters the Endless Light which is all light and happiness (Tafažžulī, *DMx.*, 1:145-146). In Paradise, it will not be alone, and all the *Yazads* and *Amahraspandān* (Holy Immortals) welcome it, and ask:

“How have you come from that perishable, fearful and unhappy world to this [world] which is imperishable and all happiness, O, you young man of good thoughts, good words and good deeds?” (Tafažžulī, *Mēnōg ī Xrad.*, 1:149).

Ohrmazd, the supreme God who resides in the realm of Endless Light, forbids them to ask him any question because he has just left the precious body through that fearful road. He asks them to bring him the most pleasant food, which is the midspring butter, in order that he may rest, because he has passed the bridge and those three nights with *Astwihād* and other demons. He wants them to seat him on the fully-adorned throne. *Yazads* receive him with midspring butter and seat him on a decorated throne. The pious soul will be in happiness for ever (Tafažžulī, *DMx.*, 1:150-154).

- Ardā Wirāz Nāmag

As stated before, *Ardā Wirāz* remains by righteous souls in their first three nights after death, who are sitting near to their corpse and reciting *gāhān*: “*Well is he by whom that which is his benefit becomes the benefit of anyone else*” (Āmūzgār, *AWN*, 4:6). In those three days and nights, the righteous soul will be in extreme comforts and joy that it has never experienced before. At the dawn of the third night a fragrance of sweet-scented plants, comes to it from the south, the abode of the *Yazads*. It is more pleasant than other sweet smells that it has experienced thus far. Then a beautiful, *hurust* (tall), *kanīg kirb nēk* (well-shaped maid visage), *frāz-pēstān* (swelled out breasts) comes near to him. The soul asks the maiden: “*Who are you and to whom do you belong? That I have never seen such a beautiful, well-shaped maiden as you in the living [material] world?*” (Āmūzgār, *AWN*, 4:7-10). In reply to his question, she says:

“O Youth of good thoughts, good words, good deeds <and> good religion. I am your own action. It is because of your will and deeds that I am thus great [meh], good [weh], well scented [hubōy], victorious [pērōzgar] and without blemish [abēbēš], as you perceive. <It is> because in the world, you chanted Gāthās, consecrated the good water, <and> tended the fire. You made happy the pious men who came from far or near. I was plump and you made me plumper, I was good and you made me better, I was worthy and you made me worthier, and though I sat in a renowned place you caused me to sit in a more renowned place, and though I was honoured you made me more honourable” (Āmūzgār, *Ardā Wirāz Nāma*, 4:11-14).

After the soul has met the beautiful maiden, the bridge will be widened for him, as wide as nine spears, and *Wirāz*’s soul can cross it with the help of *Srōš* and *Ādur Yazad*. While he is passing over the bridge, he sees souls of the righteous and evil-doers which are being reckoned by *Rašn Yazad* the just with his *tarāzūg ī zard ī zarrēn* (golden balance). On the bridge, *Wirāz* is under the support of *Mihr*, *Rašn* the just, the good Way, *Wahrām* the victorious, *Aštād*, the glory and magnificence of the *Māzdēsnañ* religion (*xwarrah ī dēn ī māzdēsnañ*), the guardian souls of the righteous (*frawahr ī ahlawān*) and other *mēnōgān* (Āmūzgār, *AWN*, 5:1-4).

- Dādestān ī Dēnīg

After leaving the body, the soul remains on earth for a while. The soul that has been accustomed to the body remains on earth and wanders around his body for three days and night. During these first days and nights, the soul starts assessing the results of all his thoughts, words and deeds. He is not sure what is going to happen to him and he is afraid of the enumeration on the bridge. He thinks about the good deeds that he could have done, but did not and regrets his omissions.

“...the souls of the dead and departed are on the earth for three nights. The first night they receive comfort as a result of their good thoughts and sorrow as a result of their evil thoughts. The second night they receive pleasure as a result of (their) good words and trouble and punishment as a result of (their) evil words; and the third night they receive help as a result of (their) good deeds and punishment as a result of (their)+evil deeds” (Jaafari-Dehaghi, Dādestān ī Dēnīg, 19:2).

At dawn on the third night, something different happens to the soul: interrogation and judgment of the souls in the divine court that distinguishes the righteous souls from the evil ones. All souls must go to Mount *Alburz*, the place of judgment. There, they will all be judged by deities.

“And he who is righteous passes over the bridge in the upward direction [pad ulīh], and if he belongs to limbo (hamēstagān), he goes to where his place is; and if (he has) more good deeds and proper religion he goes to Paradise [wahišt]; and (he has) more good deeds and proper religion and has recited the Gāthās he goes to+Garōdmān. He who is wicked falls from the sharp edge of the bridge or from the middle of the bridge. He falls head first to a +level in hell [dušox] which is inversely proportional to his wickedness” (Jaafari-Dehaghi, Dādestān ī Dēnīg, 19:4-5).

- Another account of the experiences of the soul in the *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* is mainly the answers of a priest to the questions of the believers, and it seems that sometimes the same question is being repeated and the author tries to answer; therefore, the answers can be a little bit different. To exemplify this, it is better to bring up one of the questions relevant to the Afterlife.

“When who is righteous departs where does (his) soul sit on the first night and the second night and the third night, and what does it do?” (Jaafari-Dehaghi, Dādestān ī Dēnīg, 23:1).

In reply to the question, it is stated that the soul of the man remains three nights on the earth while he is in fear of *Činwad puhl* and being enumerated and examined because of his good deeds or evil deeds (Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dd.*, 23:2).

“And +the first night pleasure reaches the soul from its own good thoughts, the second night from its own good words, and the third night from its own good deeds; and if also, with the righteousness, there be sin which is in his +account, the first punishment in the atonement for the evil deeds happens on the same third night” (Jaafari-Dehaghi, Dādestān ī Dēnīg, 23:4).

At the dawn of the third night, the guardian and treasurer of good deeds [*ganjwar ī kirbag*] (*Dd.*, 23:5), who is like a handsome maiden, comes to meet the soul with the store of its good deeds on (her) shoulder. Many unatoned sins and crimes come into account and are justly accounted against the good deeds; then the soul in atonement for the remaining of the sins undergoes punishment. Seemingly, sins and merits neutralise each other and what remains sheds

light on the fate of the soul. Finally, the embodiment of the deeds receives the pious soul and leads him to Paradise.

“(After)+ having atoned for evil thoughts, evil words and evil deeds, along with its own good thoughts, good words and good deeds (in the shape of) the helpful and pleasing spirit (i. e. the beautiful maiden) it +proceeds to the supreme heaven (garōdmān), or to Paradise (wahišt) or to the limbo (hamēstagān) of the righteous, where there is a place for it in righteousness” (Jaafari-Dehaghi, Dādestān ī Dēnīg, 23:6).

- Pahlavi Rivāyāt

At the dawn of the third night, as we have mentioned, an aromatic wind blows to the soul. At the same time, through the wind, there appears a bright, attractive and well-shaped maiden, than whom it has never seen one more beautiful before; the righteous soul asks about her origin. The maiden says: *“Young man of good thought, good speech and good action, I am your Action, I belong to you”* (William, *Pah. Riv. Dd.*, Part II, 23:9). The soul asks her about the reason of her greatness, excellency, victoriousness, loveliness and sorrowlessness. She replies:

“By your doing I am just as I seem to you. When you saw him who was performing demon-worship and who did not carry out the wishes of his friends and who slammed the door (on them) and who did not give anything at all, then you sat down and performed worship and you gave something to the righteous man who came from near and who came (from) afar, and I was lovely, and by you I was made lovelier, I was comely and by you I was made more comely through the good deeds which you performed. Until the Future Body mankind will worship Ohrmazd in the material world, day by day it will become better for me” (Williams, *The Pahlavi Rivāyāt*, Part. II, 23:11-12).

With the first step, the righteous soul goes to the star station or the place of *humat* (good thoughts), with the second step, it enters the moon station or the place of *hūxt* (good words), with the third step the soul goes into the sun station or the place of *huwaršt* (good deeds) and finally, with the fourth step, the pious soul goes into the *garōdmān* (Williams, *Pah. Riv. Dd.*, Part. II, 23: 13-14).

In Paradise, the soul is welcomed with fragrance, and also by the souls of the righteous people who have passed on before him. They say to him:

“You are welcome! And have (done) well (to) come from the material world full of affliction and evil to this place which is free from affliction and evil and for the Long Duration it will be well for you” (Williams, *The Pahlavi Rivāyāt*, Part. II, 23:14).

Ohrmazd asks the righteous souls not to ask the newcomer any questions because he has already left his body which was dear to him and this departure has been difficult for him; instead, he wants them to give him foods such as mare’s milk, cream, butter, sweet wine and spring butter, which is the best food for righteous souls until the Future Body.

“Ohrmazd says: ‘Do not ask questions of him! For on account of love and affection for (his) body when he came out of the body, then it was difficult for him. And give him food!’ ‘The souls say: ‘Which food shall we give him first?’ Ohrmazd says: ‘Give (him) mare’s milk, and cream and butter and sweet wine, or butter which is made in spring. First give him the spring butter, because for the souls of the righteous when they depart from the material

world, then this is the food for them until the Future Body” (Williams, *The Pahlavi Rivāyāt*, Part. II, 23:16-17).

- Vizīdagīhā ī Zādisparam

On the fourth day (at the dawn of the third night after death), the maiden body comes to the soul to take it to the bridge. It is a frightening place in which the soul must be judged. Having been judged on the bridge, souls will be divided into two groups apparently: the inhabitants of Paradise and dwellers of Hell (Rashed-Mohassel, *Zādisparam*, 31:3-4).

“Whoever is sinful falls into Hell like a dead man who falls with his body [a dead body cannot stand on its feet and falls down]. The devoted soul enters the spiritual world with the help of the maiden body, and the maiden body nourishes him, brings him up and teaches him the words of spiritual beings. Then the man body teaches him the skills and the cues for the tasks of the spiritual world, and when he is expert and qualified enough, then he chooses one of the main four occupations, cleric, soldier, peasant or artisan” (Rashed-Mohassel, *Vizīdagīhā ī Zādisparam*, 31:4-5).

- Šad Dar-e Naṣr, Šad Dar-e Bundahiš

It is attested that the soul stays in the material world for three days and nights and goes to the place where it has left the body in search of the body and wishes: *“Would that I could enter the body once again”* (Dhabhar, *Šaddar Bd.*, 99:1). In these three days and nights, the soul of the righteous sees its body eaten by animals, but it does not suffer; on the contrary, the evil-doer suffers when he sees that his body is being eaten by animals and says:

“If priesthood that is in the world had been practised by me, there would have been no affliction and punishment more than this accruing unto me. The soul cries out to the body and says: O vile that thou art! When men were after duties and good works, thou wast in search of wealth and riches; now that wealth and the riches are consumed by (thy) sons and daughters and relatives and are carried away by them, and for the sake of me who am the soul, thou didst not do any good work and didst not acquire anything that would have assisted me here” (Dhabhar, *Šad Daddar-r Bundahiš*, 24: 3-5).

When the three days and nights are over, the soul must be taken by *Sroš* to the *Činwad puhl* for reckoning whatsoever virtue or sin which has been committed in the material world by the soul. Near the bridge, *Rašn* stands with her balance to make up the account. Whoever has more merits than sins, he will be happy; the bridge will be expanded as wide as nine spears. It seems that it is *Ardwahišt Amahraspand* who is in charge of the widening of the bridge for righteous. The soul walks on the bridge and on the mid way, a fragrance of musk and ambergris comes to him which makes him happier. In the middle of the bridge, he sees such a beautiful form that he has never seen before; the figure laughs when sees the soul on the bridge. He is amazed of such a form and asks:

“Who art thou with such goodness, as no purer form than thou hast was ever seen by me?” The form replies: “I am thy good deeds. I myself was good but thy deeds made me better” (Dhabhar, *Šad Daddar-r Bundahiš*, 99: 7-9).

Then the figure throws its hands round the soul’s neck and they both go to Paradise (Dhabhar, *Šaddar Bd.*, 99: 9-10).

- The Persian Rivāyats of Dārāb Hormazyār

As was mentioned before, the soul dwells near to the body for three days and nights three places: (1) his house; (2) where the corpse is kept; (3) in the ossuary. He wishes he could join his

body once more, he wishes he could return to his body, and is hopeful to reunite with body. At the dawn of the third day, *Yazad Sroš* the righteous takes the soul to the *Činwad puhl* to be reckoned by *Yazad Rašn* (*Riv.*, Vol. 1, p. 149).

After being reckoned, if the soul is righteous then it goes to Paradise. Whosoever has performed more good deeds than committing sins, the sins will be removed by the virtues (*کرفه به*) (*گناه انگارند*) and if what remains is good deeds, then the soul will be led to Paradise. The bridge seems to him as high as nine spears; therefore, he feels joy and comfort and crosses it. On the bridge a fragrance like musk and ambergris that he has never smelled before, comes to him. After that a beautiful visage, whom he has never seen before comes to him. The soul asks her about her origin and finds out that it is his own good deeds that are embodied in form of a beautiful visage; he himself has made such a beautiful maid by his good thoughts, words and deeds. Then the beautiful visage throws her hand around the soul's neck, and in joy and comfort, they both go to Paradise (*Riv.*, Vol. 1, pp. 149-150).

2.9 On the fate of wicked souls (Judgment and the embodiment of the sins)

- Hādōxt Nask

This time Zarathustra asks *Ahura Mazdā* about the fate of the wicked soul after death. It seems that the wicked soul is in pain and unease right after leaving the body. It wanders around its corpse and recites this verse of the Gathas: “*To what land can I turn to flee, O Ahura-Mazda! To where can I escape?*” (*Y.*, 46:1). After the third night at dawn, the wicked spirit feels a freezing cold, with a malodorous stink that comes to it from the north. It cannot tolerate such a stink and says: “*Whence blows the wind, the most stinking wind which I have ever inhaled with my nostrils?*” (*Mīrfakhrā'ī*, *HN.*, 3:25). Meanwhile, there appears to her an ugly dirty visage:

“Advancing with this wind, there appears to him his religion as a maiden, shrewish, ugly, filthy, bent-kneed, similar to the dirtiest malicious animals, as putrid as the most unpleasant of creatures. The wicked soul asks her: ‘Who are you? I have never seen anyone as ugly as you before this!’ The maiden replies: ‘O youth of bad thought, bad word and bad deed, I am your bad deeds. On account of your greed and your bad deeds I have become so ugly, spoiled, wrongdoing, afflicted, rotten and helpless. When you saw another one chanting and praying to the gods and consecrating water, fire, plants and other good creatures, you made Ahreman and other demons happy. When you saw someone extolling the pious man and helping others coming from near and far, you were narrow-minded and jealous and a closed door to the people. You made me, being unpleasant, more unpleasant, me being frightening, more frightening, me being blameworthy, more blameworthy. I was located in the north; you drove more to the north. Those who were misled, who were obedient to Ahreman, will curse me constantly” (*Mīrfakhrā'ī*, *Hādōxt Nask*, p. 66, 3:27-32).

After that the wicked soul with the first step goes to the station of bad thoughts, with the second step he goes to the station of bad words and with third steps he goes to the station of bad deeds. Finally, he steps onward and with the fourth steps he falls into the Endless Darkness.

“Then the soul of the wicked man advances with the first footstep upon the place of bad thoughts, the wicked soul advances with second footstep to the place of bad words, the wicked soul advances with third footstep to the place of

bad deeds and finally with the fourth step, he advances to the place of the endless darkness” (Mīrfakhrā’ī, Hādōxt Nask, p. 66, 3:33).

There, he is surrounded by the wicked souls who died before him. They come to the soul and ask:

“O wicked one! How did you die? O wicked one! How did you come away from the dwellings supplied with cattle and supplied with bird and supplied with success? From the material world to the divine world, from the world full of dangers to the safe world? How did the everlasting misfortune become yours?” (Mīrfakhrā’ī, Hādōxt Nask, p. 66, 3:34).

Then the arch-demon orders the questioner not to ask the newly deceased person any question. He says:

“Ahreman shouted: Ask him not what you ask, because he is come along the frightful, deadly, destructive path, the separation of the body and soul. Of the nourishment from poison and poisonous stench brought to him, that is the food of a youth of bad thought, bad word and bad deed after death. That is the food of a woman with bad thought, bad word and bad deed, ill-tempered, disobedient and a sinner after death” (Mīrfakhrā’ī, Hādōxt Nask, p. 67, 3:35-36).

- Bundahišn

As with the righteous soul, *Bundahišn* narrates two versions of the fate of the wicked soul. According to the first account, at the dawn of the third night the wicked soul smells a stinky wind and then is taken for being enumerated. On the way, the evil soul meets a *nizār* (thin), *sahmgēn* (frightful) and *husk* (dried, without milk) cow, that causes it to regret and grieve. Then the soul visits an ugly, rude and ill-shaped maid (*sahmgēn ī duš-kirb kē-š tar-menišnīh nihuft ǎstēd*) who causes the soul to take fright. Next, it approaches a dried garden *abē-āb* (without water), *abē-draxt* (without trees) and *abē-xwā (h)rīh* (without comfort), which reminds it (the soul) of Hell. Saddened by all these horrible experiences (Bahār, *Bd.*, p. 130, para. 252), he asks her:

“Who are you, than whom one more harmful I have not seen on the earth?” She replies: “O wicked! I am your actions [man dēn ī tō], that is your own doing; as you did that which was evil, I have been here, owing to you” (Bahār, Farnbağ Dādagī: Bundahišn 130, para. 252). Then the wicked soul is taken to the Chagād Dāitī, where he must cross the bridge which is as a blade. While the righteous soul crosses the bridge easily, a wicked soul will not be able to cross it because it stands as a sharp blade and prevents the soul from crossing over it. It is so that when the soul steps onward on the bridge, with the third step it falls down into Hell wherein it faces all kind of sufferings” (Bahār, Farnbağ Dādagī: Bundahišn, p. 131, para. 253).

“If it be the soul of the wicked, when it comes onto the fulcrum “juY” over the peak, that sharp floor remains in the same manner, and does not give passage; it has to walk involuntarily over this floor, with three paces that it lays on it, that are the wicked-thoughts, the wicked-words, and wicked-deeds that it has practised, and borne low from the top of the bridge, it falls headlong into the worst existence, and sees every harm” (Bahār, Farnbağ Dādagī: Bundahišn, p. 131, para. 253).

The second account states that the soul of the evil-doer will be received by the wind in which the ill-shaped maiden appears to him. When man faces the maiden, who is in fact the result of his deeds, he is frightened, he starts talking with her to know who she is and where she comes from. Then the deeds of the man turn to a sharp blade (*ast kunišn tēx ī tēz homānāg warded*). It (the embodiment of the deeds) says to the soul: “*If you will, if you will not, you have to walk over this with paces.*” The soul replies: “*I would feel better if you would sever me with a very sharp knife than that I go over this with paces.*” It repeats what it had said before, but this time the soul says: “*I would feel better if you would shoot me with an arrow than that I go over this with paces.*” For the third time, it asks the soul to cross over the blade, but the soul says: “*I would feel better if you would take my life from the body than that I go over this with paces.*” At this moment, his deed stands before the soul like a hideous wild beast that causes the soul to be scared and walk over the blade (Bahār, *Bd.*, p. 131, para. 254).

“Then that conduct will become just like a terrific wild beast not tamable by the hand, and stand near the soul. And the soul will be so afraid that it will go over it with paces, and it will fall into the wicked existence {hell}, borne down by three paces” (Bahār, *Farnbağ Dādagī: Bundahišn*, p. 131, para. 254).

Having walked on the bridge, by taking three steps, bad thoughts, bad words and bad deeds, it falls into Hellfire.

- Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī xrad

A wicked man experiences difficulties after death, as a result of his evil deeds. When a wicked soul leaves his body, it wanders around its body for three days and nights. The evil soul sits near its head and body, cries uncontrollably and weeps convulsively and says: “*To which place should I go and with whom should I take refuge?*” (Tafažžulī, *DMx.*, 1:159).

He sees with his eyes whatever sins and evil that he has committed in his life in those three days and nights after death. At the dawn of the third night, demon *Wizarš* fastens the soul of the evil-doers while being opposed by *Sroš* the righteous, and takes them forcefully to the *Činwad puhl*. There on the bridge, *Rašn* the just discerns their maliciousness and detects them. After being judged, *Wizarš* takes them fiercely, beats them and abuses them. The wicked soul cries, and attempts to release itself, but no one pays attention to it, and it will be taken to Hell by demon *Wizarš* (*Tafažžulī, DMx.*, 1:164-166).

At this moment a maiden who is not like a maiden, but a hag, appears to the soul. The scared wicked soul starts talking with her to know who she is, and where she is from: “*Who are you that I have never seen anyone as gruesome and filthy as you?*” She answers:

“I am not a maiden, but your bad thoughts, bad words and bad deeds. When you saw someone was worshipping gods, you sat down and worshipped demons. You served demons and devils. When you saw someone welcoming guests and giving them presents, from near or far, you humiliated the good man and did not give him presents, but you closed the door. When you saw someone judging fairly, not taking bribes, and not testifying falsely, and saying the truth, you sat down and misjudged, took a bribe, testified falsely and lied. I am your bad thoughts, bad words and bad deeds. I was illaudable, but you made me less. I was unrespected, but you made me more unrespected. I was sitting with flagrant sinners, but you made me more scandalous” (Tafažžulī, *Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī Xrad*, 1:171-181).

After this conversation between the wicked soul and the hag, the soul goes onward; with the first step to the place of bad thoughts, the second step to the place of bad words and the third step to that of bad deeds, and finally with the fourth step it goes to the place of the Arch-Demon and his companions (Tafažžulī, *DMx.*, 1:182-183).

He meets demons in the Worst Existence “dušox”; the demons mock him and say to him:

“What was wrong and your complaint with Ohrmazd and the Amahraspand (s) that you came to the Ahreman and fell down into Hellfire even though we will torture you and you will be in suffering for ever?” (Tafažžulī, *Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī Xrad*, 1:184-186).

The Arch-Demon forbids the evils to ask him any questions, because he has just left the precious body and he has passed through the bad road. He wants them to bring him the worst and the filthiest food which has been nurtured in Hell. The wicked soul must eat the poison and the venom of snakes and scorpions and of the other animals that are in Hell. It will be in suffering and torment, and eat spoiled foods until resurrection.

“And the evil spirit shouts to the demons thus: ‘Ask ye no tidings from him who is parted from that which was a precious body, and has come on by that which is a very bad road. But bring ye unto him the foulest and vilest of eatables, the food which is nurtured in hell’” (Tafažžulī, *Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī Xrad*, 1:187-194).

- Ardā Wirāz Nāmag

To see what happens to evil souls, *Wirāz* returns back to the Bridge where he meets sinful souls who are uglier and in more suffering than he has ever seen in the material world; they sit near their heads and say: “*O Ohrmazd the creator, to which land shall I go and with whom shall I seek refuge?*” (Āmūzgār, *AWN*, 17:10) After that a cold, stinky wind from the north, the direction of the demons, blows to him; it is so foul that he had not experienced such a stinky wind in the material world before. Then he sees his *dēn* (action) as a *brahnag* (naked), *pūdag* (decomposed), *rēman* (dirty), *zan ī jeh* (whore woman), (*frāz snug*) (with bent knees), *abāz kūn* (protruding buttocks), *akanārag-drēm* (unlimited phlegm) who is *rēmandom* (the most reptile) and *gandagdom* (the most filthy).

“And in that wind he saw his own religion and deeds as a profligate woman, naked, decayed, gapping, bandy-legged, lean-hipped, and unlimitedly spotted so that spot was joined to spot, like the most hideous, noxious creature (xrafstar), most filthy and most stinking” (Āmūzgār, *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag*, 17:9-10).

The soul asks her about her origin and she replies:

“I am your evil deeds, you youth of ‘evil thoughts,’ of ‘evil words,’ of ‘evil deeds,’ of ‘evil religion [Dēn]’. It is due to your will and your action that I am ugly, evil, sinful, torn out, rotten, stinking, defeated and distressed, as appears to you. When you saw anyone who performed the *yazišn* and *drōn* and praised and exalted and worshipped the Yazads, and looked after and protected Water, Fire and Cattle and Plants and other good creatures, you fulfilled the wish of Ahreman and of the demons, and practised unlawful deeds. And when you saw one who gave properly gifts and alms to the good and the worthy who came from far or near, and showed hospitality and received them and provided them with < necessary > things, < then > you showed meanness and shut < your > door. And though I was disrespectful, i.e. I was considered

bad – you made me more disrespectful. And though I was frightful you made me more frightful. Though I was complaining you made me more complaining. I was sitting in the northern region, you caused me to sit furthest north, because of the ‘evil thoughts,’ ‘evil words’ and ‘evil deeds’ which you have practised. They torment me for a long time because of your long worship and wicked communion with the Evil Spirit” (Āmūzgār, Ardā Wirāz Nāmag, 17:11-20).

Then the sinful soul goes with the first step to the station of bad thoughts, with the second step to the station of bad words and with the last step to the station of bad deeds and with the fourth step he falls down into Hell.

- Dādestān ī Dēnīg

The author of the *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* is questioned about the state of sinful souls in the Afterlife. He too mentions that the evil-doer’s soul must stay on the earth for three nights. During these days, it remembers its evil thoughts, words and deeds, and is in fear because of its uncertainty about its place, judgment and the enumeration at the bridge. Since every person may have done some righteous deeds in his lifetime, the spirit of whatsoever good thoughts, good words and good deeds that have been thought, said or done by the wicked soul will come to help him in the first three nights.

“It is troubled the first night by its bad thoughts, and the second night by its bad deeds, and the third night by its bad words, but on account of the good deeds which it has done in the material world, the first night the spirit (mēnōg) of good thoughts, the second night the spirit of the good words, and the third night the spirit of the good deeds come to the soul and become pleasing and helpful to it” (Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, 24:4).

At the dawn of the third night, the *nigāhbed ī-š wināh* (guardian of man’s evil deeds), being envisaged in the shape of a frightful, filthy and harmful woman comes to him. This ugly woman is in fact the reflection of the deeds that is called by the author 'keeper of the sin' that comes to the soul in a form (*kirb*) of a terrifying, dirty and injurious woman with all the sins that he had committed in the material world; meanwhile, a stinky northerly wind blows to him.

“And the third night at dawn, the guardian of its sins in the shape of a frightful, filthy and harmful maiden comes to meet it with the store of its sins, and a fetid northerly wind comes out towards it; and (the soul) comes to judgment with... (?) prostrating (?), and unwillingly running” (Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, 24:5).

Then the evil soul is judged on the Bridge, and condemned to Hell because of its malicious deeds.

“On account of deception and deceit, heresy, smiting the righteous, false witness, perpetual blaming of the good-natured, and praise of druz and excessive sinfulness, it (i.e. the wicked soul) is condemned and falls from the bridge and is thrown headlong into hell” (Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, 24:6).

- Pahlavi Rivāyāt

Knowing the fate of pious souls after death, this time Zarathustra asks God about the souls of evil-doers after death and *Ohrmazd* in his reply says that the soul of an evil-doer sits near his head, where the soul departed the material body. Wearing a torn and dirty garment, the wicked soul says: *“It was indeed evil for me when I did not perform good deeds. I belong to*

Ahremen. *To what land shall I go? And whom shall I seek? And who shall hold back this affliction from me?*” (Williams, *Pah. Riv. Dd.*, Part. II, 23:19). In the first three days and nights, he will be in such suffering and pain as felt by a living man who is in pain and torment all his life.

At the dawn of the third night, he feels freezing as if he were in snow, and a foul stinky smell blows to him. He asks about the origin of the stink which he has never experienced before. He is told this smell comes from Hellfire (Williams, *Pah. Riv. Dd.*, Part. II, 23:22-24).

Through the stink, there appears to him his action in the figure of an ugly woman, who is worse than all the noxious creatures of Ahremen, and then he asks her about her origin. She replies: *“Young man of evil thought, of evil speech, of evil action, I am your Action.”* The wicked soul asks her about the reason of her evilness, sinfulness, dirtiness, fetidness, foulness, unsuccessfulness and woefulness. She says:

“By your doing I am as I seem to you. When you saw him who was performing worship, and who gave something to the righteous man, then you slammed the door (on him) and you harmed your friends and you did not give anything. And I was bad and by you I was made worse. I was ugly, and by you I was made uglier through the sins you committed. Until the Future Body, when Ahremen is destroyed, then day by day it will become worse for me” (Williams, *The Pahlavi Rivāyāt*, 23:27).

After being faced with an ugly woman, who is the result of his evil deeds, the evil soul is taken to Hell through a dangerous road, while he complains and says:

“If they cut off my head [like a sheep], or cut me with arrows and kill me, or first take me prisoner [or detach me from the cattle], then cut me with a dagger, then it seems better to me than on this path, where my treasure has been carried away (for me) [or the way strewn with thorns]. Then (although) I must go to Hell, I do not go willingly” (Williams, *The Pahlavi Rivāyāt*, Part. II, 23:28).

On the way to Hell, he faces a demon that is called *Wizarš*. Demon *Wizarš* throws a rope around his neck; meanwhile, his Action stands in front of him, and he seeks shelter with *Wizarš* the demon because of the woefulness and dreadfulness of his Action. The evil soul goes as fast as a horse to Hell (*Pah. Riv. Dd.*, 23:29). With the first step he goes to the place of *dušmat* (bad thoughts), with the second step he goes to the place of *dušhūt* (bad words), the third step brings him to the place of *dušxwaršt* (bad deeds) and finally with the fourth step he falls into Hellfire.

There, in Hell, the wicked souls who have died before him come to him with the foul smell and say: *“Woe unto you! And woe unto you who have come from that tormented, material world to this place where that affliction was easy for you in (comparison with) this affliction!”* (Williams, *The Pahlavi Rivāyāt*, 23:32).

In Hell not only the wrong-doers welcome him, but he is faced with Ahremen reproaching him. Ahremen utters with loud harsh cries: *“Wicked one! Why have you come to my Hell-hole? Since there is nothing else at all here except the pain and misfortune and affliction with which they abuse you and all is affliction for you.”* (Williams, *Pah. Riv. Dd.*, 23:33).

He orders the evil souls not to ask the newcomer any questions, and wants them to bring him the food that he deserves. They give him the fresh stench, because it is the food for all evil souls until the Future Body.

“And the wicked say: “Shall we give him that stench, or that which has not been freshly voided?” ‘Ahremen says: “Give him the fresh stench, because

for the souls of the wicked, then this the food for them until the Future Body”
(Williams, *The Pahlavi Rivāyāt*, Part. II, 23:35-36).

- Ṣad Dar-e Naṣr, Ṣad Dar-e Bundahiš

The evil-doer must step on a bridge which is thinner than the edge of a blade. When the soul steps on the bridge, a fetid smell comes to him. It is so stinking that he has never experienced such a smell before. On the middle of the bridge, he faces an ugly, dreadful form; it is such an ugly and unpleasant form that he has never seen such a thing before. He is afraid of it like a sheep that is afraid of a wolf. The wicked soul decides to escape, but the form addresses him and asks him the reason; the soul replies:

“Who are you with such ugliness and dreadfulness? I have never seen one worse, uglier and more dreadful than you in the world.” The form replies: “I am your bad deeds. Now you have involved me and you in trouble and affliction and up to the last day we shall undergo punishment in Hell”
(Dhabhar, *Ṣad Dar-e Bundahiš*, 99:18-19).

Having talked together, the ugly form throws his hand around the soul’s neck and they both fall down into Hell (Dhabhar, *Ṣaddar Bd*, 99:21). The state of evil souls in Hell depends on the amount of the sins that they have committed in the world. The more evil, the nearer to the *Ahremen*, but if his sins are less, he goes to the place where his sins are gathered and amassed. When *Ahremen* sees the wicked souls in Hell, he says:

“O you Margarzan sinner who deserve to die, what trouble have you from Heaven and Ohrmazd and the Amahraspand (s) that you relinquished such a pleasant spot and came to us? Now when you are fashioned for this (Hell), we shall so regard you as you will fit in with it” (Dhabhar, *Ṣad Dar-e Bundahiš*, 99: 23-24).

Demons laugh at him and mock him; as a result, he suffers more than being punished and tortured in Hell. He will be served a disgusting food which is called in Arabic *šajra* (شجرة) and in Persian *dūi* (دوی)¹⁴⁴ It is the most stinking food of all (Dhabhar, *Ṣaddar Bd*, 99:25).

- The Persian Rivāyats of Dārāb Hormazyār

For those whose sins are more than their virtues, the bridge will be as narrow as a blade. When the sinner steps on the bridge, a harsh stinky wind, which he has never experienced before, comes to him. It is worse than all other sufferings that he has so far experienced. On the middle of the bridge, the wicked soul meets a dreadful, ugly visage, more dreadful than anything he has seen before. He fears and tries to escape, like a ewe that fears the wolf. The ugly visage says:

“Whither do you escape? I am not the person whom you escape from.” The sinner asks it about its origin and says: “Who are you that I have never seen anyone as ugly and dreadful as you before? It says: I am your bad action. I was ugly and you made me uglier day by day. You left me in pain and suffer in Hell until the resurrection. It throws its hand around his neck and they both fall down into Hellfire” (*Rivāyats of Dārāb Hormazyār*, Vol. 1, p. 150).

¹⁴⁴ For these two words *Dehkhudā* does not give any meanings, but it can be supposed that *shajra* could be the misreading of the *shajara* (tree) and it may be a shortened form of the *shajarat al_zaqqūm* in Qur’ān 17:60, 37:62-68, 44:43 and 56:52. It is a tree that springs out of the bottom of Hell; its fruits are like devil’s heads and when the unbelievers eat it, it tears their bodies apart.

They fall into Hell because the bridge is made of blades and this makes it impossible to walk on. Those with great sins go to the abode of *Ahremen*, and when *Ahremen* confronts them he says:

“O Wicked one who deserves death (marg arzān)! What was wrong with Ohrmazd and Amahraspands that you left such a happy place and came here? Now, because you did not know it [how worthy Paradise is] we will chasten you in pain and suffering as it deserves you. He regrets and will be mocked [by demons], which is worse than all other sufferings that he has endured.” There the wicked soul will be received with the most contaminated food which is call in Arabic sahra (سحره) and in Persian doi (دوی)¹⁴⁵” (*Rivāyats of Dārāb Hormazyār*, Vol. 1, pp. 150-151).

2.10 Paradise, Hell and Hamēstagān

As we have seen so far, all souls will be judged and then will enter Paradise or fall into Hell. Paradise (*Wahišt*) is the final abode of all righteous souls and Hell (*Dušox*) is the abode of all the evil souls. Next to Paradise and Hell, Zoroastrian eschatology refers to a third abode which is for those whose good and evil deeds are equal (*Hammistagān*). In the following paragraphs, the description of these three abodes will be related.

- Bundahišn

As mentioned under ‘The fate of righteous and wicked souls,’ Paradise and Hell are the final abode of the man after death. In addition to the abodes of righteous souls and the wicked ones, *Bundahišn* refers to an intermediate level for those whose good deeds and bad deeds are equal. If sins and merits are equal, the soul enters the *Hammistagān*, which like the earth, and souls will be placed there according to their good deeds.

“They will assign him to purgatory {Hammistagān} whose sins and works of merit are equal. As regards purgatory one says, ‘It is a place just like the earth. They will assign places to all persons according to the degree of their works of merit, and they will sit’” (Bahār, *Farnbag Dādagī: Bundahišn*, 30:34).

- Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī Xrad

Paradise is the result of man’s good thoughts, words and deeds. Whoever has more merits goes to Paradise; otherwise, he must go to Hell, but if his merits and mistakes are equal, *Hamēstagān*¹⁴⁶ will be the man’s abode.

“Whosoever has more good deeds, his abode is in Paradise; and whosoever merits and evil deeds are equal, his abode is the intermediate stage [hammistagān], and whosoever has more evil deeds, his abode is Hell” (Tafāzzulī, *Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī Xrad*, 11:13-15).

Paradise is divided into different stages and levels. It is stated that Paradise has three parts, and each part is basically divided into three divisions corresponding to Zoroastrianism mottos; good thoughts, good words and good deeds. It it stated that Paradise is from star station

¹⁴⁵ Similar to *Šad Dar –e Bundahiš*, but with different pronunciation.

¹⁴⁶ Philippe Gignoux, “Hamēstagān,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hamestagan> (accessed September 14, 2015).

to the moon station and from the moon station to the sun station and from the sun station to the *Garōdmān* where *Ohrmazd* resides.

“Heaven is, first, from the star station unto the moon station; second, from the moon station unto the sun; and, third, from the sun station unto the supreme heaven, whereon the creator Ohrmazd is seated. Of heaven the first part is that of good thoughts, the second is that of good words, and the third is that of good deeds” (Tafażżulī, *Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī Xrad*, 6:8-12).

The righteous are in happiness in Paradise without any old age or death, far from any sorrow and suffering. It is full of pleasant aromas and joy. Sometimes, a fragrance, which smells like the odour of flowers, blows softly to them. It is more pleasant than any other fragrance that they have ever smelled. They are always happy to be in Paradise and never weary of it. They will be forever in glory and happiness with *Ohrmazd*, *Amahraspands* and *Yazads*:

“The righteous in heaven are undecaying and immortal, unalarmed, undistressed, and undisturbed. And, everywhere, they are full of glory, fragrant, and joyful, full of delight and full of happiness. And, at all times, a fragrant breeze and a scent which is like sweet basil come to meet them, which are more pleasant than every pleasure, and more fragrant than every fragrance. For them, also, there is no satiety owing to the existence in heaven. And their sitting and walking, perception and enjoyment are with the angels and archangels and the righteous for ever and everlasting” (Tafażżulī, *Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī Xrad*, 6:13-17).

As mentioned earlier, the spirit of wisdom states that beside Paradise and Hell, there is a middle stage. It is from earth station to the star station, and is called *Hamēstagān*. There is no other pain except hotness and coldness in it. It is a dwelling for those whose good deeds and evil deeds are equal; and therefore, they are not allowed to enter Paradise or Hell.

“Regarding the ‘hamēstagān’ it is declared, that they are from the earth unto the star station; and its affliction for them is then nothing whatever except cold and heat” (Tafażżulī, *Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī Xrad*, 6:18-19).

Like Paradise, Hell is divided into three stages, but it is not stated whether it is under the earth or on it. It is a dark place that has been categorised into bad thoughts, bad words and bad deeds. The first stage of Hell is from the station of the bad thoughts to the bad words, and then from the station of bad words to the station of bad deeds, and finally from the station of bad deeds to the last station which is the abode of *Ahreman* and his companions.

“Of Hell the first part is that of evil thoughts, the second is that of evil words, and the third is that of evil deeds. With the fourth step the wicked person arrives at that which is the darkest hell; and they lead him forwards to the vicinity of Ahreman, the wicked. And Ahreman and the demons, thereupon, make ridicule and mockery of him thus: ‘What was thy trouble and complaint, as regards Ohrmazd and the archangels, and the fragrant and joyful heaven, when thou approachedst for a sight of us and gloomy hell, although we cause thee misery therein and do not pity, and thou shalt see misery of long duration?’ And, afterwards, they execute punishment and torment of various kinds upon him” (Tafażżulī, *Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī Xrad*, 6:20-26).

Hell, as the abode of the evil-doers, has different places with different punishments. For example, there is a place which is as freezing as cold and snow; and a place that is as hot as a blazing fire. Poisonous and harmful animals bite and chew the evil-doers there, like a dog that

chews bones. Hell stinks and is full of foul smells. It is so dark that a man thinks he can grasp it with his hands.

“*There is a place where, as to cold, it is such as that of the coldest frozen snow. 28. There is a place where, as to heat, it is such as that of the hottest and most blazing fire. There is a place where noxious creatures are gnawing them, just as a dog does the bones. 30. There is a place where, as to stench, it is such that they stagger about and fall down. And the darkness is always such-like as though it is possible for them to seize upon it with the hand*” (Tafažžulī, *Dādestān ī Mēnōg ī Xrad*, 6:27-31).

- Ardā Wirāz Nāmag

After he has drunk an intoxicating drink, *Wirāz*’s soul ascends to the Heavens and goes to the *CHagād Dāidīg* and *Činwad-puhl* (*ud ruwān ī Vīrāz az tan ō chagād ī Dāiti [ud] CHinvad puhl šud*). In this journey, he is accompanied by two *Yazads*: *Srōš* and *Ādur*. Having stepped into the world of spirits, *Wirāz* begins keeping souls under his observation. He experiences whatever a soul experiences after death. He experiences the state of both the righteous and wicked souls. As a righteous soul, he experiences three stages to reach the Bridge; with the first step he goes to the station of the good thoughts, with the second step to the station of the good words and finally with the last step to the station of the good deeds to the *Činwad-puhl*.

“*And then the victorious Srōš the pious, and Ādur the angel, took hold of my hand. Taking the first footstep with the good thought, and the second footstep with the good word, and the third footstep with the good deed, I came up to the Činwad puhl...*” (*Āmūzgār, Ardā Wirāz Nāmag*, 4:3-5).

- Paradise in Ardā Wirāz Nāmag

His companions suggest to him visiting Hell and Paradise where the evil-doers and righteous reside respectively. Paradise, the reward of the righteous man (*wahišt pādāšn ī ahlavan*), is described as a place full of light (*rōšnīh*), ease (*xwarīh*), comfort (*āsānīh*), prosperity (*frāxīh*), pleasure (*xwašīh*), happiness (*huramīh*), peace (*rāmišn*), joy (*šādīh*) and fragrance (*hubōyīh*).¹⁴⁷

Paradis is divided into different partitions. The first one, the star station, is that of good thoughts, in which the souls of pious men dwell. They are as bright as stars, while sitting on their shining thrones:

“*I put forth the first footstep to the star station, on Humat, the place where good thoughts (humat) are received with hospitality. And I saw those souls of the pious whose radiance, which ever increased, was glittering as the stars; and their throne and seat were under the radiance, and splendid and full of glory*” (*Āmūzgār, Ardā Wirāz Nāmag*, 7:1-2).

Then he goes to the moon station or the station of good words, where he visits the assembly of the pious men (*wuzurg hanjaman ī ahlawān*), whose faces are as shining as the moon (*Āmūzgār, AWN.*, 8:1-2). The next station is of good deeds, the sun station or the highest of the highest (*bālistān bālist*) in which souls are sitting on golden thrones and carpets, and their faces are as bright as the sun (*Āmūzgār, AWN.*, 9:1-4). With the fourth step he goes to the *Garōdmān* that is called all comfort and pleasure (*hamāg xwarīh*); there, souls (*frawahr*) of the

¹⁴⁷ These descriptions can be seen in Chapters 7-10, where *Wirāz* mentions in each one, one of the features of Paradise.

deceased welcome him and ask him how he could come from the passing (*sejōmand*) and foul (*vas-anāgīh*) world to the everlasting (*asej-axwān*) and unassailed (*apetyārag*) world.

“I took the fourth step to the radiant, ever blissful Paradise. The souls of the deceased came to receive us. They gave greetings and offered praise and said: ‘How did you come, O righteous one, from that troubled and harmful world to this world <which is> free from danger and adversity? Eat <the food> of immortality, because for a long time you shall enjoy peace here’” (Āmūzgār, *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag*, 10:1-4).

In Paradise *Bahman Amahraspand* welcomes him, takes his hand and leads him to the abode of *Ohrmazd*, *Amahraspandān* and other righteous souls, like Zarathustra’s *frawahr*. This abode is the brightest and the best place that he has ever seen. He visits *Ohrmazd* and salutes him. *Ohrmazd* says to him: “*Greetings to you, Ardāwirāz! Be welcome. You have come from that troubled world to this pure and radiant place*” (Āmūzgār, *AWN.*, 11:5). Then *Srōš* the righteous and *Ādur* takes his hand and shows him *Amahraspandān*, *Yazads* and other holy beings.

In Paradise all the righteous souls are in garments (*paymōzān*) decorated with gold, silver and different jewels. They are sitting in various places, *stār waxšāg paymōzān* (wearing luminous robes). It is *pahlom axwān* (the best place) which is full of happiness, comfort, fragrance, decoration, wonders, of which no one tires.

“And I saw the souls of those who in the world chanted Gāthās, and worshipped, and were faithful in the religion of the Mazdeans, which Ohrmazd taught Zoroaster. Then I came forward <and I saw the people, who put on> garments adorned with gold and silver, most glorious of all garments. And it seemed praiseworthy to me. Then I saw in the powerfully-created light the souls of those <who had practised> kin-marriage, from whom a brightness as high as a mountain ever radiated. And it seemed praiseworthy to me. And I saw the souls of the good rulers and kings, from whom radiated greatness, goodness, strength and triumph, when <they> entered into the light with the golden chariot. And it seemed praiseworthy to me. And I saw the souls of the great ones and the truth-speakers, who walked in that <realm> of lofty brightness and great glory. And it seemed praiseworthy to me” (Āmūzgār, *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag*, 12:4-13).

In different places, he visits souls in decorated garments. For example, in *AWN.* 12:6-7, he visits also the souls of those who in the world chanted the *Gāhān* and used the prescribed prayers (*Yašt*) and were steadfast in the good religion of the *Māzdēsnañ*, which *Ohrmazd* taught to *Zardošt*, and when he advances, he sees them while they are in gold-embroidered and silver-embroidered clothes, the most embellished of all clothing that seems to him most sublime (Āmūzgār, *AWN.*, 12:5-10); and also he visits the souls of husbandmen (*Wāstaryōšān*) in glorious clothing “*u-m dīd ān ī wāstaryōšān ruwān pad ān ī bāmīg gāh ud xvarrahōmand ud starvaxšāg paymōzān*” (Āmūzgār, *AWN.*, 14:8).

He also visits the best existence in which there is all comfort, happiness, fragrance, joy, wonders and the best gloriousness with which no one can be sated. There, golden thrones, fine carpets and cushions decked with rich cloth, on which are seated the souls of the righteous people, can be seen.

“I also saw the pre-eminent world of the pious, which is the all-glorious light of space, much perfumed with sweet basil, all-bedecked, all-

admired, and splendid, full of glory and every joy and every pleasure, with which no one is satiated” (Āmūzgār, Ardā Wirāz Nāmag, 15:10).

- Hell in Ardā Wirāz Nāmag

Wirāz, accompanied by Srōš the righteous and Ādur Yazad, visits Hell too. Hell is located below the Činwad puhl on the peak of chagād dāitī (AWN., 53:1-2). Ahreman and other demons dwell in Hell (AWN., 54:2); they cry and groan together with many other sinful souls.

“And Srōš, the pious, and the god Ādur took hold of my hand and brought me to the ‘lawful summit’ beneath the Činwad puhl, into a desert, and in the middle of that desert below the Činwad puhl, <they> showed <me> Hell in the earth, and from that place came so <loudly> the complaints of Ahreman and of the demons and devils and many other souls of the wicked that it seemed to me that seven regions of the earth were trembling” (Āmūzgār, Ardā Wirāz Nāmag, 53:2).

There, all the wicked souls are punished by Ahreman and other demons. There is such a cold (*sarmāg*) and dryness (*huškīh*) as no one has seen in the material world. Hell is portrayed as a deep and narrow well ‘*zofr chiyōn ān ī sahmġēndom chāh*’ (Āmūzgār, AWN., 18:3). It is all darkness (*tārīgīh*), narrowness (*tangīh*), suffering (*dušxwārīh*), badness (*wadīh*), harm (*bēš*), evil (*anāgīh*), pain (*dard*), sickness (*wēmārīh*), terribleness (*sahmġēnīh*), fearfulness (*bīmġēnīh*), harmfulness (*rēšġēnīh*) and stench (*gandagīh*); it is so dark that one thinks he can grasp the darkness with his hand and so stinky that whoever inhales it, his nose will be damaged and fall off; it is so cramped that no one can stand in it. All people there think that they are alone, and three days and night are equal to nine thousand years. Everywhere noxious creatures (*xrafstar*) can be found; they attack the wicked souls, tear them and seize them (Āmūzgār, AWN., 18:1-9).

Wirāz describes Hell as a deep well full of dread, fear and stink; a painful abyss with lots of noxious animals. They all cry and wail, but no one hears them; it is so crowded with people that no one can see its end (Āmūzgār, AWN., 54:4). He also runs into Ahreman who mocks the evil-doers and says: “Why did you eat the bread of Ohrmazd and do my work, < and why > did you not think of your creator, but fulfilled my wishes?” (Āmūzgār, AWN., 100:1).

Wirāz also faces some souls who are standing next to one another. He asks his companions (Srōš the righteous and Ādur Yazad) about them. In reply to his question they say that everyone whose good deeds are greater goes to Heaven, and everyone whose sins are greater goes to Hell.

“Everyone whose good is more than his sins <goes> to Heaven, <and everyone> whose sins are greater <goes> to Hell, <and those) who <possess> both equally remain in this Hammistagān until the Final Body. Because of the change of air their punishment <is> cold and heat, and there is no other adversity for them” (Āmūzgār, Ardā Wirāz Nāmag, 6:5).

In addition to Hell and Paradise, there is a place which is called *Hammistagān* for those whose merits and sins are equal.

“This place is called Hammistagān and these souls stand here until the Final Body. <These are> the souls of those people whose good deeds and sins were equal” (Āmūzgār, Ardā Wirāz Nāmag, 6:3).

There, in *Hammistagān*, people are not being punished or rewarded. The only difficulty that they have there is the coldness and hotness of the atmosphere, but they do not have any other suffering (Āmūzgār, AWN., 6:6).

- Dādestān ī Dēnīg

All souls go to one of three destinations according to their deeds, the righteous go in the upward direction to the *Hamēstagān* or higher to the *Wahišt* (Paradise) and the most righteous to *Garōdmān* (House of the Song), whereas evil-doers fall from the Bridge to *pāyag ī-š druwandīh*, the station of the wicked (Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dd.*, 23:6).

As mentioned earlier, all souls must cross the Bridge, a two-dimensional structure; at the same time it has a broad surface as wide as twenty-seven reeds and a thin and sharp side, as thin and narrow as razor blade. This Bridge can be the beginning of Paradise and its rewards or of Hell and its punishments. For the righteous ones, it will be broadened in height and width, as high and as wide as nine spears, but for the evil ones it will be narrowed like the edge of a blade. When the righteous one steps on the bridge he feels joy.

The wicked person cannot walk on the bridge and from its middle falls down, because it is sharp and harsh. He is unhappy and a fetid smell like the stench of cemeteries comes to him (*gandag ī murdagestān*). He must pass over the bridge quickly, because the bridge is so sharp that he cannot stop or stay on it.

“He who is wicked falls from the middle of the bridge and turns downwards as he steps on the bridge, because of (its) +roughness and sharpness. And the unpleasantness of his path to hell, according to a material simile, is similar to the middle of the stinking cemetery; there are sharp point of kync (?) which are inverted and pointing upwards, and they (i. e. the wicked) go with unwilling haste, and they do not allow (them) to stop or to linger” (Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, 20:7).

It is on the Bridge that blessings and sorrows,¹⁴⁸ as the result of man’s deeds, begin. The righteous soul goes to Heaven because of its merits. In Paradise, a righteous soul rejoices because it has escaped *Ahremen*’s hands; there, he is happy to be in the world of *Ohrmazd* (Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dd.*, 18:6). A spiritual body goes along with him as a guide and in agreement with his thoughts, words and deeds. In the world of spirits, the soul will receive garments, suitable equipment and a swift chariot (*ray wardyūn*) with four horses (*cahārag bārag*) to fly to Heaven. There in Heaven, *Wahman* the *Amahraspand* welcomes it and introduces it to *Ohrmazd* and other spiritual beings. *Ohrmazd* orders that the righteous soul be shown his position in Heaven, and because of this the soul feels great joy (Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dd.*, 30:2-3).

There in heaven, all the family and friends of the soul welcome it and the soul remains in Paradise until *fraš (a)gird* (the renovation). The soul will be in happiness and spiritual perfection as if it were eating the best material food from cattle, *mēdyōzarm rōyn* (spring butter), which is the best food in the material world.

“And the righteous in heaven who have been his relatives and friends, and are of the same religion and the same place in the world, show him affection and enquire after his health and (show) similar respect for his coming

¹⁴⁸ Something interesting about *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* is that seemingly, all the blessings and sorrows are spiritual and imaginary, and not material. To support this claim, I refer to the phrase that its author uses to describe blessings and sorrows; he says: “*And he who is righteous passes over the bridge, and the pleasantness of his journey, according to a material simile [xwašīh <ī> pad ān ī hangōšīdag ī gētīg], is as though a+ handsome, wonderful, perfumed person were to walk about with a spiritual sound pleasantly and well (and) willingly and effortlessly in the golden-coloured spring”* (Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, 20:6). Apparently, all the descriptions are just compared to the eases and difficulties of the material world by expressing “*according to a material simile [xwašīh <ī> pad ān ī hangōšīdag ī gētīg]*”.

to heaven and say to him: ‘welcome to Heaven!’” (Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, 30:8).

A righteous soul lives in comfort and pleasure in Heaven. There all kinds of comfort which are in the material world are given to him due to his spiritual good thoughts, good words and good deeds, bounties such as wise friends, servants, beautiful, modest, and husband-loving woman, humble maid, etc. The only difference between the bounties of the material and the spiritual world is that whatever the soul receives in the Hereafter in contrast with material world is unlimited, permanent, undiminishing, inexhaustible and ever-pleasurable.

“All kinds of comfort and joy as (there are) in the world, (such as what may come) from a man who is a wise friend, (or) a reverent servant, or other cultured men, this (i.e. comfort) also (which may come) from a beautiful, modest, and husband-loving woman, (or) a humble maid servant, or other +beneficial women; this also (which may come) from +large and small cattle, wild beasts, birds, fishes, and other species of animals; this also (which may come) from bright fires, well-blowing winds, shining, shining metals and +bright crystals; this also (which may come) from +walls and lands, houses and all +well-fertilised lands; this also (which may come) from rivers and springs, wells, and all kinds of water; this also (which may come) from trees and shrubs, soft fruits, grain and fodder, vegetables, flowers, and other plants; this also (which may come) from the cultivation of the earth by (?) these creatures and all creation; these pleasant tastes and fragrances and colours of all types, all natures, powers, people, beings (and) abilities can come to mortals; (all these) on account of his spiritual good deeds are attached to the soul, in the manner and likeness of a vision, males and females, cattle, +fires of fire (temples), metals of every kind, (precious) +stones, lands, water and plants, as befits (his) +spiritual merits; in the degree and portion of their strength (resulting) from that righteous man’s achievement of good works, that righteous man is worthy of pleasure and obtains good reputation, and what is seemly and fitting and constant comfort with no pain. He is also so joyful that no example is +wht (?) in the world from the beginning, but (that happiness) comes to those who are in heaven and those in Garōdmān in such a way that even the highest worldly happiness and pleasure were no comparison” (Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, 30:19).

According to *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, Paradise and Hell are in two different directions. Paradise, in comparison with Hell, which is downward, is upward (*ulīh*). After going to the bridge, all righteous souls ascend to Heaven from there with the power of their good thoughts, good words and good deeds. It consists of different stations. The first station begins from earth to the stars and is called *star pāyag* (star station), then from star station to the moon which is called *māh pāyag* (moon station) and the third one from moon station to the sun which is called *xwaršēd pāyag* (sun station) and finally the last station which begins from sun station and is *a-sar-rōšnīh* (endless light). Souls dwell in different stations in happiness and comfort according to their deeds in the material world (Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dd.*, 33:2).

Wahišt (Paradise) is the place where *ahlawān* (the righteous) reside. It is called *pāhlom axwān ašōān* (the best existence). It is the highest place in the world above, a place which is the most beautiful, without stink and contamination. It is all light and brightness, the most desirable

residence which is full of comfort and happiness. It is safe and because of this there is no fear of evil in heaven.

“...that (it is) high, exalted, and supreme, most splendid, most fragrant, and most pure, and most beautiful, most desirable, and best, and (it is) the place (and) dwelling of yazdān. And in it there are all comforts and pleasures, delight and bliss and goodness exceeding even the greatest and highest goodness (and) comfort in the world” (Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, 25:2-3).

To portray Paradise, it is better to mention some of its descriptions according to *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, Chapter 25:¹⁴⁹

Ulīg (upward direction), *abrāzīg* (ascending), *bālistīg* (exalted), *rōšntom* (the most bright), *hu-bōytom* (the most fragrant), *pāktom* (the purest), *hu-cihrihāto* (the most beautiful), *abāyišnīgto* (the most fitting, the most suitable), *wehtom* (the best), *gyāg māništ ī yazdān* (the dwelling deities, place of gods), *hamāg āsānīh rāmišnīh šēdāyīh* (all comfort, pleasure, blessing), *abardom nēkīh rāmišn* (highest goodness and pleasure), *u-š nēst ēc niyāz ud dard bēš ud duš-xwārīh* (in it there is no need, pain, sorrow or difficulty).

While a righteous soul is in pleasure and happiness, a wicked soul is in sorrow and suffering. It is sad because he has been deceived by *Ahremen*; therefore, it asks for mercy, but *Ohrmazd*'s answer will not come until the time of the resurrection (Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dd.*, 18:6). After it falls into Hell from the bridge, demon *Wizarš* chains the soul and drags it to Hellfire. There all the sins that the wrong doer has committed in the material world are personified in satanic and demonic forms such as: destroyer, ruiner, murderer, criminal, dirty people, shameless people, noxious animals, stinky winds, darkness, burning foul smoke, thirst, hunger and many other demons who torment the soul in Hell. All these torments and punishments continue till the renovation (Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dd.*, 31: 2-8).

In Hell, *Wizarš* introduces the soul to *Ahremen* and other demons. When the soul meets *Ahremen* and other demons, it regrets because of the sins that it has committed in the material world, it wishes it could go back to the material world to compensate the mistakes (Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dd.*, 31:5). It is given the most decayed, contaminated, disgusting food. It must eat this because of the everlasting thirst, hunger and greed. It will be in suffering and its punishments continue until renovation before *rist-āxēz tā fraš (a)gird* (resurrection) (Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dd.*, 31:6).

“...He is regretful of the delusion of +lust and desire, and from hell he remembers again the material world, and he has a great desire for good deeds” (Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, 31:5).

“And his food is similar to the most fetid, most rotten, most polluted, and most unpleasant food in the world; and he does not eat with delight (and) fulfilment, but he is impelled by need, which is due to greed, and is kept hungry and thirsty... because of that sin. He has no satisfaction, but his oppression increases and (so does) the length of his pain and punishment and oppression. His place in hell is not limited, (but) before the resurrection until the time of renovation (he is) in hell” (Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, 31:6-8).

¹⁴⁹ Mahmoud Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* (Paris: Association Pour l'Avancement des Études Iraniennes, 1998), 85-87.

Dādestān ī Dēnīg illustrates Hell as a descending (*nigūnīg*) abyss. It is located in the north (*abāxtarīg*), under the earth (*azērīg ī ēn zamīg*). The gate of Hell is located on the earth; it is called the Head of the *Arezūr* (*arezūr kamāl*), and all the demons in the world gather on the peak of it.

“...there is a place which is called the neck of +*Arezūr*, a mountain within that same mountain (range) bearing the name of *Arezūr*, which among (all) the mountains is said in the religion to have the greatest fame with the demons, because the demons in the material world rush and gather on the top of that mountain, so that it is called the head of *Arezūr*” (Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, 32:6).

Hell or the worst existence (*dušox*) is the dwelling of *druwandān* (the sinful people); it is the worst place that can be imagined. Hell is located under the ground and is full of darkness and stink. There is no comfort or pleasure in it. It is the house of the arch-demon and his companions, from where all pains and sorrows come to the world. The characteristics of Hell according to the 26th chapter of *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* are: *Frōdīg* (down), *zōfāyīg* (depth), *nigūnīg* (downward direction), *tārīktom* (the most dark), *gandagtom* (the most stinking), *sahmgēntom* (the most terrible), *an-abēdāntom* (the most unwanted), *wattom* (the worst), *gyāg ud gilistag ī dēwān ud druzān* (the dwelling and home of the demons), *u-š nēst andar ēc āsānīh ud xwašīh ud urwāmīh* (there is no comfort, pleasure and delight in it), *hamāg gandagīh ud rēmanīh dard ud pādīfrāh bēš ud zarīg ud anāgīh ud duš-xwārīh* (it is all stench, filth, pain, retribution, sorrow, grief, harm and misfortune).¹⁵⁰

Hell is divided into three parts. The first one is called *Hamēstagān*, a place mingled with evil and the evil in it is more than goodness. It is *sahmgēn* (terrible), *tārīk* (dark) with *garān anāgīh* (a lot of harm). The second partition of Hell is called *Wattom axwān* (the worst existence); it is the dwelling of demons and full of torment, pain, anguish and foul (*anāgīh ud pādīfrāh*). The third partition is called *druzaskān*, which is full of demons and evil forces; it is all darkness (*tār*), harm (*anāgīh*) with heads of demons (*dēwān kamālīg*) (Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dd.*, 32:1-5).

- *Vizīdagīhā ī Zādisparam*

Paradise is a splendid residence with blessings like those of the material world. *Juwān Jam* depicts the residence of a righteous soul in his book: a place full of all kinds of bounties, the same as the material world but in huge amounts and with the best qualities. It is a land with a lot of houses with different stories:

“The land [there] is similar to a land with houses, [well-lit] houses, with houses inside and outside, with upper stages and lower stages that is harmonious with nature and is the most pleasing to the soul” (Rashed-Mohassel, *Vizīdagīhā ī Zādisparam*, 30:54).

The houses are located in gardens (*urwar kirb*) through which fountains (*āb kirb*) run. There grow many different trees and blossoms. In the houses, fire (*ātaxš kirb*) glints, and a sweet fragrance comes from the flowers; all the houses have been decorated with precious stones (*sag kirb and ayōšust kirb*) in which there are costly garments; man can find beasts (*gōspand kirb*), fishes and birds (*murw kirb*) that sing delightfully; as the dwellers enjoy drinking milk and eating meat, milk, meat and different kinds of butter are served in these dwellings to make the pious

¹⁵⁰ Mahmoud Jaafari-Dehaghi, *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* (Paris: Association Pour l’Avancement des Études Iraniennes, 1998), 87-89.

soul happy; wind blows (*wād kirb*) everywhere, such a wind that spreads fragrance across the lands (Rashed-Mohassel, *Zādisparam*, 30:55-59). Male figures for souls (*mard kirb*) are similar to fathers for children, brothers for brothers, sons for sons and companions for companions, and the female figures (*kanīg kirb*) are like mothers, sisters, daughters and wives who nurse souls and take care of them (Rashed-Mohassel, *Zādisparam*, 30:60-61).

- Pahlavi Rivāyāt

The realm of spirits is located above the earth. As the author of *Pahlavi Rivāyāt* describes it, the Hereafter stands above this material world; they are firmaments over firmaments. Heaven is divided into three stations; the first one is from the earth to the star station which is called *hamēstagān*, the next is from the star station to the sun station that is called *pāšom axwān* (the best existence) and finally there is *asar-rōšnīh* (the endless light) or *garōdmān* (the house of song) which is from the sun station to the heavens (Williams, *Pah. Riv. Dd.*, 65:1).

Paradise is the result of good deeds by the righteous souls, and Hell is the result of the evil deeds of the wicked. Meanwhile, there is an intermediate level between Paradise and Hell for those whose righteous and evil deeds are equal, and for this reason, they neither go to Hell nor to Paradise. A third dwelling is devoted to such people according to the *Pahlavi Rivāyāt*; these people all go to the star station which is called *hammistagān*.

“This also (is) revealed in the Avesta, that from the earth to the star station (is) Limbo; from the star to the sun station (is) the best existence; from the sun station to the heavens (is) the Endless Light, and Garōdmān (is) in the Endless light” (Williams, *The Pahlavi Rivāyāt*, Part. II, 65:2).

- Šad Dar-e Naṣr, Šad Dar-e Bundahiš

After death, souls will be divided into three groups. First, the righteous, who go to Paradise; the second group are the evil-doers who enter Hellfire. There is another group, whose virtues and sins are equal. They will enter neither Paradise nor Hell, they go to a place which is called *Hammistagān*, a place between Heaven and Hell. It is implied that *Hammistagān* is a part of Paradise, because it says:

“For it is said in the religion that when they have performed patet [repentance] and have repented the sins they have committed, the door of hell is shut against them and they do not go to hell. When at the head of the Chinvat Bridge, punishment has been inflicted on them the more completely, then, thereafter, in proportion to their crimes they are carried from the Heaven-station to Hammistagān between Heaven and Hell and, they remain there up to the resurrection and future existence” (Dhabhar, *Šad Dar-e Bundahiš*, 99: 27-28).

Paradise has different sections that are over one another; the higher, the closer to the station of *Ohrmazd*. It is stated that on the fourth night, as soon as the enumeration has been done, if the soul was righteous, with the first step it enters the star station, with the second step to the moon station, with the third step the sun station and finally with the fourth step the *garōdmān*.

“on the fourth night, it arrives from the world at the Činwad puhl. First it goes to the abode of fire (ādur-gāh); afterwards, one step reaches to the star station, the second step reaches to the moon station, the third step to the sun station, and with the fourth step it reaches the Činwad puhl, and they convey it to its own place” (Dhabhar, *Šad Dar-e Bundahiš*, 87:10-11).

- The Persian Rivāyats of Dārāb Hormazyār

Persian Rivāyats indicates in several sentences the place and status of Paradise, an intermediate status and Hell. Each of these accounts narrates a different story. For example, it is stated that Paradise consists of firmaments, one over another (*Riv.*, Vol. 2, p. 58).

It is also stated that there are seven Paradises with different names. The first one is *hammistagān* or the wind station (*bād pāyeh*), after that the star station (*setāreh pāyeh*), then the moon station (*māh pāyeh*), next the sun station (*xuršid pāyeh*), the fifth one is *garōdmān* (house of song), the sixth one is *axwān ašuān* (the dwelling of the righteous) and finally *anagr rušn* (infinite light). Moreover, it is said that the first station of Paradise is called the wind station, after that the sphere station (*spihr pāyeh*), the star station (*setāreh pāyeh*), the moon station (*māh pāyeh*), the sun station (*xuaršid pāyeh*), endless light (*asar rōšnīh*) and the last one is the house of song (*garōdmān*) where *Ohrmazd* sits on his throne (*Riv.*, Vol. 2, p. 58).

The Persian Rivāyats of *Dārāb Hormazyār* does not directly indicate the direction of Hell, there is some evidence to suggest its direction. It is stated that *Činwad puhl* is over Hell and *Hammistagān* is located above the bridge which is under the sky of the world (*Riv.*, Vol. 2, p. 61; p. 464). It can be concluded that Hell is located under the earth. The crux of the matter is surely that *Hammistagān* is under the sky and thus within the sphere of this world.

2.11 Mourning causes difficulty for the soul

On the basis of the sources drawn on in this project, mourning and lamentation are forbidden in Zoroastrianism.

- Ardā Wirāz Nāmag

Wirāz on his way deals with a great (*wuzurg*), mighty (*sēzdēn*) and hellish (*dušoxtar*) river; many souls are standing on its shore and cannot cross it. He asks his companions for the reason and they reply:

“This river is many tears which men shed from their eyes mourning their departed, and they mourn, grieve and cry, and shed tears unjustly, and this river increases. Those who are not able to cross are those for whom after their passing much lamentation, crying and mourning was made. And those < who cross > more easily are those who are less < lamented >. And tell those in the world: ‘While < you are > in the world do not unlawfully mourn and grieve and cry, for the souls of your departed shall receive that much harm and difficulty’” (Āmūzgār, *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag*, 16:4-7).

- Šad Dar-e Našr, Šad Dar-e Bundahiš

Mourning and lamentation are prohibited in Zoroastrianism; therefore, *Šad Dar Našr* strongly forbids the family and friends of the deceased to weep or cry. It is said that their tears will be amassed and form a river in the way of the soul and prevents it from moving forward (*Dhabhar, Šaddar Nr.*, 96:1-3).

2.12 Zarathustra’s ascension

Generally in all religions the ascension to Heaven and Hell or the abode of celestial beings can be traced. Such stories can be seen in the Bible and the Qur’ān and even the Mandaeans’ most sacred text, *Ginza*. In the Bible,¹⁵¹ one can find indications of the ascension of Ezekiel, Elias and Isaiah, and definitely in the Qur’ān the ascension of Prophet Muhammad too.

¹⁵¹ Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish & Christian Apocalypses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

They ascend to Heaven, where they can converse with celestial beings, taking their decrees for people or their ascension is considered by them as a witness of the truth of their assertion.

Pahlavi tradition is rich in such ascensions too. The most important one is the ascension of *Wirāz* to Paradise and Hell, as one of the most important eschatological sources of Zoroastrianism. Another story of ascension is the ascension of the great Sasanian Priest, *Kartīr*, inscribed on a stone in *Naqš i Rağab*. In addition to the above-mentioned stories of ascension, *Vizīdagīhā ī Zādisparam* refers to the heavenly journey of Zarathustra, as the founder of Zoroastrianism, too. It states that Zoroaster ascended to the abode of the *mēnōgān*, when he was alongside the *Dāitī River* to draw water for ritual ceremony. He visited *Wahman Amahraspand*, who invited him to the assembly of *mēnōgān* “*abar raw ō hanjāman ī mēnōgān*” (Rashed-Mohassel, *Zādisparam*, 21:7). There, Zarathustra, visited *Ohrmazd*, *Amahraspands* and *Yazads*; they talked with him and he had some revelations. *Ohrmazd* showed him the first sky which is all greatness, and its brilliance “*be nimūd asmān pad wuzurg rōšnīh ud bām.u-š*” (Rashed-Mohassel, *Zādisparam*, 22:7).¹⁵² These all can be evidence for the idea of a kind of existence beyond this material world in Zoroastrianism, which is possible for some especial people to traffic between these two worlds.

¹⁵² Apparently, this ascension took place several times as Selections of Zadsparam states, see Rashed-Mohassel, *Vizīdagīhā ī Zādisparam*, pp. 69-71.

3 Mandaism

3.1 A brief view of Mandaism

Mandaism is “the last Gnostic religion surviving from the time of late antiquity”¹⁵³ with a limited number of followers mostly widespread in Iraq and Iran along rivers and other waterways.¹⁵⁴ In Iran and Iraq, they are known as *Ṣābī* (*Ṣubbī*) or *Muḡtasila*, but they prefer to present themselves with the title *Ṣābī ʾīn i Mandā ʾī* as followers of John the Baptist.¹⁵⁵ The word *manda*, a west Aramaic term, means knowledge,¹⁵⁶ and *Ṣābī* or *Ṣubbī* is derived from the root *ṣba*, which means to baptise, to immerse, dip in (Drower and Maculf, *Mandaic Dictionary*, 388). Because their rituals are mostly performed in running water, they are called *Ṣābeans*. Their language is one of the branches of the Aramaic language which is written in a special alphabet called *Ā, Bā, Gā, Dā*, after the first four letters of this writing system. Through the centuries, they have developed their religious literature in this language with this alphabet.

Mandaeans have a long but obscure history that often makes it difficult for scholars to talk with certainty about their origin. However, it is certain that Mandaeans have been in contact with different religious systems such as Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Manicheanism and Islam through their history. Mandaeans mostly try to make a parallel historical background with the Jews and Jewish history; it is stated that they are originally Egyptians who migrated to Mesopotamia and then Iran.¹⁵⁷

Through the centuries, Mandaeans have produced a considerable body of literature including ritual texts, prayers, hymns, theological and mythical writings, treatises, legends, magical texts and illustrated scrolls. When and where these texts were written is difficult to say, but it is stated by some scholars that they mostly found their final compilation in the 7th and 8th centuries CE in Babylon,¹⁵⁸ although some of the evidence suggests that Mandaeans started to compile their sources from the 3rd century CE on.¹⁵⁹ Mandaean scriptures are categorised by

¹⁵³ Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley, *The Great Stem of Souls: Reconstructing Mandaean History* (New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2005), 1.

¹⁵⁴ In recent years, some of them have immigrated to North America, Europe and Australia because of war and some other difficulties.

¹⁵⁵ Being confronted with Muslims, Mandaeans had to decide to convert to Islam, proving to be the People of the Book and paying poll tax or being killed as infidels, so by introducing Ginza as their Holy Scripture and revering John as their prophet, they rescued themselves, and because of this they are known as followers of the John the Baptist up to now.

¹⁵⁶ E. S. Drower, R. Macuch, *A Mandaic Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 247.

¹⁵⁷ For more information about Mandaeans' self-historiography, it is necessary to look at the Mandaean scroll of Haran Gawaita, a scroll about the origin and history of Mandaeans, full of myths and stories that are difficult to prove. See E. S. Drower, *The Haran Gawaita and Baptism of Hibil-Ziwa* (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1953).

¹⁵⁸ Kurt Rudolph, *Die Mandäer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), 23.

¹⁵⁹ Geo Widengren, “Die Mandäer,” in *Der Mandäismus*, ed., Geo Widengren (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982), 2; Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley believes that Mandaeans began to compile their manuscript from the 3rd century CE on the basis of the information provided by colophons at the end of each

Mandaean technical terminology; the most prevalent terms are: *ktaba* (writing), *draša* and *sidra* (both mean book), *šapta* (scroll), *da* (manuscript, but literally hand) and *kurasa* (loose-leaf manuscript).¹⁶⁰ Some of these writings are presented on bowls, ceramics and metal instruments as amulets and magic texts.

3.1.1 Sources

Although Mandaeism is a religion with considerable sources from Late Antiquity till the early Islamic centuries, talking about the date of the Mandaean sources is difficult, and all estimations about their compilation date are conjectures on the basis of historiographies by followers of other religions, historical evidence and colophons of Mandaic manuscripts. In this section, the sources that contain indications as to the individual eschatology are introduced.

Ginza: the most important book for Mandaeans is *Ginza Raba* (*the Great Treasure*) or *Sidra Rba* (*the Great Book*), which consists of two parts, the Right Ginza (*ginza iamina*) and the Left Ginza (*ginza smala*). Traditionally, upon reading the end of the Right Ginza, one should turn the book upside down to find the Left Ginza which starts on the opposite side. Both Ginzas are divided into chapters about different subjects.¹⁶¹ The former contains mostly cosmological and material subjects, whereas the latter concentrates on the otherworldly existence and the fate of the soul after death (Book of Souls). *Ginza* has also an alternative name: The Book of Adam. Mandaeans believe that Ginza is a revelation to Adam, but it is obvious that sayings of John the Baptist can be seen in it too. It is difficult to talk about the date of Ginza, but Lidzbarski¹⁶² and Rudolph¹⁶³ believe that the compilation of Ginza and many other Mandaean manuscripts took place in the 7th and 8th centuries CE when Mandaeans needed to be recognised as People of the Book by early Muslims who conquered Mesopotamia and Iran.

Ginza Right: it discusses various subjects, such as praise of God, angels, morality, the story of creation, the Realm of Light and its deities, the Realm of Darkness and its beings, John and his teachings, the creation of man (Adam) and the soul, the wonders of the universe, liturgies, man and his soul, death and ascension to the next world, revelations, the history and end of the world.

Ginzā Left: while Ginza Right talks about different subjects and gives less information about the fate of the soul, Ginza Left can be called ‘Book of the Souls’ because it concentrates mainly on the adventures and events that happen to the soul after death. This part of Ginzā begins with the ascension of Adam to the Hereafter and what happens to Eve after Adam’s

manuscript About Ginza manuscripts and colophones see Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley, *The Great Stem of Souls: Reconstructing Mandaean History* (New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2005), 25-96.

¹⁶⁰ Jorunn. Jacobsen Buckley, *The Great Stem of Souls: Reconstructing Mandaean History* (New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2005), 2.

¹⁶¹ Lidzbarski has divided Ginza right into 18 chapters (books) and the left one into 3 chapters (books), but the English translation of Ginza Right is divided into 19 chapters (books) and the left one into 3 chapters (books). All the translations of Ginza in this research are after the English translation of Ginza. It is worth mentioning that the English translation of the Ginza lacks those parts that oppose Judaism, Christianity and Islam which have been translated in the German translation of Ginza.

¹⁶² Mark Lidzbarski, *Ginzā Ders Schatz oder das Grosse Buch der Mandäer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1925), XIII.

¹⁶³ Kurt Rudolph, *Die Mandäer: Prolegomena, Das Mandäerproblem* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), 23.

ascension and continues with man's death and how the soul leaves the body and the fate of the righteous souls and wicked in the Hereafter.

Sidra d-nišmata: it means literally the book of souls. As its title says, it is about the ascension of the soul after death and ascending to the Realm of Light. This book is recited in the *masiqta*¹⁶⁴ ceremony, a baptismal liturgy to commemorate the deceased with ritual practices. *Sidra d-nišmata*¹⁶⁵ consists of 150 chapters, which from Chapter 49 on deal with the soul's ascension. It is mainly a series of liturgies that are recited in death ceremonies while death rituals are performed.

Mandaean Book of John: The Mandaean Book of John is mainly called *adrašia d-malkia* (*Book or Recitations of Kings*), or *adrašia d-iahia* (*Recitations of John*). Mandaeans believe in this book as a revelation to John that contains some teachings of John (*iahia iuhana*), one of the most important figures in Mandaeanism. It consists of different subjects such as the story of the creation of the universe, John's birth and his doctrines, beliefs and morality. In addition to these subjects, there are some indications as to the fate of the soul at the time of death and the Afterlife. It is stated that this title was given to the book because of the importance of John for Muslims¹⁶⁶ in order to be recognised as the People of Book like Jews and Christians by Muslims; however, the materials of this book can be divided into two groups: the old materials like moral teachings and myths, and the materials that are attributed to John from the 8th century CE.¹⁶⁷

Qulasta: One of the religious books of the Mandaeans which means collection; it is a collection of the baptism prayers, minor ablutions, *masiqata* prayers, offering prayers, coronation prayers in baptism and liturgies in marriage ceremonies. As is obvious, a part of the book deals with *masiqta*, the ceremony for the ascension of the soul of the deceased. Mostly, what *Qulasta* says about death, souls and their adventures is similar to what is said in the Book of the Souls (*Sidra d-nišmata*), but sometimes some other information is added. In this project, an effort is made to avoid repeating similar phrases that were discussed in the previous section under the Mandaeans' Book of the Soul; however, to cover the materials related to death, it is necessary to discover what *Qulasta* indicates about this subject. The date of the *Qulasta* compilation is uncertain, but some colophons make a pre-Islamic compilation of some of the texts possible.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ Masiqta consists of liturgies to be recited during a sacramental meal intended to assist the soul rise after death which is done by the clergies on the third day after death to help the soul to ascend to the Realm of Light. It is performed by four priests one of whom should be of the high-ranking priests. First, they should wear their ritual clothes and after that begin reciting prayers for the forgiveness of the deceased's soul. The ceremony is followed by eating and drinking sacred bread and water in addition to the consecration of the 60 small loaves of bread. The consecration of the bread is accompanied by sacrificing and eating dove meat and an especial drink, made of date extract and water, and finally the ritual hand shake by priests that ends the ceremony; see Kurt Rudolph, *Die Mandäer: Der Kult* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), 264-271; for more information about death and death ceremonies see E.S. Drawer, *The Mandaean of Iraq and Iran: Their Cults, Customs, Magic, Legends, and Folklore* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937), 178-224.

¹⁶⁵ All the quotations of the Sidra d-nišmata are from: Forūzandih, M. (1377). *Tahqīqī dar Dīn i Šābi 'n i Mandā'ī*, pp. 278-390 compared with its English translation in: <http://gnosis.org/library/ginzarba.htm#The%20Book%20of%20Souls> (accessed 31.01.2017).

¹⁶⁶ Mark Lidzbarski, *Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer* (Giessen: Verlag von Alfred Töpelmann, 1915), V-VI.

¹⁶⁷ Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley, *The Great Stem of Souls: Reconstructing Mandaean History* (New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2005), 225.

¹⁶⁸ Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley, *The Great Stem of Souls: Reconstructing Mandaean History* (New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2005), 279-280.

Diwan Abatur: It is an illustrated scroll which describes the fate of souls after death. In this book the deities and celestial beings are portrayed as strange geometrical-looking figures, because it is believed that celestial beings must be shown with a special design (they should not be drawn like human beings). So far, the Mandaean texts that have been reviewed mostly cover the fate of a righteous soul that will be released from obstacles and finally reaches the Land of Light; in contrast, *Diwan Abatur* deals with the fate of wicked souls and their destiny after death.

As the title indicates, this book is named after *Abatur*, an outstanding Mandaean genie sitting between the purgatories and the worlds of light,¹⁶⁹ weighing souls in his scales. Abatur functions as the judge of the souls in his land, on the borders of the Realm of Light that plays the role of pass control. If the soul is a righteous soul,¹⁷⁰ then it will be permitted to enter the House of Light; and if not, it will be sent to the purgatories to be purified there. The purgatories are named after both the planets that are considered evil beings by Mandaeans, and also some of the pure Mandaean beings.¹⁷¹

Alf Trisar Šuialia (The Thousand and Twelve Questions): It is the longest Mandaean treatise that is not intended for laymen of the Mandaean community. This treatise provides a detailed picture of the history of religion, rites, cosmogony and beliefs. The teachings of this scroll are considered secrets that are given to the young priests at their initiation. It is full of similes and allegories to teach the secrets of knowledge indirectly to the initiates of the priestly order who are thirsty to gain it.

Since the sayings of this text cannot be divided under each of the topics of this study, they are presented separately under the title of ‘Death in the Book of *Alf Trisar Šuialia*’ at the end of this chapter.

There are also some other texts and scrolls such as *Diwan Haran Gawaita*, which gives some information about the history and race of Mandaeans; *Alam rišaia rba* (The Great First World) and *Alma rišaia zuṭa* (The Small First World), *Diwan of the Rivers (Diwan nabrawata)*, which gives some information about the Mandaeans’ geographical viewpoints; and a book which helps priests choose religious names for the Mandaean community according to the Zodiac and horoscopy, the Book of the Signs of the Zodiac (*sfar malwašia*).¹⁷²

3.1.2 Mandaeans: beliefs, cosmology and practices in brief

To illustrate the Mandaean view of death, it is useful to consider the Myth of Creation which sheds light on the origin of body and soul according to the Mandaean tradition. Mandaean

¹⁶⁹ According to the story of creation, there are three nested worlds of light, each one of which consists of several smaller worlds of light; totally, they amount to 46,785,960 worlds of light.

¹⁷⁰ Grammatically and according to the Mandaean tradition, soul ‘*nišimta, nišmata*’ is grammatically a feminine word; therefore, in translations the pronoun ‘she’ is used.

¹⁷¹ The number of Watch Houses is traditionally seven; however, *Diwan Abatur* names more Watch Houses, in addition to the seven Watch Houses according to the number of seven planets. Planets are: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, Venus, Moon, Sun; Mandaean beings that some Watch House are named after them are: Ptahil and his sons: Bihram, Anuš, Hibil, Ginziel or Kanziel, Nbaṭ, Šitil and the saviour-spirit the personified Sunday.

¹⁷² All the members of Mandaean society have two names: a name that the person is called by it in the society and a religious name different from the name by which he is called in the society. This name is chosen after the Zodiacs and horoscope of each person by a priest. According to Mandaean religion, a child’s religious name is after his mother’s name not his father, for example X son or daughter of Y (his or her mother’s religious name).

cosmogony, cosmology and theology are simple and yet complicated. In the following paragraphs, this ambiguity will be explained. From the Mandaean viewpoint, there have been two realms at the same time since the beginning: the Realm of Light (*alma d-nhura*) above in the heights, and the Realm of Darkness (*alma d- hšuka*)¹⁷³ under it in the depths. Apparently, these two worlds are both pre-existing, and each has its own ruler: *Haiia*,¹⁷⁴ the ruler of the Realm of Light, and *Ruha*, the ruler of the Realm of Darkness. In the beginning Light was active, but Darkness was passive.

“...He [*Haiia*] is everlasting, without death, and omnipresent, without bounds. By his manifest light and perfect brilliance, he shines over all the universes...”¹⁷⁵

“As for the world of darkness, the world of evil and sin, it is a desolate and scary land. It is pushed far to the south, away from the world...it is a world of smoke and fire, flaws and shame...”¹⁷⁶

In the beginning, there was fruit (*pira*)¹⁷⁷ in the fruit, and ether (*aiar*)¹⁷⁸ in the ether. After that the great *Mana*¹⁷⁹ which is all light and life awakened and created many other *Manas*.¹⁸⁰ It is the first that creates countless *piras* and *škintas* (celestial dwellings). Then, by the will of *Mana*, the great *iardna*¹⁸¹ (running water) came into being and from it countless *iardnas* came into being too. When the great *Mana* faces water, it dwells in waters because its essence is like the essence of waters; they both are light and brightness. It is *Mana* that moves water and makes it alive; meanwhile, the Realm of Darkness is still passive. It is at this moment that darkness becomes aware of light, and light and darkness enter a dialogue.

Ginza gives different accounts of the beginning and the story of creation. In the previous paragraph we saw the brief version of the first account; in the second account, in addition to the above-mentioned story and terms, we come across some new terms and beings. Accordingly, from the Great *Iardna*, Life (*Haiia*) is born. He creates from himself some other celestial dwellings and some other Jordans. It is from Life that the Second Life (*Iušamin*)¹⁸² comes into being with his own Jordans and celestial habitats. It is from the Second Life that three *Uthras*

¹⁷³ Alma d-hšuka is also called *Siniauis* ‘underworld’ or *Supat* ‘lowest part of the earth’.

¹⁷⁴ Haiia is also known as the King of Light ‘*malka d-nhura*’.

¹⁷⁵ Qais Mughashghash Al-Saadi, Hamed Mughashghash Al-Saadi, trans., *Ginza Rabba: The Great Treasure, An equivalent translation of the Mandaean Holy Book* (Drabsha, 2012), 2.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 162.

¹⁷⁷ The meaning of Pira is uncertain and doubtful, but it has been translated to fruit, vagina (the reproduction organs are mentioned a lot in Mandaean sources symbolically). Accordingly the *Great Pira* is the origin of all things according to one of the accounts of creation in Ginza, and the pre-emanational fruit; it is the primal entity and symbol of fertility.

¹⁷⁸ It is the rarest and purest element of creation, and the heavenly atmosphere in which the celestial beings dwell.

¹⁷⁹ Mana appears to be a work of Iranian origin, which in Mandaean sources has the meaning spirit, soul, mind and intelligence. It is the other worldly (transmundane) power of light; it is the soul and mind and the earliest manifestation of the Great Life (*haiia*).

¹⁸⁰ The story of creation has at least three accounts in *Ginza Rabba*. For more information see Sabah, Aldihisi, *The Story of Creation in the Mandaean Holy Book Ginza Rabba* (PhD Dissertation, University College London, 2013).

¹⁸¹ Madaeans call the rivers and streams *iardna* ‘Jordan’. The heavenly Jordan is the terrestrial river that descended from the celestial world that originates from the Great Mana.

¹⁸² The Second Life plays an important role in Madaeans story of creation. He creates the semi-physical world beneath the World of Light.

come into being and ask him to grant them permission to build their own Jordans and *Škintas* below the Streams of Water (*hapiqia mia/ apiqia mia*).¹⁸³ The Second Life grants them this permission and they create for themselves what they requested.

It is from the Second Life that the Third Life comes into being. The Third Life or *Abatur*¹⁸⁴ is called the father of *Uthras*.¹⁸⁵ His throne is placed at the gate of the House of Life, where he sits with scales before him weighing deeds and judges souls. By gazing at the Black Waters (*mia siauia*), the *Abatur* brings the Fourth Life (*Ptahil*)¹⁸⁶ into being, the demiurge who creates the physical world.

As we can observe, among Mandaeans, in addition to *Haiia*, three origins¹⁸⁷ can be seen. He (*Haiia*) creates three interconnected stages of light and calls it *alma d-nhura* (The World of Light), and appoints *malka d-nhura* (The King of Light) as its guardian. Each of these stages of the Realm of Light contains 360 worlds that each contains 360 other worlds. It is 60,000,000 years after the creation of the Third Life that the First Angel is created, and 7,700,000,000 years after the First Angels' creation, earth is created.

Earth was like a melting material, flaming and hot. To make it ready for life, Fresh Water was brought from the Realm of Light and was mixed with Dark Water. The combination of Fresh and Dark water resulted in life, plants and forests. *Ptahil* is the demiurge of Mandaeism. He creates man (*Adam*) from earth in his image, and his wife Eve in the image of the Queen of the Realm of Darkness, *Ruha*.¹⁸⁸ Adam, who was created by the fourth life, could not stand on his feet. All *Ptahil*'s efforts to make Adam stand were unsuccessful. It is by bringing a hidden *Mana*¹⁸⁹ from the Realm of Light that is cast into Adam and his wife Eve that finally they can stand on their feet as active and live creatures. The Mandaeans' Adam and Eve have three sons, *Hibil* (Abel), *Šitil* (Seth) and *Anuš* (Anoš) and three daughters whose names are not mentioned in Mandaean sources. It is worth mentioning that, since incest is forbidden in Mandaeism, three brothers and sisters from the Realm of Light, accompanied by 60 angels, are sent to the earth to marry Adam's sons and daughters.

¹⁸³ There are fresh waters that flow from the realm of the Second Life. They are above the House of Abatur and separate the world of light from the material world and world of darkness; a river which the souls have to cross in ships. Drower translates them into "Waters of Death," what I accept in the project, but because they are the frontiers of the World of Light and created by Light beings in which the souls of Mandaeans can baptise, Mandaeans do not accept such a translation. Compare it with Divider Bridge in Zoroastrianism.

¹⁸⁴ A mystery being in Mandaeism; he is the weigher of the souls to see if they may pass over into the Realm of Light. He is sitting in his house with scales and because of this he is called Abatur of scales *Abatur d-muzania*. His house is between Watch Houses 'maṭarta' and the world of light. Compare *Abatur* with *Mihr Yazad* and *Rašn Yazad* in Zoroastrianism.

¹⁸⁵ Eternal being, spirit of life light, they are like *Yazads* in Zoroastrianism. They cannot be rendered as god or angels, but they are associated with divine and worldly tasks.

¹⁸⁶ He is the demiurge in Mandaeism and is responsible for opening the Realm of Light into the world of darkness. It is worth mentioning that what he does is according to a mandate that he receives from his father *Abatur* who instructed him to build the material world (*tibil*).

¹⁸⁷ Sometimes these three beings of light are equalised with *Iupin Iupapin*, 'Sam Mana Smira, *Iušamin*, *Tree of Life* or as mentioned above *Iušamin*, *Abatur* and *Ptahil*, three celestial beings that the last one as a demiurge is in charge of the creation of world and mankind.

¹⁸⁸ It is also stated that *Ptahil* created Eve according to the image of Adam. At first he cast from his own spirit 'ruh' into Adam and his wife, but they could not stand up and move and then he asked his father *Abatur* for help. By a hidden *Mana* which was given to him from the world of light he could make them to stand.

¹⁸⁹ This hidden *Mana* is the soul or 'nišmta,' a divine being from the world of light that in the beginning of the creation hesitated to be casted into the body.

As mentioned, there is a counterpart for the ‘Realm of Light’ that is called ‘Realm of Darkness’. As Life (*haiia*) is called the King of Light, his rivals in the Realm of Darkness are *Ruha* and her sun/husband *Ur*. In contrast to the Realm of Light, which is connected to the Fresh Living Waters (*mia hiiia*), the Realm of Darkness is related to the Dark Waters (*mia siauia*).¹⁹⁰ It is full of evil spirits (*m (a)laka*),¹⁹¹ and is governed by *Ruha*. There is no indication of the beginning of the Realm of Light and the creation of the dark waters in Mandaean sources.

To oppose the good creation, *Ruha*¹⁹² creates the Seven Planets¹⁹³ (*šuba*’ or ‘*šibaihia*) and Twelve Constellations, by sleeping with her son *Ur*.¹⁹⁴ *Ur* is the prince of the Realm of Darkness. *Ruha*, *Ur*, the Planets, the Constellations and demons are the main enemies of humankind; and therefore they should be avoided by man. Evil forces are in the lowest part of the universe, which is full of stagnant waters and all sources of evil.¹⁹⁵

For Mandaeans, all the beings of the Realm of Light are important and deserve to be invoked and appreciated. In all daily practices, rituals and celebrations, it is the beings of light that are worshipped. As mentioned above, *Haiia*’s abode is at the peak of the cosmos. *Haiia* (Life) is the king of light and the most important being in Mandaeism. He is the source of being and creation. From him life came into being in different phases. After *Haiia*, there are spiritual beings, ‘*utra* (angels or heavenly spirits) and particles of light (*aira ziua*) as celestial beings that are revered. These deities are busy creating and looking after the creatures, Mandaean souls and rivers; they are also bountiful and bestow *Haiia*’s mercy to the creation. They are illuminated beings that are sometimes invoked in prayers. They are *Haiia*’s agents with different duties in the divine or material world.

Regarding the importance of water in the story of creation, water plays an important role in Mandaean rites. Running Water (*iardna*)¹⁹⁶ is the source of life, the basic element for purification of body and spirit, the renewer of youthfulness and the essence of life; consequently, it is located in the overarching Heaven. All the earthly waters originate from the heavenly waters; therefore, baptising with them results in connection with the world of light and life. It is the importance of water that makes baptism the most important rite for Mandaeans, a rite that makes both body and soul pure. The most important religious practice in Mandaeism is baptism in living water which is called (*mašbuta*).¹⁹⁷ It is mainly accompanied by eating sacred bread

¹⁹⁰ Water can be seen in both of the realms of light and darkness with different names. For example, in Realm of Light runs living water (*mia hii*) or shining and glittering water (*mia ‘ria urauzia*), while in Realm of Darkness it is black water (*mia siauia*) or stinking water (*mia sariia*) that flows. It is the fresh water that finally gives life to the black waters and causes the creation of the life on earth.

¹⁹¹ In contrast to *Uthra*, *Malkas* are sometimes good and sometimes evil beings; therefore, Mandaeans avoid using the word *malka* for divine beings except ‘*malka d-nhūra*,’ which designates the King of Light.

¹⁹² She is the queen of darkness and dwells in the first underworld. She is the mother of the seven planets, twelve signs of the zodiac and five planets. *Ruha* is the leader of the underworld forces and the ruler of one of the purgatories or watch houses.

¹⁹³ Planets are evil in Zoroastrianism as well.

¹⁹⁴ He is the king of darkness, sometimes he is a huge reptile where his dragon nature appears and sometimes he is like a snake biting its tail. His nature is from black waters and emerges through his own evil nature.

¹⁹⁵ For more information about the creation and cosmology in Mandaeism, see *Rudolph Kurt, Theogonie, Kosmogonie und Anthropogonie in den mandäischen Schriften* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965).

¹⁹⁶ As mentioned earlier, in Mandaeism *iardna* (Jordan) is either a divine river that all the waters come from it, and it is also a title for all the running waters on the earth that are sources of light and purity, because they all originated from the celestial Jordan.

¹⁹⁷ For more information about *mašbūtā* see Eric Segelberg, *Mašbūtā: Studies in the Ritual of the Mandaean Baptism* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1958).

(*pihta*) and drinking sacred water (*mabūhā*), which takes place on Sundays (*habšaba*) and special religious festivals. In addition to *mašbuta* as the most important baptism ceremony, two other forms of ablution are performed that are called (*rišama*) and (*tamaša*).¹⁹⁸

The Realm of Light is located in the north and the Realm of Darkness in the south. Between the Realm of Light and the Realm of Darkness there is an intermediate level which is the material world (*tibil*). It is created by *Ptahil*, a demiurge whose origin is from both of the realms of light and darkness; he is son of *Abatur* who as a result of looking at the Realm of Darkness caused the creation of his son. This world is the product of the mixture of fresh and dark waters, a combination of good and evil; surrounded by planets and constellations as evil beings, neither light nor dark, but a combination of these two. The earthly world is the abode of man, and beneath it is called *siniauis* or *alma d- hšuka* which means the Realm of Darkness, but from earth upward is the Realm of Light (*alma d-nhura*). It is the abode of the celestial being. As mentioned earlier, the Realm of Light consists of three interconnected abodes. The lowest one is the border of the earthly world and the Realm of Light wherein *Abatur muzania* (*Abatur* of the Scales) as the judge of souls dwells. Above the House of *Abatur* is *mšunia kušta*¹⁹⁹ wherein all the prototypes of all the material beings and things live; in other words, it is the world of ideas, and finally, it is the peak of the Realm of Light that is called *uškinta Haiia*, which means the House of *Haiia*.

To sum up the dualistic viewpoint of Mandaism, it is best to quote what the Mandaeans' Book of John states about the two rulers of the universe; one with a crown of light on his head and *Kušta* (on this see further below) in his hand in one side, and on the other side, one with a crown of darkness on his head and a sword in his hand. The former gives life to his children, while the latter kills his children.

*“Zwei Könige waren da; zwei Naturen wurden geschaffen; ein König dieser Welt und ein König von außerhalb der Welten. Der König dieser Zeitalter legte ein Schwert und eine Krone von Finsternis an. Eine Krone von Finsternis setzte er sich auf und nahm ein Schwert in seine Rechte. Ein Schwert nahm er in seiner rechte, er steht da und tötet seine Söhne, und seine Söhne töten einander. Der König von außerhalb der Welten setzte sich eine Krone von Licht auf. Eine Krone von Licht setzte er sich auf und nahm die Kuštā in seine Rechte. Die Kuštā nahm er in seine Rechte und steht da und belehrt seine Söhne. Er steht da und belehrt seine Söhne, und seine Söhne belehren sich gegenseitig.”*²⁰⁰

3.1.3 The Mandaeans' perspective on death and the fate of the soul

The perspective on death in Mandaism is related to the two pre-existing forces and the story of man's creation. As was stated earlier, this world is the result of combination of the fresh water and dark water by a demiurge that was the result of the relation between one of the light beings and the queen of Realm of Darkness. The demiurge created man but he was not able to make him stand up on his feet; it was an endowment from the celestial being (*mana*) that was

¹⁹⁸ There are different types of baptism, for example: Baptism of a newborn child; baptism of a newly marriage couple before and after marriage; public baptism on public religious holidays; baptism because of touching the deceased and baptism because of menstruation.

¹⁹⁹ It is the ideal and the spiritualised counterpart of this world, something like *mēnōg* in Zoroastrianism.

²⁰⁰ Mark Lidzbarski, *Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer* (Giessen: Verlag von Alfred Töpelmann, 1915), 55.

cast into the body and vitalised Adam's body.²⁰¹ Apparently, soul (*mana*) or (*nišimta*)²⁰², a life-giving being, is a heavenly being that in the beginning hesitated to enter the material body. As the soul descended, it was accompanied by angels; they assured it about its status in the material world.

“From the place of light, I have come. From you, the perfect place, I have come. An uthra from the house of Hayyi accompanied me: an uthra with a Margana staff²⁰³ of living water in his hand. The margna staff abounded with splendid leaves; he gave me some, so I felt greatly glorified. He gave some of them to me again; I was healed, and felt secure and at peace. He gave some of them to me for a third time, and I felt stable without any anxiety. I saw my father, and recognised him. I asked him three questions: I asked him for peace, security, and for a rest without disturbance; I asked him for a soul, fit for both the old and young; I asked him for a smooth path to the place of light”²⁰⁴

In addition to the soul and body, Mandaean sources introduce a third element that is called *ruha*²⁰⁵ (Vital Spirit).²⁰⁶ This third element co-operates with soul and body; they stay together for a while, but are detached by death. Through the death rituals for the deceased performed by the survivors, they will be reunited together in the spiritual world.

It is true that soul is from the Realm of Light as an endowment from God, but this does not mean that the soul returns to the house from which it came. After leaving the material world, each soul will be enumerated to see its virtues and depravities, the former of which lead it to the Realm of Light and the latter to the Land of *Ruha* (*arqa d-ruha*).

“Do not you realise that your wrongdoings will reflect upon you, and that you will be punished on account of what you have done?”²⁰⁷

“This is the fate of the bad grapes which do not bear fruit: Woe to the evil-doers! They sow sins, and will surely reap torture.”²⁰⁸

Entering the Realm of Light or the House of Darkness after death depends on man's deeds (moral and religious duties). Good deeds help the soul to pass all the Watch Houses, obstacles and judgment on its way to the celestial dwelling (*Škinta*) wherein the righteous will inherit a habitation of light (*andiruna*). Those souls who are heavy with good deeds will ascend

²⁰¹ Qais Mughashghash Al-Saadi Hamed, Mughashghash Al-Saadi, trans., *Ginza Rabba: The Great Treasure, An equivalent translation of the Mandaean Holy Book*, Right Volume (Drabsha, 2012), 58-61.

²⁰² *Nišimta* and *mana* are synonyms in Mandaean traditions.

²⁰³ It is the ritual staff of olive-wood, which should be held in hand by the priest while performing rituals. It is believed that the celestial beings hold the staff of living water in their hands, and because of this the priest should hold it.

²⁰⁴ Qais Mughashghash Al-Saadi, Hamed Mughashghash Al-Saadi, trans., *Ginza Rabba: The Great Treasure, An equivalent translation of the Mandaean Holy Book*, Right Volume (Drabsha, 2012), 198.

²⁰⁵ To distinguish *Ruha* (Queen of Darkness), it is written with small letter r.

²⁰⁶ It is stated that after entering the soul in body a third element was formed in the body: “For when the body was formed, a soul (*nišimta*) was formed, and when the soul took shape in the body, the body formed the Vital Spirit (*ruha*)...” in: E. S. Drower, trans., *The Thousand and Twelve Questions: Alif Trisar Šuialia* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1960), 164.

²⁰⁷ Qais Mughashghash Al-Saadi, Hamed Mughashghash Al-Saadi, trans., *Ginza Rabba: The Great Treasure, An equivalent translation of the Mandaean Holy Book*, Right Volume (Drabsha, 2012), 84.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 160.

easily, but those whose bad deeds are heavier ascend with difficulty, so they will be separated to atone for their sins.²⁰⁹

As mentioned, when the demiurge created man, he could not stand on his feet; it was the soul that helped him and made him movable. However, at first it hesitated to enter the body because of the material world, so it can be concluded that for Mandaean death is not an evil phenomenon, but a redeemer. If soul continues keeping its initial purity during life in the material world, death enables it return to its origin.²¹⁰ This viewpoint can be seen in the Mandaean Book of Souls which reminds the soul that she does not belong to the filthy material world. According to this book, the material world is full of hatred, jealousy, pain and sins; it is death that releases her from all these miseries and helps her to ascend.

“Hail to thee, hail to thee, soul that hast departed from the world! Thou leavest corruption and the stinking body In which thou hast been: (thou leavest) Its abode, the abode of the wicked, The place which is all sinning, The world of darkness, Of hatred, jealousy and dissensions, The abode in which the planets go about, Bringing pains and blemishes, Pains they bring, and blemishes, Every day causing them tribulation. Rise up, rise up, soul! Ascend to thy first homeland. Rise, rise to thy first homeland, the place from which thou wast transplanted to the place from which thou wast transplanted, to thy good dwelling, (the dwelling) of ‘uthras, Bestir thyself! don thy garment of glory And set on thy living wreath. Rise! Inhabit the S’kintas Amongst the ‘uthras, thy brethren. As thou hast learnt, praise thy first Home; And curse this place, the house of thy fostering; For (during) the years that thou didst spend therein Every day the Seven were thine enemies, The Seven were thine enemies and the Twelve Beset thee with persecution. Renowned is Life and victorious, And victorious the man who hath gone thither.” (The Book of Souls, Chap. 94)²¹¹

When man’s measure becomes full, God sends him his angels to release the soul. Two angels are in charge of this mission: *Ṣaur’i (i)l* or *Qmimir ziua*.²¹² However, in one case it is *hibil ziua*, who is originally the saviour of the spirit, who plays the role of the psychopomp and

²⁰⁹ Qais Mughashghash Al-Saadi, Hamed Mughashghash Al-Saadi, trans., *Ginza Rabba: The Great Treasure, An equivalent translation of the Mandaean Holy Book, Right Volume* (Drabsha, 2012), 68-69.

²¹⁰ Although the soul is originally from the Realm of Light, it can return to its real home provided that it has led a pious life on the earth.

“Go in peace, O chosen, pure, and innocent one; you are without impurities. Your place was upon this earth, but your destiny ascended from its struggles. You said, ‘I am a seer, diviner’; then you passed the ages, and passed the worlds of darkness, so go forth in peace” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, p.52).

²¹¹ Mas’ūd Forūzandih, *Dīn i Ṣābi’īn i Mandā’ī* (Tehrān: Intishārāt i Samāṭ, 1377), 1: 386; and for its English translation see <http://gnosis.org/library/ginzarba.htm#The Book of Souls> (accessed September 16, 2015).

²¹² Mostly, it is *Ṣaur’i (i)l* that releases souls from body; however, this task has been assigned to *Qmimir ziua* three times in *Ginza* (Gs, 2:3; 3:17, 24; 4:12, after the German translation of *Ginza*, see Mark Lidzbarski, *Ginzā Ders Schatz oder das Grosse Buch der Mandäer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1925); and once in Mandaean Book of John (Jb, 232:6), see Mark Lidzbarski, *Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer* (Giessen: Verlag von Alfred Töpelmann, 1915); Diwan Abatur states names the Angel of Death ‘slaughterer’ that has three steering-paddles: “The name of one is *Nafqiel* and the name of *Yawar* is engraved upon it, incised all round it. The name of another, *Samandriel*, is graven upon it, and the name of another is *Gatliel*, and the name of *Yukabar* is graven thereon. These three steering-paddles are assigned to *Ṣaur’i (i)l* the slaughterer (Drower, *Diwan Abatur*, 39-40).

takes John's soul.²¹³ After leaving the material world, the soul stays on earth and wanders between its grave and its house for three days. Next, it starts its journey towards Heaven, which lasts forty-five days.²¹⁴ During these days, it confronts some obstacles and in some places it will be interrogated by demons. There are also some Watch Houses (*maṭaraia* or *maṭrata*) that are controlled by Demons for the task of testing and punishing wicked souls. These watch houses play the role of the house of detention or purgatories wherein wicked souls will be tortured and purified according to the sins that they have committed in the material world. However, there are some souls that will not be purified by any means; they are those souls that will be sent to the Realm of Darkness, the lowest part of the universe, far from light until the last day. Leaving behind all these obstacles, the soul arrives at the House of *Abatur*, *Abatur* of scales (*Abatur d-muzania*).

The House of *Abatur* is the first stage of the *mšunia kušta* and is the gate of the Realm of Light. *Abatur* is one of the angels of the Realm of Light and is responsible for weighing man's deeds, whether it be a pious soul or a wicked one. After being weighed,²¹⁵ the pious and righteous soul will be able to enter the Realm of Light, where it will be accompanied by its ancestors; otherwise, it will be sent back to the purgatories to become pure enough to enter the House of Light. After being judged in the House of *Abatur*, the soul confronts a river (*Hafiqia mia*) that it must cross. If it is a pious soul, a boat helps it to cross the river; otherwise, it must walk into it.

Life-taker	The status of the soul at the time of death	Interrogation, judges and place of interrogation	The reflection of deeds in the Afterlife	The final habitat
<i>Šaur'i (i)l</i> and/or <i>Qmamiṛ ziua</i>	Soul is surrounded by good and evil forces.	Soul is interrogated in <i>maṭrata</i> (the Watch Houses), and in the House of <i>Abatur</i> by the genie <i>Abatur</i>	They appear in the form of beautiful or ugly companions, heavenly means of salvation or helps from celestial beings	Realm of Light Watch Houses Realm of Darkness

The story of the soul according to Mandaean sources

In the following parts, all details relevant to the fate of the soul after leaving the material world will be conveyed in details according to the relevant Mandaean sources.

3.2 The adventures of the soul according to Mandaean sources

3.2.1 Death, an inevitable fact

Ginza Right states that *Haiia* is the life-giver, but life is not eternal and death is inevitable: "All that is born will die. All that which is made by hands will be corrupted; the

²¹³ This story can be seen in 'Yuhana's Ascent to the World of Light' (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, pp.99-105).

²¹⁴ E. S. Drower, trans., *The Thousand and Twelve Questions: Alif Trisar Šuialia* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1960), 190.

²¹⁵ The measure for weighing souls is the heart of Šitil son of Adam, who died instead of his father and entered the Realm of Light.

whole world will perish” (Al-Saadi, *GR.*, p. 15). Ginza asks man to give alms (*zidqa*) and donations (*tabuta*) and act in accordance with the will of *Haiia* by, for example, avoiding adultery, magic and cheating to support life after death.

3.2.2 Seth’s death according to the Left Ginza

The Left Ginza states the adventures of the soul after death by covering the story of Adam’s death. *Haiia* is sitting on his throne and observing Adam who is in the material world. Adam has lived 1000 years and it is his time to leave his body. *Haiia* orders *Şaur‘i (i)l*, the Angel of Death, to help the soul to depart the body. Because death is inevitable and nothing and no one can intercede to postpone it, so the angle of death obeys *Haiia* and goes to Adam. He reminds Adam of his nature and the endowments that have been granted to him by the world of light:

“You were dumb; we made you able to speak. You were deaf; we made you able to hear. You were ignorant; we made you knowledgeable. You were lonely; we made you sociable” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, p. 2).

The Angel of Death asks Adam to leave the material body before he becomes incapable and weak, but Adam wishes he could live 1000 years more. The Angel of Death ascends to the abode of *Haiia* and shares Adam’s wish with him. *Haiia* asks *Şaur‘i (i)l* to go back to Adam and to remind him of the disadvantages of old age. He wants Adam not to be mocked by his children and other problems of age:

“You are a wise human being, but your Lord knows all. He does not want you to become senile or disabled so that your children make a fool of you. Come; die as if you were never created. Come, die before you become weak and humiliated. Let your soul return back to the house, the house of her father, her lord and creator” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, p. 4).

Whatever *Haiia* does to take Adam’s soul is irremediable. Adam insists on remaining in the material world and asks the Angel of Death to take the soul of his son *Şitil* (Seth) instead, although he is younger than Adam. *Haiia* asks the Angel of Death to go to *Şitil* to know if he is ready to die and to return to the great home from which his soul comes. Seth reminds the Angel of Death of his age (he is too young to die) and asks him to take his father, but *Şaur‘i (i)l* says to him that his father wanted him to take his son’s soul instead of his own. Seth obeys *Haiia* and leaves the material body. He puts on the garment of light, puts the crown on his head and ascends to the Realm of Light and praises God:²¹⁶

“Then he arose and removed the body of flesh and blood, and put on the body of brightness and light. He put on the luminous, splendid clothes, covered his head with the pure turban, and ascended to the World of Light, surrounded by the Uthri and angels. He ascended, to be seated upon a cloud of light. He prayed abundantly, made abundant praise, and said, ‘Praise be to you, my Lord! As you removed the mist from my heart, so too remove it from the heart of my father, so that he can see the world to which I go’” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, p. 6-7).

²¹⁶ It is because of Seth’s obedience to *Haiia* that his heart is the measure purity in the House of Abatur; see E. S. Drower, *The Mandaean of Iraq and Iran: Their Cults, Customs, Magic, Legends, and Folklore* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937), 199.

Then when Adam sees the position of his son, he asks Seth to return back to the world, because he wishes he were in Seth's position, but Seth says:

"You naive old man! Have you ever seen a new-born return to its mother's womb? The foetus in its mother's womb looks like yolk of an egg. Just as I have departed this world prematurely, foetuses who are like egg yolks will come, infants whose mouths are still full of milk will come, virgins who are still virgins like sealed letters will come, brides with oil still not flowing from their wreaths will come. In this world you are asking about, the master may desire death, but death does not come to him. Those who say, 'this child will stay, and that old man has to depart, will be interrogated and judged in the Place of Judgment'" (Al-Saadi, Ginza Rabba, Left volume, p. 7-8).

Winds bring Seth to the heights until he goes to the *Maṭarta of Šilmai*.²¹⁷ There, the doors are opened to him and he resides in Heaven with other fair believers and righteous ones. His abode is full of light with imperishable foods, with a crown on his head under the blessing of *Haiia* in joy and happiness for ever.

"They opened the door of the house, and Shitil in a great celestial dwelling. He was treated generously and respectfully. They put him into the grapevine from which he had been formed; It is full of brilliance...Their food is not perishable and their drink is not wine. They braid wreaths for their heads under the blessing of the almighty Lord, who fills their lives with happiness" (Al-Saadi, Ginza Rabba, Left volume, p. 8-9).

3.2.3 Man and the Angel of Death at the time of death

- Mandaeans' Book of John (*adrašia d-iahia*)

Man must at some time leave the body and it is *Šaur'i (i)l* (the Angel of Death) who is in charge of taking the soul out of the body. He visits man and asks him to leave the mortal body and reminds him that it is man himself who is in charge of his soul. He should have avoided committing sins if he had desired to inherit the world of light. If the soul has been preserved completely, then it will be clothed in a robe of light. The righteous one and the perfect souls go to the lands of light; whereas the wicked will be prevented from ascending to the Realm of Light. These beliefs are reflected in a dialogue between John and Jesus²¹⁸ who asks John some questions about death and its angel *Šaur'i (i)l*. Tracing these questions and answers clarifies what happens when man meets the Angel of Death.

"...beim Sonntag, dessen Namen teuer ist. Ich fragte dich, Jahjā, bei dem Wege, den die Männer von erprobter Frömmigkeit gehen, ohne gehemmt zu werden. Sage mir: welchem Dinge gleicht die Form des Messers des Šaur'i (i)l? Sage mir: wenn die Seele den Körper verläßt, womit kleidet sie sich, und welchem Dinge gleicht sie im nichtigen Körper? Die Seele gleicht doch nicht etwa dem Blute, daß sie im Körper sich erhitzte und darin gehemmt werde? Die Seele gleicht doch nicht etwa dem Winde, daß sie in die Berge fahre, sich da

²¹⁷ One of the guardian spirits of the running water, the other being is *Nidba* who is the key holder of "Kušta"

²¹⁸ According to the Mandaeans' Book of John, Jesus is one of the disciples of John.

verliere und gehemmt werde? Die Seele gleicht doch nicht etwa dem Tau, daß sie auf die Früchte falle und sich verliere?” (Lidzbarski, Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer, p. 119).

In reply to Jesus, he (John) yells and asks him not to compare the soul with blood that makes the body warm or with a dewdrop that falls on the leaves and disappears or the wind that blows in the mountains and then vanishes from sight. He says:

“Wenn die Seele sich vollkommen erhalten hat, steigt sie in einem Gewande des Glanzes empor. Das Messer des Şaur’i (i)l besteht aus drei Flammen. Wenn er sie zur Eile treibt, um sie forzutragen, läßt er die drei Flammen gegen sie los. Eine läßt er gegen sie los des Abends, die andere beim Hahnenruf, die dritte läßt er gegen sie beim Herauskommen der Strahlen los. Wenn das Feuer zu wüten anfängt, gleitet die Seele aus den Füßen und Knien. Aus den Füßen und Knien gleitet sie und nährt sich der Hüfte. Darauf verläßt sie die Hüfte, dringt in das Herz und sucht da Platz zu fassen. Dann fällt sie in die Brust und preßt sie.... Die Augen, das Gesicht und die Lippen des Menschen erfaßt ein Zucken, und die Zunge dreht sich hin und her....” (Lidzbarski, Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer, pp. 120-121).

When these things happen, the Angel of Death sits on the eyebrows of the dying person and talks to him. He asks the soul to leave the body and surprisingly wants to know why he is still residing in the material body yet (because his measure has become full). The soul resists and does not want to leave the body. It asks the Angel of Death to show it the vesture (perhaps it is expecting a vesture of light) and wants to be clothed in it before leaving the body.²¹⁹ In return, the Angel of Death asks the soul to show him its deeds and prize, Şaur’i (i)l asks it, first of all, bring me your deeds and your prizes and then I will show you your vesture and clothe you in it (Lidzbarski, *Jb.*, p. 121).

When man responds to the Angel of Death’s request, he denies that he knew death would come sooner or later and says:

*“Ich wußte nicht, Şaur’i (i)l, sagte, “sagt sie zu ihm, daß meine Zeit kommt und man dann rasch nach mir sendet, um gute Werke zu tun, damit du mir mein Gewand bringest und mich damit bekleidest. Doch her erwidert ihr: Ist denn niemand vor dir gestorben, und hat man noch niemanden auf Freidhof hinausgetragen?” (Lidzbarski, *Jb.*, p. 121).*

Şaur’i (i)l reminds the soul of the death of its forefathers and those who died before it and whose bodies were carried to the cemetery. It seems that what Şaur’i (i)l says does not convince the dying person (soul). He replies:

“Durch die Kraft dessen, der vor mir gestorben ist, und durch die Kraft dessen sie auf den Friedhof hinausgetragen haben. Es liefen hin und her (die Weiber), die weinten, und es liefen hin und her (die Männer), die klagten, so lange der Körper vor ihnen dalag. Wenn die Seele den Körper verläßt, gehen vier hinaus auf den Friedhof. Es liefen hin und her (die Weiber), die weinten, es liefen hin und her (die Männer), die klagten, und es liefen hin und her die schrien, bis sie hin in den Schacht versenkten. Hatten sie den nichtigen Körper versenkt und zugeschüttet, dann hörten die Frauen mit Totenklagen auf. Man

²¹⁹ When a righteous soul is about to leave the material world, celestial beings welcome him by precious clothes of light and crown of light.

verschüttete den Schacht, und die Männer gingen.... davon. Sie verließen eilig den Körper und das Grab und gingen hin, griffen zum Becher und aßen Brot und vergaßen den nichtigen Körper” (Lidzbarski, Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer, Chap. 33, pp. 121-122).

After all these explanations, the dying person asks the Angel of Death to postpone his death. He wants to sell his property and distribute it among his sons; besides, he wants to buy a robe²²⁰ in which he can rise up to the land of light. He says:

“Nun, willst du, Šaur ‘i (i)l, so laß mich hier noch zwei Tage bleiben, ich will dann meine ganze Habe verkaufen und unter meine Söhne verteilen und will mein Gewand mit mir nehmen, das Kleid, das zum Orte des Lichtes emporsteigt” (Lidzbarski, Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer, Chap. 33, p. 122).

Obviously, the Angel of Death rejects the request and takes the soul, because it is not possible to postpone someone’s death when his measure is full. In reply to the request the Angel of Death says:

“Gibt es ein Kind, das den Leib seiner Mutter verlassen, und das man wieder in seine Mutter hineingebracht hätte, daß ich dich im Wohnorte der Bösen zurücklasse, damit du unter deine Söhne eine Teilung vornehmest? Ich will dich von hier fortführen, und ziehe das Kleid der Finsternis an, weil du dich in der Tibil nicht hast warnen lassen und deinen Weg zum Ort des Lichtes nicht geliebt hast. So sollst du nun im Hause der Bösen bewacht werden, bis Himmel und Erde vergehen” (Lidzbarski, Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer, Chap. 33, pp. 122-123).

3.2.4 Evil forces surround the soul at the time of leaving the material world

- **Ginza Right**

Haiia has endowed the body with the soul and when its measure becomes full, he orders angels to take it out of the body. When the soul leaves the material world, it confronts difficulties. In order to go to the Realm of Light, it is necessary to pass through the obstacles that are in its way. According to the right *Ginza*, the soul will be surrounded by evil forces who want to confine it; it sees fangs, claws and angry eyes that surround it. The soul shivers with fear and invokes the great *Haiia* against the dark forces.

“My life on the earth is over, my time has come to an end. I am leaving the folds of death and the worlds of darkness. What can I see through these doors? I see fangs, wild claws, and inflamed eyes, in this Maṭratha. Oh, you. All of you, can you see or are you blind? Can you hear or are you deaf? All of them encircled me, I called upon the name of Haiia; they never heard my words, I raised up my voice” (Al-Saadi, Ginza Rabba, Right volume, p. 89).

- **Ginza Left**

As mentioned earlier, Mandaean cosmology is dualistic, and this attitude runs through all events, even after death. A newly dead soul is surrounded by two forces; on one hand, it faces demons and on the other hand the forces of the Realm of Light. While the soul is mourning for

²²⁰ By doing good deeds like giving alms and performing religious rites, because when a righteous and perfect soul is going to leave the material body, angels welcome it with precious clothes.

leaving the body, it notices demons that are approaching it to take it with other wicked souls. They ask it to go with them:

“While she was waiting, she saw ghosts coming, but they are not shining, and are not illuminating. Darkness precedes them and darkness follows them. They are surrounded with evil spirits, full of sin. From a distance of about a league and a half, she heard their quarrelling, and smelt their evil and disgrace. When they saw her, they stopped close her, and called for her to come with them on their path” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, P. 79).

A righteous soul who hates such a status asks these wicked spirits about the reason for their status and they say that they have been misled and cheated by deceivers. They have followed demons and done wrong deeds. They are criminals and lewd people, who had forgotten *Haiia*. As a result of this conversation and because of their deeds and status, the soul rejects their invitation and does not follow them, instead it asks them to keep away from her (Al-Saadi, *GL.*, P. 79-80).

3.2.5 The heavenly road on the way of the soul

- Ginzā Left

When the soul leaves the body, it begins its journey to the Hereafter along a road. It is the road which leads the soul to the *škinta*.

“Bliss and peace will be upon the road, the road which Adam attained. Bliss and peace will be upon the road, the road which the soul traversed. The soul had loosened her chains and broken her bones. She had taken off her earthly garment. She turned around and saw it, she saw it and became revolted” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, p. 55).

- Sidra *q*-nišmata

The soul leaves its material body, and then it is the time to start its journey. *Sidra q*-nišmata shows the soul must step forward on a heavenly road to reach its final destination.

“Blessed art thou, Road of the great, path of the perfect and track that riseth up to the Place of Light” (Drower, *Sidra q*-nišmata, Chap. 71).

3.2.6 Status of the soul at the time of death

- Ginza Left

The soul wants to leave the material world, and is asked to wear glorious clothes. A righteous (soul) takes off the earthly body and leaves in peace the stinky material for the fragrance and impeccable pearl. It puts on the garment of light, puts the crown on its head and rises to the *Škinta*.

“The providers called the soul, they provided her and called her, ‘Come in peace, o illuminator, who has illuminated the falling house! Come in peace, fragrant one, who imparted her fragrance to the stinking body! Come in peace, flawless pearl, who was transported from the Treasuries of Life! Come in peace, daughter of the free, whom in the house of evil ones they called handmaiden. O soul, Dust yourself off! Put on your garment, and crown yourself with the living wreath! Gird on your Himiana, in which there are no

infirmities or blemishes! Arise, come to dwell in the škinta, the place where your brethren, the Uthri abide; Haiia is glorious and victorious, and victorious are the ones who went hence!’” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, p. 55).

Moreover, it is stated by the Left *Ginza* that souls are surrounded by demon forces when they are leaving their bodies. As *Ginza* shows, the forces of the world of darkness converse with the soul about its bodily organs; they ask the soul to give them its bodily organs while departing the material world. It seems as though only the souls of the righteous are able to refuse this, not all souls, because of the good deeds that they have done with their bodies. The righteous man who has been signed on his head or has heard the name of *Haiia* with his ears is made unable to obey the demon forces. For instance, it is said that the dark forces ask the soul to give them its hands but in reply to their request she says: “*No, I shall not give you my hands, my hands are stretched forth in charity and Kushṭa*” (Al-Saadi, *GL.*, p. 64).²²¹

- Sidra ḡ-nišmata

The Mandaean Book of the Soul portrays a scene full of angels, when the soul is about to leave the material body. While four angels (*Rhum-Haii*, *In-Haii*, *Sum-Haii* and *Zaniar-Haii*) are surrounding it as witnesses to this divine journey departure, seven heavenly visages come to the soul. They all come to it to lighten its fear of the demons that are on its way to the World of Light. It is *Šaur i (i)l*, the redeemer, who takes the soul out of the body. If it is a righteous soul, the Angel of Death brings it some precious garments (*the garments of Iuzaṭaq manda ḡ-hiia*)²²² and clothes it in them. The righteous soul dresses in several garments while it jumps up and down, rejoices, dances and looks gloriously happy. The journey of the soul starts, this is only the beginning of the way.

“When any human being departeth from his body, there come towards him seven god-like appearances, and each standeth by his own, and Šaur i (i)l the Releaser cometh – he who releaseth spirit and soul from the body. Up there, with those works, he standeth with the vesture of Iuzaṭaq manda ḡ-hiia which releaseth (the soul). And Hauraran and Karkawan-Ziwa remove from her that in her which is of the body, and she putteth on the dress of Iuzaṭaq manda ḡ-hiia. Garment on garment she putteth on, she arrayeth herself in robe after robe, When she weareth the vesture of Iuzaṭaq manda ḡ-hiia there, she laugheth, rejoiceth, leapeth for joy, danceth, exulteth and is overjoyed about the glorious splendour resting (upon her) and the glory that accrueth to her” (Drower, *Sidra ḡ-nišmata*, Chap. 49).

As the soul belongs to the World of Light, deities and celestial beings encourage it to leave the body. They have the best glad tidings for it and encourage it to leave the mortal body to the world above wherein angels and all other pious souls reside:

“Hail to thee, hail to thee, soul that hast departed from the world! Thou leavest corruption and the stinking body In which thou hast been: (thou leavest) Its abode, the abode of the wicked, The place which is all sinning, the world of darkness, Of hatred, jealousy and dissensions, the abode in which the

²²¹ Compare it with the Islamic belief about the embodiments of the religious practices in the grave that prevent the deceased from being chastised.

²²² Manda ḡ-hiia is the outstanding saviour-spirit of the Mandaean religion; *Iuzaṭaq* is name given to this important deity. The clothes that are given to the righteous soul are precious garments which are all light and seemingly are in relevant with *Manda ḡ-hiia*.

planets go about, bringing pains and blemishes, pains they bring, and blemishes, Every day causing them tribulation. Rise up, rise up, soul! Ascend to thy first homeland. Rise, rise to thy first homeland, the place from which thou wast transplanted, to the place from which thou wast transplanted, to thy good dwelling, (the dwelling) of 'uthras, bestir thyself! Don thy garment of glory and set on thy living wreath. Rise! Inhabit the Škinta Amongst the 'uthras, thy brethren. As thou hast learnt, praise thy first Home; And curse this place, the house of thy fostering; for (during) the years that thou didst spend therein Every day the Seven were thine enemies, The Seven were thine enemies and the Twelve Beset thee with persecution. Renowned is Life and victorious, And victorious the man who hath gone thither” (Drower, Sidra d-nišmata, Chap. 94)

The adventures of the soul after death are scattered in various accounts in *Sidra d-nišmata*; and therefore, it is necessary sometimes to rearrange them in a logical pattern. However, it is not only scattered but details may vary in different accounts. One of these differences can be traced in Chapters 52 to 58. Seemingly, when the soul is leaving the material body (the righteous one), a divine being comes to it and shows it its abode in the land of light. God clothes it and makes it similar to the heavenly beings in the light of God. Then the soul receives a letter from God which announces its unity and victory in God. It is a letter that ensures its unity with gods.

“A letter, union and victory have come to this the soul of N. from the House of Life. Its fastening is water, its wreath is light, its weapon the living word, and its seal the Chosen, the Pure One. Every man who openeth it and readeth therein shall live, be whole, and his name will be set up in the House of Life in the name of the Great Sublime Life. And the First Life is established in Its škinta” (Drower, Sidra d-nišmata, Chaps. 52-53).

And finally *Iukašar*, the guardian of souls (he is the one who guides and houses souls in their divine abodes) receives the soul and clothes it in glorious garments of light and seats it in its heavenly house.

“Iukašar chose her that passeth (crosseth) over; he chose her, called her forth and established her. He clothed her in radiance ineffable and brought light abounding and covered her therewith. He raised her up to the Great Place of Light and the Everlasting Abode, and in his own škinta his (the dead man's) soul was assigned (a place) and found rest in his treasure” (Drower, Sidra d-nišmata, Chap. 54).

- Mandaean's Book of John

At the time of death a heavenly envoy invites the soul to leave the material world to its real house in the Realm of Light:

“Aufsteige zum Hause des großen Lebens empor, zum Orte, wo die Guten wohnen, dem Orte, dessen Sonne nicht untergeht und dessen Lichtlampen nicht verdunkeln, dem Orte, wo keine Lüge, wo kein Fehl und Mangel ist” (Lidzbarski, Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer, p. 62).

- Qulasta

When the soul is going to leave the material world, seven heavenly visages come near to it. Moreover, *Šauriel*, who is in charge of taking the soul out of the body, ascends to man to fulfil his duty. He stands with a garment from *Iuzaṭaq manda d-hiia* near the soul and tries to set the

soul free. Two other deities (*Hauraran* and *Karkawan-Ziwa*) help the soul to be completely free and pure from the body [material being]; meanwhile, the soul is leaving the world and putting on the vesture of *Iuzaṭaq manda ḡ-hiia*.

A pious soul will be welcomed by the inhabitants of the Realm of Light while it is leaving the material world. A herald carries the greetings to the soul from deities; they salute and welcome it because it has left the material world. From these glad tidings, one can infer the pessimistic view of Mandaeans towards the world and the body as evil subjects, because the corporeal world is described as the land of dishonesty, feud and the abode of malice which is full of crime and sins. It is the world of darkness and enmity, jealousy and conflicts. The material world is contaminated by evil and the planets which bring pain, defect and suffering to it.

“...rise up, rise up, soul! Ascend to your first homeland, to the place from which you were transplanted, to your good dwelling, (the dwelling) of ’uthras, Bestir yourself! Don your garment of glory and set on your living wreath. Rise! Inhabit the Škintas Amongst the ’uthras, your brothers. As you have learned, praise your first home; and curse this place, the house of fostering; for (during) the years that you spend therein...” (Drower, *Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaeans*, Chap 94, p 97).

Wearing the robe of light, not only one robe but several robes (garment on garment, robe over robe), while a righteous soul is laughing, rejoicing, leaping for joy, dancing, exulting and is overjoyed about the glorious splendour resting upon it and the glory that accrues to it, starts its journey into the world of souls.

It is true that the soul’s origin is the House of Light, but this does not mean that all souls will go back to their origins after leaving the material world. In order to reach the Realm of Light, they must be tested to see if they deserve it and if not they should be purified enough to enter it. As a result, there are many watch house or houses of detention on the way of souls. Between Earth and World of Light, there are many obstacles and it is in these difficulties that the heavenly spirits come to the righteous soul to redeem it; they clothe it in the vesture of radiance and put the crown of life on its her head. The soul that has left the body continues its way to the first watch house, house of detention or purgatory (*maṭarta*) that belongs to the sons of perfection (*’in-Haii, Rhum-Haii, Šum-Haii, Zamar-Haii*). The sons of perfection come toward the true believers and right doers and release them from the bonds made by demons, while the wicked souls will be imprisoned there. The sons of perfection take the soul and raise it to the land of light. There, the soul will be united with life in the great palace of reality and truth (*Šrara*). There, each of these deities clothes the soul in robes of light. All these endowments and victories make it laugh, dance and rejoice. It continues its way onwards (Drower, *Q.*, 44-45).

- Diwan Abatur

While the soul receives its garment of *Iuzaṭaq manda ḡ-hiia* and treasures, it scents and smells like a fragrance. When the soul sees these things, it leaves the body. It departs to the purgatories where souls will be tested

“...the soul scents her treasure and goes forth; (as for) the spirit, they show her her garment and she (too) goes forth. Bihram breathes the treasure and Iuzaṭaq manda ḡ-hiia carries her garment to the spirit. And Sin bears the

knife.²²³ *If the soul be that of a righteous person and is redeemed then Sin does not appear to it, nor to either of the two.*²²⁴

3.2.7 Watch houses

- Ginzā Right

As mentioned earlier, wicked souls must be purified in order to enter the Realm of Light. *Ginza* portrays a scene in which the soul deals with watch houses wherein dark forces reside. They try to capture the soul and keep it in the watch houses. But those who have been righteous in the material world will be able to pass through these watch houses without being hurt. A pious soul passes through the first watch house easily because it wears an elegant garment of light which is an endowment from the world of light. The righteous soul will be respected by demons and they seat it on a throne. They announce that because of *Haiia*'s name and the precious vestments, they cannot torment it; therefore, the soul can continue its way without sorrow and pain.

*“Have no fear of your safe ascension! You are like a miserable man, who has spent a hundred and twenty years, creeping behind the cattle, with a rod in his hand; when suddenly, they caught him, and dressed him in a splendid garment, sat him upon a splendid throne, and declared him king. You are just like him! You will ascend in your pure garment, so fear not...do not stumble, mortal!” I walked with confidence, and neither hardship nor sorrows attended me” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Right volume, p. 91).*

The soul deals with numerous watch houses on its way: leaving the first watch house, it deals with the second one. The soul goes into the second *maṭarta* where it faces an arrogant woman whose neck and breasts are naked. With her, there are sixty-seven girls who are moving back and forth while their chests are naked too and they bewitch all those who pass by them. They ask the soul for its sign²²⁵ and religious name. It shows them its sign and gives its name because of them it will be able to pass this watch house too, but the girls and the arrogant woman will remain in that darkness and cannot go out of it.

*“Hey you, who are passing by us, stay for a moment with us! Tell us your name, and your sign! Tell us your name, which is from the treasures of light, then you may take whatever you like” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Right volume, p. 92).*

Then the soul ascends to another *Maṭarta* and there it sees drowned bodies with beaten heads whose faces are burnt. It asks the reason and it is told that they are the murderers who must remain in blazing fire for ever and will never be saved from there. In this *maṭarta*, a demon who is called *Zan Uhazabban* asks the soul's name and sign. The soul gives them and can pass the watch house without fear.

²²³ Knife refers to the 'Sikina' an iron knife with a seal that together is called *Sikina q-daula*, and is used in ceremonies like burial.

²²⁴ E. S. Drower, *Diwan Abatur: or Progress through the Purgatories* (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MCML), 21-22.

²²⁵ Sign refers to anointment of the man's forehead while he is baptised by the priest with sesame oil. It is an important part of baptism.

“There, I saw drowned bodies, beaten heads, and faces like dark burnt pottery. Who are those toiling under all of this torment? The answer was, ‘They are those who have spilled blood, the murderers. Their bodies will stay aflame just as you see them, and their souls yearn for second death, but a second death is not coming to save them from these flames. Ages come and pass, but they will remain just as they are’” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Right volume, p. 93).

It advances on its way to the next watch house. The next *maṭarta* is that of the adulterers and liars whose skins are black and their bodies weak and thin. They are for ever in torture and will never be saved. This watch house is guarded by *Iur*, *Iahur* and *Arhum*.²²⁶ They ask it for its name and sign and it gives them. They all bend down to it and let it go to the next purgatory.

“There, I passed by the adulterers, I passed by the sinners, I passed by the liars, they were very weak and very thin; their colour is black and their position is perishable. Their souls yearn for a second death, but the second death will never come to save them from these flames. Thus they stay in their torment. I mentioned my name and gave my sign. They bowed down to me, and gave me the way to pass this Maṭratha” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Right volume, p. 94).

In the next purgatory, it visits kings, rulers, judges and blasphemers in clouds of the smoke and burning in flaming fire. It also sees a woman with hanging breasts in the flames burning in a metal dish with mourning eyes and wagging tongue. She (the sinful woman) invokes *Haiia*, but no one helps her. Wicked souls ask for the second death (to become alive in the material world to compensate for their mistakes and return back to the Hereafter for the second time). They are those mothers that left their children and did not breastfeed them, but fed the children of their lovers with their breasts. They will be for ever in torment. The soul tells the house keeper its name and sign and because of its sign, it can leave there to the next *maṭarta*.

The next watch house belongs to *‘Ur*, the king of darkness, son of *Ruha*. It visits unbelievers in *Haiia*, idol worshippers and those who were misled by deceitful swindlers (*‘Ur*). These wicked souls are always thirsty. They see water, but whenever they want to get it, it withdraws. The King of Darkness asks its sign and name and it gives them. The king of Darkness respects it, which draws the attention of the sinful. They ask the reason for this respect and *‘Ur* replies:

“He is the one who is baptised in the name of Haiia; ‘who does not give praise except to the great Haiia.’ The wicked ask ‘Ur to send them back to the material world to do the same things that the righteous soul has done, but he says: ‘Have you ever heard of a child returning to his mother’s womb? I was the one who seduced you to become greedy, and become slaves to gold and silver; this is why you dwell with me, in the darkness’” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Right volume, p. 96).

Then the soul arrives at the *maṭarta* of *Iurba*, wherein it sees thieves, misers and those who collected money. In the material world, they were very greedy and did not help the poor and needy people. They just cared about money and forgot their religious duty and alms giving. They

²²⁶ They are keepers of the watch houses.

ask for the second death,²²⁷ but they must be in torment and decay. As with previous watch houses the soul passes the *maṭarta* with its name and sign.

“I reached the Maṭratha of Iurba. I saw the crooks, the misers, and those who hoarded money. Their profits were obscene and greed was their only ambition. They did not help the poor and miserable people, but rather themselves with their money, and so forgot religion and charity. I found them in a state of decay. Like the obscene profits they consumed, they too will be eaten” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Right volume, p. 97).

The last *Maṭarta* that *Ginza* names belongs to *Ruha*, wherein all her followers are wandering. She goes astray and roves, but she cannot escape the darkness and has no chance to see light. The righteous soul passes this watch house and on the way it meets an exalted heavenly spirit (*‘Utra*) who asks:

“Man of remarkable honesty, How would you describe the Maṭrata you have passed? How was the situation of the sinners and wrong-doers, and those engaged in sin?’ In her reply she says: *‘They are like flies gathered on the edges of pots; whenever steam touches them, their wings and chest are pierced, and they fall down into the boiling pots.’”*²²⁸

So far *Ginza* has shown souls²²⁹ while they are trying to pass through the watch houses and being interrogated by demons in each of them. The interrogation results in being imprisoned in the watch houses or being released from them. What happens for the released soul is joy and happiness, because finally, the righteous soul is clothed by *Haiia* in brightness and light. It sits in its place [throne] and reaches whatever it desires and will be the centre of attention, because *Haiia* is happy with it.

“Haiia became glad, and clothed him in brilliance and light. He put him in a place where everything he seeks, he will find. And whenever he speaks, he will be heard” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Right volume, p. 98).

- Diwan Abatur

Maṭarta or purgatories are stations in which souls must stay to be purified according to the sins that they have committed.²³⁰ Each *maṭarta* is named after an astrological character, seven

²²⁷ Perhaps second death means death in the Afterlife to get rid of the tortures and miseries of the Afterlife.

²²⁸ Qais Mughashghash Al-Saadi, Hamed Mughashghash Al-Saadi, trans., *Ginza Rabba: The Great Treasure, An equivalent translation of the Mandaean Holy Book*, Right Volume (Drabsha, 2012), 98.

²²⁹ It is very similar to *Ardā Wirāz*, only *Ardā Wirāz* was not dead.

²³⁰ As mentioned earlier, souls will be punished in the purgatories according to their evil deeds and sins. According to the *Diwan Abatur*, sins are those deeds that are abominated by true Mandaean such as music, dancing, embellishment and wearing colourful clothes or sexual impurity by women, adultery, false testimony, being cruel, eating profane foods and drinking wine and other immoralities. *Diwan Abatur* mentions some of these sins from the viewpoint of Mandaeanism.

“...those who severed connection with their neighbours: they will roast them on coals, they will sit with him (‘Ur?) and that horror of the Gehenna that is before ‘Ur will be before them. And disgrace will come upon them, and their right hands shall be taken off” (Drower, *Diwan Abatur*, p.3),

For false judgments, *Diwan Abatur* states:

“Those that (obliterated, “wield”?) scourge and rod of office, sitting at the gate of judgment, they will tear them with combs and hang chains upon them: they will fall into the black waters, and they strangle them, and they will be to the question in the purgatory” (Drower, *Diwan Abatur*, pp.3-4).

Diwan Abatur continues counting different other sins and punishments such as murder, sorcery, flattery and a woman who leaves her husband and becomes wife to a second, third or fourth or more men.

planets, such as Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, Venus, Moon and Sun, or celestial beings and holy beings such as *Ptahil*, *Bihram*, *Anuš*, *Hibil*, *Hibil*, *Ginziel*, *Kanziel*, *Šitil*, *Nbat* or personified Holy Sunday (*habšaba*) which is the sacred day for Mandaean. They are full of fire, coal and even extreme cold in addition to the demons and tools of chastisement for evil souls, next to the animals such as worm, dog, ape – upon whom is placed two chains – and the lion that stands in the entrance of the purgatory to attack souls abruptly

The punishments in the purgatories match the type of the sins.²³¹ The first purgatory which ‘*Diwan Abatur*’ indicates belongs to *Ptahil*, is for those who never forgive and forget others’ sins and mistakes, and do not help the needy. They must stay there in flames, heat and fire until they become pure enough (Drower, *DAb.*, 22). The second purgatory, which is called after *Bihram* the great, son of *Ptahil*, is the abode of those who forgot their daily prayers and instead committed devil deeds such as robbery and adultery. The third purgatory is called the purgatory of *Anuš* son of *Ptahil* in which are those Mandaean who do their deeds without mentioning the name of *Haiia* or *Manda d-Haiia*; there, they are beaten with the sword and suffer from heat, flame and fire (Drower, *DAb.*, 22).

Another purgatory in which sinful souls must stay for purification is that of *Hibil* son of *Ptahil*. There, reside people who have truly believed, but invert the truth and testify falsely. They commit theft and have an immoral way of life. There, they must be in flame and heat to be purified (Drower, *DAb.*, 23).

The other purgatory is the dwelling of those who own treasure, but do not give it to others when they are in need, those who know but do not teach if they are asked for it, and it is also the abode of those who have hot baths in their houses.²³² They all must be under extreme cold and heat, and fire is loosed upon them. This purgatory is called the purgatory of *Ganziel* (Drower, *DAb.*, 22).

One of the sins that the soul must atone for is not taking part in ritual baptism in running water on special days. These people must pass a while in the purgatory of *Ragl’il*. In addition, those women who have not observed the period of isolation because of menstruation and have not been baptised after their menstruation must stay in this purgatory which is full of coals and flames (Drower, *DAb.*, 24).

“When a bride comes before me they put a chain upon her. When she leaves her first husband and goes and belongs to a second, they put two chains on her. When she becomes the wife of a third they put three chains on her, and if to a fifth they put five chains on her, and if she belongs to a sixth they put six chains on her and if to a seventh they place seven chains on her. When she departs the body she will go to the world of *Gaf*. If she be righteous (but) her star is at fault [she was forced to marry] she will become a maidservant and will serve *Našoraean*s. If she is a lying woman, she shall go and dwell with *Qin* until she asks for three witnesses, so that she may go with the three before *Šilmay*, before him and *Nedbay*, but she will have no helper”. (Drower, *Diwan Abatur*, pp.5-6)

²³¹ The sins are those deeds that are abominated by true Mandaean such as music, dancing, embellishment and wearing colourful clothes or sexual impurity by women, adultery, false testimony, being cruel, eating profane foods and drinking wine and other immoralities. *Diwan Abatur* refers to some of these sins from the Mandaean viewpoint in a dialogue between *Hibil Ziwa* (Gabriel in Mandaic traditions) and *Abatur* (Drower, *Diwan Abatur*, 2-6)

²³² The hot baths can be wrong perhaps due to the lack of this possibility for poor people or it can be under the influence of Zoroastrianism that direct washing of the body in hot baths were forbidden.

In purgatory of *Šarhabiel*, son of *Ptahil*, reside those men who sleep with their wives on the first day of the week (Sunday) or on the first day of their wives' ritual isolation after being baptised in running water.²³³ They are in hot coals and flames beside usurers (Drower, *DAb.*, 24).

The number of purgatories is not limited to the aforementioned list. It increases according to the sins that are committed by different groups of people and different genders. For example, in the purgatory of the '*l-spar*,' son of '*Ptahil*, men and priests dwell who keep in close contact with polluted women, sorcerers and women who sell their children or milk to other women; there, souls are whipped terribly (Drower, *DAb.*, 24-25).

Being chastised in the purgatories is not only restricted to the evil lay people of the Mandaean society, but also the Mandaean priests. For example, *Diwan Abatur* indicates the purgatories in which priests are tortured by three flames that are loosed upon them until they become as thin as hair; this is the purgatory of *Nbaṭ*, son of *Ptahil*. In this purgatory reside those priests who live ambitiously and fabulously beside those women who wear jewellery such as gold and silver and pierce their ears to wear earrings (Drower, *DAb.*, 25).

In the purgatory of *Bhaq*, son of *Ptahil*, those men are tortured who drink wine and forget their daily prayers and instead sing and dance; furthermore, those women who tell lies to their husbands, or Rabbis who do not instruct priests or train learners correctly, but sanctify them, and those women who do not feed the poor when they ask for food at their doors (Drower, *DAb.*, 25).

In the purgatory of Saturn, which is about two thousand parasangs flattened, two lions are standing and frighten souls. Those women who left the world while they were menstruating are questioned in this purgatory. They can get release from it when sixty *masiqtas* have been read for them (Drower, *DAb.*, 26).

In the purgatory of Mars, where his sword is uncovered and two dogs stand, men who sleep with their wives on Sundays or the first day after their first ritual ablution and women who approach their husbands during their menstruation are questioned. They are beaten by an iron stick and are under heat and cold or coal, fire and flame. Moreover, two dogs stand in the purgatory of Mars to frighten the souls (Drower, *DAb.*, 26). Priests who go in unto women who are not their own, and devilish persons who work on Sunday and do not honour it will be punished in the purgatory of *Šitil*' son of '*Ptahil* (Drower, *DAb.*, 27).

These purgatories are mostly full of animals that are in charge of tormenting and chastising people. For instance, in the purgatory of Jupiter those people who assert their own divinity are tortured by a worm that eats them (they will be consumed) as if they had never lived before (Drower, *DAb.*, 27). Other examples of these animals are a two-headed worm with two chains that are fastened to it to horrify the souls and the spirit of darkness *Šdum* who carries in his hand two cymbals to bang them together (Drower, *DAb.*, 28). In the gate of *Šdum* an ape and a lion confront souls, they obstruct them, rubbing against them and hemming the souls in, except those who escape, whom they bite and torture until their blood gushes out (Drower, *DAb.*, 33). In another purgatory a demon who is named '*Baz*' beats a copper tray and carries the heads of the souls with it (Drower, *DAb.*, 28).

Whatever man faces after death in the purgatories is the result of his deeds in the material world. To illustrate that the means of torture is the embodiment of the specific sins and material impurity, it is worth mentioning the well of black water. *Diwan Abatur* describes it thus:

²³³ A newly Mandaean couple should be in isolation for a week after being married and baptised, during this week any sexual relation between the couple is forbidden.

“...that is of menstruation (menstrual blood) into which women are cast, and from this well drink women who (should have) observed their period of isolation during menstruation but did not observe it. They drink of this well because they perform the works of the children of darkness” (Drower, *Diwan Abatur*, 28).

It is interesting to know that all souls after leaving the world face purgatories, so not only wicked souls must enter them, but righteous souls have to pass through them too. However, it seems that they will not all be punished and they all are not houses of detention. For example, the purgatory of Sunday, which is about two thousand parasangs flattened, is one of the *maṭarta(s)* in which the soul of the righteous elect is welcomed and will be released by Sunday, the owner of the watch house. This is done to those people who unfold a banner²³⁴ and help those who are poor, the pure man whose name, after his death, all the people on the earth call, and three hundred and sixty priests, accompanied by *Hibil Ziwa*, *Šitil* and *Anuš*, come towards him to welcome him. Two banners of *Zihrun* and *Bihram* are at his left and right side and because of this he has no need to fear the purgatory (Drower, *DAb.*, 31).

3.2.8 The soul is unhappy because of leaving the body

Leaving the material body is not easy for the soul. It regrets and wishes she could rejoin it. This is what *Ginza* states about the relation between soul and body after death:

- Ginza Left

When soul leaves the material body, it feels unhappy. It is afraid of its journey, because it is going to advance on a long way without any sign, help or guide. Questions await it from the beginning of the Afterlife journey:

“So, how have you prepared yourself for this path, and with what will you prevent the obstruction? Soul, look how you were yesterday, and what you have become today” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, p. 59).

It regrets and remembers the material life when it lived in comfort and prosperity and says:

“Yesterday, I had a trunk that could eat and drink, and work until exhaustion. I used to wash it, to comb its hair, and take care of it. I was like a rose on its branch. Today, it has become arid and desiccated in its place” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, p. 59).

The soul is told that if it regrets the loss of this garment, it can return to it, because the great *Haiia* has summoned it forth in a good mood, so if the soul misses the body in which it was, it can return and enter it. Its status before death is shown to it and also its current status. It is reminded of the dangers on the way, the purgatories and the questions in each of them. But when the soul sees the decomposed corpse and understands that it is impossible to return back to the material body, it says:

“They released me, and closed the doors and windows behind me. They closed my two ears through which I used to hear the teachings of Haiia. They closed my two eyes that glimmered day and night by the order of Haiia. They

²³⁴ A white banner is a symbol of Mandaeanism. In some important ceremonies, priest raise banners near running water that symbolises the first baptism by the celestial beings in the Realm of Light.

closed the mouth that praised Haiia, and broken were my two hands, which gave alms and charity, and stretched forth to give Kušta. The two pillars fell down, so the whole structure collapsed. The body deceived its owner, and the house was filled with darkness” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, p. 60).

The soul decides to leave the body and continue its way. On the way, there are many obstacles. It is going to be questioned and tempted by the demons in the watch houses and the only thing that can release it is the name of *Haiia*, which can lead it to the place of light where the light never disappears.

“I departed by the power of Life, the name of Manda ’d Hayyi was pronounced upon me, and I am going to the House of Life” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, p. 60).

It is worth adding that the Left *Ginza* provides several accounts of the fate of the soul after death. As stated before, the soul feels a deep dependence on its body after leaving it. It mourns for its body and sits near it. It wishes it were a garment, girdle, wreath, staff or sandal that it could wear and ascend with it to the House of Life.

“The soul is wailing, weeping and saying, ‘What can I do for you, my body? If you were a garment of radiance, I would wear you, to ascend with me to the House of Life. If you were Himiana girdle of radiance, I would wear you around me, to ascend with me to the House of Life... What can I do for you, my body? I wish you were not from clay! You were formed from clay, and to clay you will soon again return’” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, pp. 76-77).

“What shall I do for you, my beautiful body that will be food for the worms? What shall I do for you, my robe of roses that will be devoured on the ground by birds?” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, p. 132).

3.2.9 Interrogation of the soul

- Ginza Left

Several sentences in *Ginza* indicate that the soul will be questioned after death. It can be inferred that questioning after death is the principal way of testing the purity of the soul. The Left *Ginza* portrays a scene in which soul is asked:

“‘What power helped you to depart? What was the name pronounced over you?’ The soul answered, ‘I departed by the power of Haiia, His name was pronounced over me, and waves of living water were in my hands. I shall raise up to the house of perfection, to the World of Light’” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, p. 57).

- Sidra d-nišmata

The Mandaean Book of the Souls describes the interrogation in which the soul will be tested to see whether it is pious enough to enter the World of Light. It is not obvious who the questioners are, but the text describes the scene as follows:

“Between the Hidden and the Radiance, Between Light and the ’uthras, Between the Hidden and the Radiance, Stand those who question the soul, Saying to her ‘Speak! Say, soul, who constructed thee? Who was thy Builder? Who built thee and who was the Being, thy Creator?’ The soul spoke and said – The edified, well-constructed soul spoke – And saith to the Being who questioneth her, Said to him, ‘My father, One built me, One constructed me;

One was the Being who transplanted me; One of the sons of salvation in his goodness; Took (accepted) his lot (duty). He folded me in a wrapping of radiance, took (me) and gave me over to Adam” (Drower, *Sidra d-nišmata*, Chap. 68).

After this interrogation, the soul that has been able to give the correct answers will be redeemed by a redeemer and will be sent to the land of light.

“Adam, in his simplicity, whilst he knew not nor understood, Took and cast me into a physical body; Took me and cast me into a physical body That is all sour and bitter fluids and decaying substances. (There) the soul remaineth and waiteth in the hostel of the body which he had bequeathed her: sitteth and watcheth over it till its measure and count were accomplished. When its measure and count were accomplished The Deliverer came to her; to her came the Deliverer Who loosed her and bore her away: (Yea), he who had bound her, who had loosed the soul, went before her whom he had bound. Coming behind him, the soul hastened Reached her Deliverer, ran (after) him who had bound her to her dwelling. The soul and her Deliverer (go): Her course is to the Place of Light, to the place whose sun goeth not down, Nor do its lamps of light grow dim. To it, and to that place, those souls That are called upon in this masiqta And signed by this sign, are summoned and invited. They shall behold the great Place of Light; And the abiding Abode. And Life be praised” (Drower, *Sidra d-nišmata*, Chap. 68).

- Qulasta

The canonical prayerbook of the Mandaeans refers to the interrogation of the soul after departing from the material world. Apparently, there are some beings that ask the soul: “*Who constructed you? Who was your builder? Who built you and who was the Being, your creator?*” (Drower, *Q.*, 54). It replies:

“My father, One built me, one constructed me, one was the being who transplanted me One of the sons of salvation in his goodness took (accepted) his lot (duty). He folded me in a wrapping of radiance, took (me) and gave me over to Adam” (Drower, *The Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaeans*, p. 54).

3.2.10 Heavenly redeemers

- Ginzā Left

When Adam finds out that he is going to be captured by the queen of darkness, he invokes *Haiia* and asks for help. *Haiia* sends *Hibil Ziua* from the Realm of Light to redeem Adam from the evil forces that surround the soul at the time of death. After this redemption, they (Adam and *Hibil Ziua*) ascend to the house of *Abatur*, the guardian of the land of scales, where Adam will be questioned about his sign, his deeds, alms and donations. They will be able to pass through the House of *Abatur*, because of their light and radiance. They go onward to the House of *Iušamin*, the mediator between good and evil, who is sitting on a throne. He stands and because of their *kušta* he lets them go. The same thing happens in the station of *Anuš* and Children of the Peace. Finally they enter the land of light and are welcomed by the celestial spirits that say: “*Blessed are you, O soul, and blessed is the one who planted you, then released you and raised you to the Place of Light.*” Adam sits on a throne and prays to *Haiia* (Al-Saadi, *GL.*, p. 72).

3.2.11 Good tidings for the soul

- Ginzā Left

When the soul decides to leave the body (after lamentations of the soul for her body), at this moment, a righteous soul hears good tidings from the world of light. They congratulate her for leaving the material world and bring her a garment of light and a brilliant crown and want her to ascend to the world of light:

*“Hail to you, hail to you, soul that has departed from the world. You have left the house, the house of corruption and the stinking body in which you have been. It is abode of the wicked, a place in which all sin. It is the world of darkness, a world of rancour, jealousy, and dissension. It is an abode of pain and defects, which bring forth the tribulation. Rise up, rise up soul! Ascend to your first homeland, the place from which you were transplanted! Rise to the dwelling of the righteous, the dwelling of the ‘Utra! Wear the garment of glory and crown yourself with the living wreath! Ascend and occupy the Škinta, alongside your brothers, the ‘Utra. As you were taught, praise the first Home; and curse this place, the house that fostered you. It is full of evil and devils who are eager to persecute you” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, pp. 50-51).*

3.2.12 Beautiful and ugly faces (bodies) on the way of the soul

- Ginzā Left

After leaving the body and mourning for it, the soul is confronted by ugly faces that approach it:

*“While she was waiting, she saw ghosts coming, but they are not shining, and are not illuminating. Darkness precedes them and darkness follows them. They are surrounded with evil spirits, full of sin. From a distance of about a league and a half, she heard their quarrelling, and smelt their evil and disgrace. When they saw her, they stopped close her, and called for her to come with them on their path” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, p. 79).*

A righteous soul hates these ugly demonic faces and therefore asks them the reason for their horrible status and they say that they have been deceived and cheated by deceivers. They have followed demons and done wrong deeds. They are criminals and lewd people, who had forgotten *Haiia*. As a result of this conversation and because of their deeds and states, the soul rejects their invitation and does not follow them. Instead it tells them to keep away from it. After that, the soul sees a beautiful, glowing face with angels and other celestial beings that are coming from a distance.²³⁵ It asks them to take it with them:

*“While she was waiting, she saw luminous gorgeous faces appearing to her. Radiance went before them and light followed them. There were accompanied by Uthri and angels. From a distance of about a mile and a half, they were shining and spreading perfume” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, p. 80).*

²³⁵ Compare it with the embodiment of the deeds as beautiful maiden or an ugly one in Zoroastrianism.

Meeting them, the soul wants to accompany them, so they ask it about its deeds and say:
“Soul, what were your deeds in your material world, so that we can take you with us on our path?” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, P. 80).

The soul starts talking about its parents and relatives, their good deeds and virtues. Since every soul benefits from its own deeds and other’s deeds cannot redeem the soul from difficulties after death, they ask the soul about its own deeds. It starts talking about its deeds such as giving alms, praising Haiia, performing Sunday rituals and helping the poor. When they hear its explanations, they take it and seat it on a throne and clothe it in garments and crowns of light. They help it to cross the seas (waters of death or dividing waters) and take its hand through the dividing waters (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, p. 82).

3.2.13 The divine letter (Letter of Kušta)²³⁶

- Ginzā Left

As mentioned earlier, when a soul leaves the body, it will be surrounded by demons and encounters serious problems. There are many obstacles and stations in which it will be interrogated. *Ginza* mentions seven gates that all souls must pass through, where all souls face different guardians who try to deceive and entrap them in their stations. In the first station they ask the soul some questions to see where it comes from and where it wants to go. By mentioning that it comes from the earth and is going to *Haiia* and the Place of Life, it will be able to pass through the stations, even though the guardians try to entrap it in the station by saying that their own place is the real Place of Life,²³⁷ but the pious soul knows that it will be in suffering and pain if it stays there; therefore, it ignores them and ascends to the upper stations. In each of these stations the guardians ask it the same questions and try to deceive it, but it knows it is search of *Haiia* and ignores them until it reaches to the House of Life in which it will receive vestments of light and will be welcomed by the righteous souls.

“I am flying, advancing until I reach the House of Life. The righteous came forward to meet me. In thanks, I bow down and praise Hayyi. They clothed me in radiance, covered me with light, and numbered me among the righteous. Soul you must raise your lamps to shine among the lamps of light. The word of truth has come to you. It came to the faithful and righteous” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, p. 125).

To obtain release from the obstacles and demons, all souls need help; however, only righteous souls receive divine help, especially from *manda d-haiia*²³⁸ who tries to save the pure souls (Al-Saadi, *GL.*, pp. 111-114). One of the divine helps that a pure soul receives is a letter

²³⁶ Kušta is one of the mysterious words in Mandaean sources. It has different meanings such as teacher, knowledge, name, letter, water, water bearer, light-figure, light, truth, ring, wreath, etc., but it is mostly translated into truth, knowledge. For more information see Waldmar Sundberg, *Kušta: A monograph on a Principal Word in Mandaean Texts, The ascending soul*, Part. I (Lund: Lund University press, 1953); Waldmar Sundberg, *Kušta: A Monograph on a Principal Word in Mandaean Texts. The ascending soul*, Part II (Lund: Lund University press, 1994).

²³⁷ The demon forces trick souls to persuade them that the place they inhabit is the final and real destination of souls.

²³⁸ He is knowledge of life, a very prominent heavenly spirit and the saviour and redeemer of spirits. Every Sunday, he goes to the watch houses to redeem those souls who have been punished sufficiently and releases them to the World of Light. According to Mandaean religion he is the father of heavenly spirits.

from the Realm of Light; it is called the letter of *Kušṭa*. This letter is written in the realms of light and has been sent to the righteous soul to save it from evil beings and obstacles on its way. It is hung around its neck and when it wants to pass through the stations it shows it to the demons and guardians of the obstacles. Ginza states that when the demons see the soul with this letter they say:

“Who has written this letter, the secret of which is unknown to us? Who wrote the letter that was written in Kuṣṭa and sealed with the signet of the mighty Haiia? Who hung it around the neck of the soul and despatched her to the gate of the House of the Life?” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, p. 94).

This letter helps the soul to pass the stations and avoid of demons until it reaches the dividing waters (*Hapiqia Mia*). There, a beam of light takes the soul (like a heavenly redeemer) and helps it to pass over the dividing waters.

“The soul flew and went until she reached the dividing waters. There she came forth towards a great beam of the radiance of Hayyi. He grasped her with the palm of His right hand and brought her over the dividing waters. They established her in her safe house, in which the Uthri sit” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, p. 95).

- Sidra d-nišmata

To escape from the evil forces, a letter which is called letter of *Kušṭa* (truth) is sent to the soul. Chapter 73 of the Book of the Soul depicts the deeds of the righteous in a form of a letter which will be hanged around the soul's neck. This letter helps the soul to pass through the stations on her way to the house of God.

“A sealed letter which leaveth the world – A letter written in good faith (kushta) and sealed with the seal of the Mighty (Life) – Righteous men wrote it, believing men tied it on, and suspended it about the soul's neck and despatched it to the Gate of Life. The soul, in her wisdom, pressed her nail on the letter, her nail she pressed on the letter; she imbued it with her mystic radiance, wrapped it and veiled it in her light. How came it that Daium saw that the soul bore a letter? How was it that Daium saw it as her seven sons gathered about her And said, ‘Who hath written the letter whose secret no man knoweth? Who wrote the letter that is sealed in by these protective strands?’ The letter is written in good faith, and sealed with the seal of the Mighty (Life). Righteous (men) wrote it, believing men tied it on; and hung it about the neck of the soul; and despatched it to the Gate of Life. The soul flieth and goeth until she hath reached the watch-house of the Seven. The Chief-of-Dues, when he saw her, (And) the Governor, when they saw her, Murmur discontent and say: ‘Who hath written the letter whose secret no man knoweth? Who wrote letter that is sealed; by these protective marks?’ ‘The letter is written in good faith and sealed with the seal of the Mighty (Life). Righteous (men) wrote it; believing men tied it up and hung it about the neck of the soul and despatched it to the Gate of Life.’ The soul flieth and travelleth on; until she reacheth spirits of Purgatory. The spirits of Purgatory abased their heads; and the soul passed the purgatory-spirits by. The soul flieth and goeth until she came to the waters of death. As she reached the waters of death; there came forth towards her a great beam of radiance (and) of life, (who) grasped her by the palm of her

right hand; and brought her over the waters of death. The soul flieth and goeth; until she reacheth the House of Life. When she reached the House of Life; She uttered a cry to the House of Life, And when He heard her call, the Life; Sent a messenger towards her, (Who) grasped her by the palm of her hand, Conducted her, (came) to support her; In the likeness of the Life to the place Of radiance, light and beams of effulgence To unite her to (the company of) 'uthras And to set her up amongst beams of light. Upon her head they placed a wreath of ether; and took her out of the world in splendour. Life supported life: Life found its own: It hath found its own, and my soul hath found; that for which she hoped. And Life is victorious” (Drower, Sidra d-nišmata, Chap. 73).

- Qulasta

It is worth mentioning that during the journey, the righteous soul receives a letter whose secret no one knows. When she wants to pass through the seven planets, they ask her about the writer of the letter and its importance. This letter, which is hung around the soul's neck, has been written by the mighty life (*Haiia*) and helps it to be redeemed from demons and forces of darkness.

“Who hath written the letter whose secret no man knoweth? Who wrote letter that is sealed by these protective marks? The letter is written in good faith and sealed with the seal of the Mighty (Life). Righteous (men) wrote it; believing man tied it up and hung it about the neck of the soul and despatched it to the Gate of Life” (Drower, Canonical Prayer Book of the Mandaeans, p. 62).

3.2.14 Obstacles, redeemers and means of help on the way of soul

- Sidra d-nišmata

Between the world and the Realm of Light, there are many obstructions that make the soul stop. According to the Book of Souls, one of these obstructions is a river or waters. These waters are called the waters of death and are located after the House of *Abatur*. Righteous souls must cross the waters; otherwise, reaching the Realm of Light seems impossible. Only the pious and elected ones cross the river by a boat that is sent from the Divine World.

“For you there will be loosings from here to the Everlasting Abode. For the ferry which ferries over the Elect Will set out towards you and take you across” (Drower, Sidra d-nišmata, Chap. 67).

In addition to the ferry which carries souls over the waters, it is apparent that the righteous soul will be under the protection of two celestial beings or two spirits of light, *Adatan* and *Uiadatan*. They help the soul to cross the river with the cooperation of two other angels, *'Usar-Haii* and *Pta-Haii*. Finally, they cover the soul with radiance and light, and the soul will be released because of her glorious and brightness.

“She proceeded in the vesture of Iuzataq-Manda d -Haiia and went onwards and reached the Waters of Death. The waters covered her, (but) Radiance crossed over – his name abode in his shkinta: honoured and chosen, he created himself – and said ‘Life, I am Thine, and for Thy name’s sake came I forth from the world of Pthahil, from amongst evil plots and from beneath the throne of Abathur the Ancient, so that we tray bring out this soul of N, of this

masiqta (so that) she cometh before him.’ He is the ray of the great radiance of Life, a being who resteth upon the shkinta, and upon shkinta doth his name rest. He graspeth her with the palm of his right hand and handeth her over to two ‘uthras, sons of light, to Adatan and Yadatan, of one gnosis and one mind. And Adatan and Yadatan hand her over to two ‘uthras, to ‘Usar-Haii and to Pta-Haii who open the Door of Life, plant the plant of Life and establish the first counterpart of the House of Life. They raised her up beside the living they bring her in, in the likeness of Life they support her in the Place where radiance, like light, flameth. And the spirit of N. went and became of the same nature as the soul and was established in the House of Life” (Drower, Sidra d-nišmata, Chap. 49).

A soul that has been rescued from all these sufferings and obstacles on her way, inherits the Realm of Light. Last of all while it is wearing a glorious garment, it sits near a spirit of light under a grapevine and sings:

“The life which is under me is the grapevine which grows over me. The prayings to the God are standing in front of me [perhaps a shield against satanic forces]. This is my name and this my sign which I have received from the water waves and the treasures of light. God is victorious” (Drower, Sidra d-nišmata, Chap. 50).

Before the House of Abatur, between earth and House of Deities, many demons such as planets, Zodiacs and evil spirits try to mislead a newly departed soul. The Book of Souls gives some hints that the souls on their way to the realm of the world of light have to face Seven [devils] and nine judges of falsehood who want to hold back the souls; nevertheless, the good doers will be led to the abode of righteous, which is full of beams of light.

“On their road the Seven will not detain them, nor will the Judge of the false question them. The Life will count you in His reckoning; and the good will set you up in their midst. To the place to which the good go they will guide you; and in the place in which they stand they will set you up; Lamps of radiance are found before you, Beams of light behind you. Kušta will come at your right; And Piety will smoothen your path. For you there will be loosings from here to the Everlasting Abode. For the ferry which ferries over the Elect; will set out towards you and take you across” (Drower, Sidra d-nišmata, Chap. 67).

If a soul can remove these obstructions, then it reaches the river. To cross the river, a righteous soul receives a means which carries it to the other side of the river, and then one who is all radiance and light and preaches glad tidings comes from the throne of *Abatur* to the righteous, carrying a robe on his arms. He wants the soul to put the crown of eternity on its head and tie the girdle around its waist. The saviour presents to the soul the fruits which are above its head and other endowments of the world of light.

- Mandaean’s book of John (*Adrašia d-iahia*)

Death is like a journey, a journey with lots of difficulties, and John alludes to the difficulties of the way of death whenever he talks about death. As he describes it, the road of death is long and limitless, and on it there is no milestone. There are many watch houses in which there are reeves and publicans, wherein there is a forged weapon, ready to use which has been polished before. There are boiling pots there to hold the evil souls. Of every thousand, one will be able to be released to the house of light and they will see the Realm of Light.

“*Meine Auserwählten! Der Weg, den die Seelen zurücklegen müssen, ist weit und ohne Ende. Auf ihm sind keine Parasangen abgemessen und keine Meilenstein nach dem Maße gesetzt. Jede Parasang ist eine Wachstation, und an jeder Wachstation sitzen Vögte und Zöllner. Geschmiedet und bereitgelegt ist die Waffe, poliert und bereitgelegt ist das Eisen. Die Töpfe sind hingesezt und brodeln, die die Seelen der Bösen in sich bergen. Aufgerichtet ist die Wage und sitzt da. Von tausend wählt sie einen aus, einen wählt sie von tausend aus, zwei von zehntausend. Sie wählt und bringt die Seelen empor, die eifrig sind und sich des Lichtortes würdig zeigen*” (Lidzbarski, *Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer*, pp. 180-181).

- River on the way of souls and Land of Abatur

As mentioned before, the road of death is a dangerous one and man needs means to protect himself against these dangers. When John gives sermons and speeches to his followers, he points to some obstacles that are on the way of man after death. The most outstanding obstacle that can be traced in the teachings of John is a river.²³⁹ Several times, when he invites man to good deeds such as giving alms, he mentions the river which is in the way of souls and the bridge that man needs to cross over the river:

“*Lohn und Almosen werden auf dem Wege gefordert, wie ein Unterdrückter, der einen Retter sucht. Wer Lohn und Almosen nicht aufweisen kann, für den ist über die Flüsse keine Brücke geschlagen. Wer Lohn und Almosen nicht aufweisen kann, für den gibt es auf dem Meere keinen Übergang*” (Lidzbarski, *Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer*, p. 102).

The verse mentioned points to a sea as an obstacle and the need for a means of transport to passing over it. It can be inferred that all souls meet a river which they must cross.²⁴⁰

The Mandaean Book of John calls this river *Nahra Kšāš* or *Nahra Kšāša*.²⁴¹ It is said that its waters are dragons and its waves are scorpions. It is like blazing fire and on both of its banks there are long chains. Wizards, adulterers, robbers, backbiters and talebearers will not be able to cross over this sea, whereas the sons of light and those who follow the Realm of Light will cross it in a ship which has been ordained for pure souls (Lidzbarski, *Jb.*, p. 181).

“*Ich habe den Steg gesschaffen, auf daß alle Seelen zu den Wasserbächen hinziehen. Ich habe ein Schiff für die Guten als Fähre gebaut, damit es die Seelen zum Hause des Abatur hinüberführe, auf daß er ihnen Kraft*”

²³⁹ Souls meet a river between this world and the other which the dead are obliged to cross which has different names; it is called *Hafiqā mia* (The waters of death) and sometimes *Kšāša*. As Mandaean Book of John describes, its water is like dragons and its waves are like scorpions. It is full of blazing fire and on both of its shores there are very long chains. In its mouth, there is a vessel (container) to torture evil-doers. They are arrested and held back there. The sorcerers, the adulterous and robbers cannot pass over it and those who do not pay attention to the limitations, but followers of the *Kušta* are able to cross it over. To cross over the river souls need a means of transportation that carries them from one bank of the river to the other bank where the House of *Abatur* is located, therefore, a boat or a bridge plays the role of the transporter for the righteous souls [the waters of death are mostly after the house of *Abatur*, but *Kšāša* comes before the house of *Abatur*] in which they will be strengthened and given power (Lidzbarski, *Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer*, p. 181).

²⁴⁰ This is what the Mandaean Book of the Souls indicates too. The Mandaean tradition mentions this river under different names, for example in *Qulasta*, the Book of the Souls and *Ginza Rabba* it is called ‘*hafiqā mia*,’ which refers to the waters that separate the world of light from the material world.

²⁴¹ *Nahra* means stream and *Kšāša* means investigation, exploration and fathoming, from which can be inferred a stream whose depth cannot be measured.

und Festigkeit verleihe in hohem Maße” (Lidzbarski, Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer, p. 199).

After crossing the waters, souls must go into the House of *Abatur*,²⁴² a celestial being before whom three hundred and sixty scales have been raised. *Abatur* tells all the souls that if they have a letter from *Tibil* (material world) with them, they can ascend to the world above; otherwise, they will be sent to the land of darkness. There, the evil-doers will be swallowed by the mountain of darkness. They wish for a second death, but it never happens. They will never see light and fall into the containers of darkness with a lightless body and find themselves in the dwelling of dragons (Lidzbarski, *Jb.*, p. 199).

- Qulasta

On its way to the Realm of Light, the soul encounters the waters of death (*Hafiqia mia*). This river is the border of the worlds of light, a river which separates pious souls from the wicked world. When the waters surround it, it invokes *Haiia* and says:

“Life, I am yours, and for your name’s sake came I forth from the world of Ptahil, from amongst evil plots and from beneath the throne of Abatur the ancient, so that we may bring out this soul of N. of this masiqta (so that) she cometh before him” (Drower, The Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaeans, p. 46).

When *Haiia* hears the call of the soul, he sends a messenger to it. The soul will be led by *Haiia* and He delivers it to the two sons of light *Adatan* and *Iadatan*. They entrust it to the two angels (*’uthras*) *’uṣar haii* and *pta-Haii*, who open the door of life and bring it there. The soul will be united with life of the same nature and resides in the house of life. The glory and brightness of the soul and its name in *Škinta* (celestial dwelling) redeems it from the waters of death.

“And when He heard her call, the life Sent a messenger towards her, (who) grasped her by the palm of her hand, Conducted her, (came) to support her In the likeness of the life to the place of radiance, light and beams of effulgence To unite her to (the company of) ’uthras And to set her up amongst beams of light. Upon her head they placed a wreath of ether and took her out of the world in splendour” (Drower, Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaeans, p. 63).

- Diwan Abatur

We see that when souls leave the material world, they face many obstacles. One of these is a river before the Land of *Abatur*, which all souls must cross; thus, they all need a means, and it is a ship that it is called *Šahrāt* (She-kept-watch); it comes toward the righteous souls and takes them to the House of *Abatur*; but evil souls on the other hand, must walk to the House of *Abatur* (Drower, *Dab.*, 10).

3.2.15 House of Abatur

- Ginza Left

²⁴² Seemingly this river is differentiated from the waters of death (*hafiqia mia*), because it is before the House of *Abatur*, while the *Hafiqia mia* is after the House of *Abature*, moreover, *Hafiqia mia* is not as dreadful as this river which the Mandaeans’ Book of John refers to. It corresponds to the river *Hitfon* in *Ginza*.

A soul which has overcome different obstacles and has been able to pass through the difficulties and endured temptations, reaches the House of *Abatur*, a celestial being who is in charge of souls. In House of *Abatur* there are many scales by which the soul's deeds will be weighed. There, it will come before *Abatur*, the judge, and will be questioned about what it has done in the material world.

"Soul, you were in the world of falsehood and deceit, so what did you do in that world? And what was your stock along the way?" (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, p. 85).

The soul declares it has not been an evil-doer, adulterer, thief or wizard. It has not disturbed anyone and has not testified falsely; it has not committed any sin with its eyes, ears or mouth. It has avoided soothsaying and tried to worship *Haiia*. It has helped the blind and the poor and clothed the naked, nursed the sick. Whatever it says must be confirmed in the presence of the judge; therefore, it needs some witnesses, and here *Iardna* (running water) and its two banks, in addition to baptism, consecrated bread and water, testify on the soul's behalf as eye witnesses. If *Abatur* accepts their testimony, they will be able to take it to the Land of Light.

"While the soul was standing before the judge, the witnesses rapidly surrounded her. The Iardna with his two banks testified on her behalf. The Maşbuta baptism testified on her behalf. The Pihtha, Kušta, and Mambugha testified on her behalf. They held her by her right palm, and raised her up to the house of perfection to be settled, in which there is no doubt, and the sun never sets" (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, pp. 86-87).

The House of *Abatur* acts as a discriminator or separator; there pious souls and the wicked ones will be distinguished. All souls must undergo a trial before *Abatur* in his house, where his deeds are weighed. When the trial is done, the righteous soul ascends to the world above.

"They put me in the balance and weighed me. They found me acceptable. They accepted me with the soul, who was happy to accompany me and to be in union with me. Together we shall ascend to the House of Life" (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, p. 107).

A righteous man who has tried to follow religious orders belongs to the Realm of Light. Because his soul is pure and bright, it will be able to overcome all the obstacles to the House of Light. According to *Ginza*, a righteous soul is like a breeze which comes from North [direction of the light and deities]. *"The soul is more radiant than the sun, and more glamorous than the moon. She is gentler than the breeze coming from the North, and softer than the waves of the water."* And because of all this greatness, the judge lets her go to the upper world (Al-Saadi, *GL.*, 92-93).

While the righteous souls ascend and enjoy their life there, wicked souls such as adulterers, magicians, fortune-tellers, thieves and oppressors will all be sent to Hell after this judgment. In Hell, their food is the bitterest food and their drink is the most malodorous one. They all will be in pain and chains because of their sins (Al-Saadi, *GL.*, p. 88).

- Sidra d-nišmata

The first account: because of its good deeds, a righteous soul is allowed to escape from the planets (there are altogether seven planets: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, Venus, Moon and

Sun).²⁴³ Then, it must go to the House of the *Abatur*, where the scales are ready to weigh the soul and its deeds. *Abatur*'s throne is at the beginning of the Realm of Light and plays the role of the pass control. He weighs the soul's deeds with his scales there and if the soul merits it, He lets it go to the House of Light. The things that will be considered in the House of *Abatur* are: the deceased's name (religious name in Mandaic, which is called *maluaša*), signs (liturgical signs in baptism), baptism itself, and prayers and hymns (*braka*, 'nian). Generally, whatever the soul has done in earthly life will be shown to *Abatur* and all its deeds will be weighed. After enumeration, all pure souls will be redeemed and they all will be clothed in glorious garments.

The second account: if a soul can overcome these obstacles, then it reaches a river. To cross the river, a righteous soul receives a means which carries it to the other side of the river, and then one who is all radiance and light and preaches glad tidings comes from the throne of *Abatur* to the righteous, carrying a robe on his arms. He wants the soul to put the crown of eternity on its head and tie the girdle around its waist. The saviour presents to the soul the fruits which are above its head and other endowments of the world of light.

“(Then) from Abatur of the Scales a saviour will come forth towards you. The saviour that cometh towards you is all radiancy and light from head to foot Like the wreath in his right hand. And on his two arms is a robe. Bestir yourselves! Put on your robes! Put on your living wreaths; gird on your girdles in which nothing is awry or blemished. Above your head there will be fruit, and there, at your time and season your manas will be set up in the Light. Your manas in the Light will be set up. (So) rise up, behold the Place of Light!” (Drower, *Sidra d-nišmata*, Chap. 67).

- Qulasta

Abatur is the deity in charge of weighing the deeds of souls. He is the ancient, lofty, holy and guarded *Abatur* whose scales are set up before him (360 scales). There, souls will be asked about their names (name of the life), sign (sign of the life and *manda d-hiia*), blessing and baptism. They will all be put on the scales and will be weighed.

After the weighing, the pure soul will be clothed with radiance from the *Abatur* and put on garment over garment and robe over robe. It laughs, dances and rejoices because of the glory which it has received from the deities, and goes upwards to the House of Light.

In *masiqta* liturgies which are recited for souls, it is mentioned that in the presence of *Abatur*, a saviour comes to the soul, who is all brilliance and light from head to foot. The saviour has a crown in his right hand and a garment of light on his arms, and asks the soul to put them on.

“(Then) from Abatur of the Scales a saviour will come forth towards you. The saviour that cometh towards you Is all radiancy and light from head to foot like the wreath in his right hand. And on his two arms is a robe. Bestir yourselves! Put on your robes! Put on your living wreaths; gird on your girdles

²⁴³As the Book of the Soul describes, the land or house of *Abatur* is vast land that many angels inhabit who praise *Abatur* all day long. In addition to the angels, there are three hundred and sixty scales before *Abatur* with which man's deeds are weighed: *“Praised be the great gate of the House of Abatur; praised be all 'uthras who stand before Abatur and praise him. Praised be the three hundred and sixty scales which are set up before the ancient Abatur; praised be that first great Scales that was set up before Abatur the Ancient. Praised be that great occult Drop from which he proceeded. Praised be all 'uthras who sit upon thrones of rest and recite ordinances and masiqtas and secret prayers. Praised be those recitations, masiqtas, and secret prayers in which the Great (Life) is praised. Praised be those priests who sit with them”* (Drower, *Sidra d-nišmata*, Chap. 58).

in which nothing is awry or blemished” (Drower, Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaean, p. 54).

- Diwan Abatur

Abatur is sitting on a golden throne and before him there is a curtain of light. Before him, there are scales in which he weighs and measures deeds. Each scale and balance has three cords, *Rihmat* (She-loved), *Šarat* (She-was-firm) and *Bihrat* (She-chose) (Drower, *Abatur*, p. 7-8).²⁴⁴

3.2.16 The status of pious souls vs wicked souls (Paradise and Hell)

- Ginza Left

As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, all souls face different impediments on their way, when they leave the material world that can prevent them from going upwards. To exemplify these, it is worth taking a look at the Left Ginza, which warns souls about these impediments and draws their attention to them. The impediments that Ginza counts include: a sea or a river (*hiṭpun zaba*), guardians of stations, blazing fire, high mountains and an iron wall.

“Look at the big sea which cannot be waded. Look at the river Hiṭfon,²⁴⁵ which cannot be crossed. Look at the guardian stations where the evil spirits stand. Look at the blazing fire, rising up to the sky. Look at the trenches and the gaps on the road. Look at the high mountain that cannot be climbed. Look at the heavy iron wall that surrounds the world, and girds it, so there is no way in or out” (Al-Saadi, Ginza Rabba, Left volume, pp. 90-91).

While righteous soul can be released from all these obstacles, the sinful must remain in these stations. They deeply regret that they have not been able to do good deeds, so they lament and say:

“Woe to us, we were tempted and deceived by this world. Who will tell our sons, whom we left behind, not to do as we did, so that they will not be bound here? Who will tell them not to give up the great Healer, not to abandon the great Lamp, and not to seek a substitute for Manda d-haiia? Who will be their sincere supporter, and the supporter of the righteous, from the place of darkness to the Place of Light?” (Al-Saadi, Ginza Rabba, Left volume, p. 127).

The wicked soul curses itself for having committed sins and amassed gold and silver which did not help it after death. All its wealth has caused it to be in darkness. Its evil wishes and desires are like bands and chains. It was deceived by the evil-doers and lied about *Haiia*. Finally, all its sins and mistakes cause her to dwell in the blazing fire (Al-Saadi, *GL.*, p. 130-131).

However, the wicked soul thinks that it can change its fate through nepotism. It is in suffering and pain and because of this emphasises its pious forefathers, through whom perhaps it could be released. It reminds the celestial beings of her righteous family members and their good deeds to gain release from the tortures. It says: *“I am a daughter of pious men, a daughter of true believers. I am the daughter of faithful righteous. Who has brought me to the house of darkness?” (Al-Saadi, GL., p. 135).*

²⁴⁴ Diwan Abatur mentions different names of *Abatur* such as: *Kanfiel*, *Bhaq*, *Hazazban*, *Nṣab* and *Taurie* (Drower, *Diwan Abatur*, p.7).

²⁴⁵ It is a great river in the world of darkness which the soul has to cross it during its ascending to the world of light.

In spite of its words about its forefathers, its claims will be ignored and it will be reminded of its bad deeds. It will be told that it could have been a true believer, but was not. It did not feed the hungry, did not give water to the thirsty, did not clothe the naked, and left many other good deeds undone while it could have done do all of them. When it hears these charges against itself it says:

“If knew that I would die, if I knew that I would stumble, then I would have fed the hungry with my bread, replenished the thirsty with my water, shared with the needy some of my ghee, clothed the wretched with the clothes in my cupboard, offered rest to the tired on my mattress, and let all travellers pass through my way. Now I am deprived, just as I deprived the others in this world” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, P. 136).

The wicked soul begs for mercy and counts the good deeds of its family and relatives and hopes to enter the House of Light because of their good deeds, but is told:

“Your father gave bread to the poor for his own sake. Your mother gave charity for her own sake. But the Forgiver will forgive the sins of the souls, thanks to the righteous men and those who believe in Kušta” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, p. 137).

- Sidra d-nišmata

The Mandaean Book of the Soul describes the abode and status of pure souls, so that, when a righteous soul is judged in the House of *Abatur*, it will be made clear whether it will be one of the inhabitants of the World of light or not. If it is a righteous soul, it will enter a dwelling in which *Haiia* and other celestial beings reside; otherwise, its abode will be the lowest part of the earth.

Where pious souls reside, run rivers of fresh water (*mia hiia uruazia*), while the banners of light have been raised. Next to the First Life (*Haiia*), many angels reside in this dwelling and extol *Haiia*. In some chapters of the Book of the Soul the descriptions of the Realm of Light can be traced, such as, in Chapter 58:

*“Praised be the First Life, praised be the Word of the First Life: praised be that radiance, light and glory; praised be that Light which is boundless and endless and none know when it came into being. Praised be the Lord of Greatness and praised be all the ‘uthras that stand to the right and left of the Lord of Greatness and praise the Lord of Greatness. Praised be my father Yawar, praised be all the ‘uthras who stand and praise my father Yawar. Praised be that great first Jordan in which the First Life was baptised. Praised be all Jordans of living water: praised be the fruits, grapes and trees which stand by them. Praised be all the mighty and lofty worlds of light; praised be all those sanctuaries (*shkinata*) of the Hidden for in each and every *škinata* sit a thousand thousand ‘uthras, (‘uthras) without end, and the myriad myriad sanctuaries that are countless. Praised are those thousand thousand ‘uthras without end and the myriad myriad sanctuaries beyond count. Praised be all those banners of radiance, light and glory unfurled before them which give them light”* (Drower, *Sidra d-nišmata*, Chap. 58).

The dwelling which the soul will inhabit is the house of the deities, and it is full of gifts for pious souls. It is a land full of peace and happiness for the souls that have been released from the yoke of material world. There, those souls that have departed the corporeal body, which is all contaminated join the house of God, being welcomed by the angels. They want it to wear the

crown of eternity and the robe of light, and lead it to the land of angels where its companions will be heavenly spirits.

“Bliss and peace there will be on the road which Adam attained: Bliss and peace there shall be on the road which the soul traverseth. The soul hath loosed her chain and broken her bonds; She hath shed her earthly garment.... `Uthras went forth towards her, Saying to her ‘Take and put on thy robe of radiance; and set on thy living wreath! Arise, dwell in the škintas, the place where `uthras abide, conversing; And Life is victorious and triumphant is Manda-d-Hiia; and lovers of his name’” (Drower, Sidra d-nišmata, Chap. 69).

In addition to the companionship of the deities and glory in the land of light, man can find foods and drinks there too. Righteous souls will drink and eat and will be served by angels every hour.

“And in good pure vestments of light which he will bring you from the Great Place of Light and the Everlasting Abode. He will bring out toward you wreaths, a wreath of victories. And every leaf of your wreaths will (weigh) One thousand and eighty mithqals. Its brilliancy will exceed the brightness of the Sun And its light outshine the light of the moon. Ye will receive your vesture and will receive your wreaths In the presence of the Great (Life). Ye will be great, and called ‘uthras amongst the ‘uthras. Ye will open your eyes and behold your Judge. Betimes will the dayspring dawn upon you, in strength ye will arise and behold the Outer Ether And the great Beam who is all light, who was set up before the Great Life: He whom Life created, prepared and sent forth to the ages and to the worlds, and every man who giveth oblation; and took part in the communion from beginning to end. They will make as perfect as the manas, Like rays of light he will be made to shine on the day of deliverance, on the Day of Redemption, The great Day of Joy; so that his righteous act Stretcheth onward. It will precede you and will uplift, showing you the Outer Ether and the Everlasting Abode, the place which is ancient, (of) Primal Beings, and sons of the great Family of Life. They eat of that which is imperishable and drink that which is not wine, eating well and asking solace. And an `uthra of Life cometh and resteth upon them day by day and hour by hour praises (be) to the fame of the righteous and to the existence of Chosen Elect (men), and to the unearthly being who standeth without, whose eyes are open and fixed upon those who love his name of truth (kushta)” (Drower, Sidra d-nišmata, Chap. 76).

The Mandaean Book of the Soul states that God calls all people to his way through his true and sincere servants. They are some people who accept God’s invitation and as a result they will be redeemed after death from the hands of the demons, satanic forces and obstacles on the way to the World of Light. As well as those who are disobedient, there are those people who ignore God’s call for salvation. They are compared to deaf and blind people who do not hear and do not see.

“There were those who did not buy my wares. They went on, reached their end and lay down. They were blind and saw not, their ears were stopped and they heard not And their hearts were not awakened to behold the Great One in the House of Perfection. As they called them and they answered not” (Drower, Sidra d-nišmata, Chap. 90).

Such ignorant people, as a result of their deeds, will be imprisoned in the house of evil-doers; they will be thrown into the gates of darkness in the lowest part of the world: “*He who hath turned aside from both will fall into the uttermost ends of the world*” (Drower, *SNŠ.*, Chap. 90).

- The Mandaean Book of John

While evil souls are entrapped in the purgatories to atone for their sins, the story of the righteous souls is completely different. The righteous soul that tries to be perfect and lives by virtues makes itself a crown which irradiates the world. It will be given flower wreaths and will be endowed the blessings of *škinta* (celestial dwelling); its body will be brighter than the sun and moon with a pleasant smell which draws others’ attention. It will never be caught in the purgatories and it will never be shown darkness. The planets (devil forces) never talk to it or ask it any question. It goes forwards and finally visits *alma d nhura*.

“Wer sich makellos in ihr erhält, dessen škînā [Škinta] wird an der Spitze der Lichtwelt sein. Uthras [‘utra] versammeln sich bei ihm und schließen Bundesstreue mit ihm. Bundesstreue schließen sie mit ihm und nehmen von ihm an sich.... und auf ihrem Haupte errichten sie eine große Krone, dergestalt, daß sie die Welten erleuchtet. Sie setzen ihm einen Kranz, einen Kranz von Siegen, auf, und Erleuchter der škînās nennen sie ihn” (Lidzbarski, *Das Johannesbuch der Mandäer*, p. 200).

- Qulasta

According to *Qulasta*, the soul of the righteous will be released and it will reside in a house in which the fruits are over its head and chandeliers are pendent from it. It will be never judged and *Haiia* sheds light on it. This residence is calm and wonderful and all who dwell in it are kings. It is full of goodness and there is no sexual desire and crime in it. The pure ones are clothed in attire made of light. The Realm of Light has wondrous buildings in it; the soul converses with an eternal partner in peace and calm.

“...And will show thee the king of light. Thou wilt see his beams of radiance, they illumine his right hand. He will grasp thee with his hand; will lay his right hand (upon thee). And will grasp thine in holy troth. He will clothe thee with his radiance, Cover thee with his light, bless thee with His blessing and His glory will rest upon thee....” (Drower, *Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaean*, p. 304).

3.2.17 Hell or Realm of Darkness

- Ginzā Right

The world of darkness, which is in the depths, is the world of evil and sin. It is pushed to the south and is full of smoke and fire. All the evil souls such as murderers, magicians and disbelievers reside there.

“It is filled with dead spirits, blazing fires, and smothering tempests, driven by furious devils and blood and bloodsuckers with faces full of darkness and gloom. They are deaf and dumb” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Right volume, p. 162).

The king of darkness puffs smoke and fire, and he knows all the secrets and is able to change his size. He is proud of such a territory and the world of darkness. He stands at the border

of the land of darkness and looks at the Realm of Light, and wishes he could be ruler of the Realm of Light:

“How are they living in the light, while I am living in the darkness? I shall take their throne and put it upon my head, and become the master of the upper world and the lower worlds” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Right volume, p. 163).

But as *Ginza* mentions, it is not possible for the master of the darkness to attack the Realm of Light or capture it because of the borders and the limitations:

“As he glanced over the border between the darkness and the light, he started circling the boundaries, wailing and moaning, but never finding an entrance to the Place of Light” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Right volume, p. 163).

- Diwan Abatur

In addition to the purgatories, demons and celestial beings, *Diwan Abatur* describes the dwelling of *Ruha* the mother of ‘*Ur* or the king of darkness. *Ruha* is in the lowest part of the earth; however, her dwelling seems not only a territory of dark forces but it is mostly like a great mansion (maybe in Paradise!), in complete contrast to what *Ginza* says about the Realm of Darkness. Diwan Abatur calls the land of *Ruha* by different names such as *gan ‘il*, *diša rabia’il d-ṭaša* and *qlida Samandar ‘il*.²⁴⁶ It is a high furnished house in which many servants are busy giving her services.

“Its height is three hundred and sixty, and seven hundred and seventy cubits. And up to three hundred and sixty, and (or?) seven hundred and seventy, and (or) eight hundred and eighty; and nine hundred and ninety thousands of parasangs in extent. And there are three hundred and sixty, and (or) seven hundred and seventy, and (or) nine hundred and ninety thousand mansions in it, and in these mansions are situated three hundred and sixty reception-halls, (moreover) in every mansion there is a dais (or “reclining-place”) and a canopy is spread over it, and the great lady sitteth thereon. And there are three hundred and sixty, or seven hundred and seventy thousands of artificial fountains set about the pavilion and sixty thousand seats of honour are set (there). And three hundred and sixty female attendants stand before her. The height of her couch is three hundred and sixty thousand cubits. And three hundred and sixty midwives sit (in her presence?) and three hundred and sixty thousand tiring-maids stand before her. And she hath sixty male children. And she hath seven hundred and seventy female pupils and a thousand and sixty daughters. (Moreover) she hath seven hundred and seventy husbandmen and seven hundred and seventy slaughters: she hath seven hundred and seventy hunting cheetahs, and seven hundred and seventy head of oxen and sheep. Bihzad is the shepherd of her mysteries. And (she hath) seven hundred and seventy herds: the herdsman is Simiaiel” (Drower, *Diwan Abatur*, pp. 36-37).

²⁴⁶*Arqa d-ruha gan ‘il šumah* (the land of *Ruha*, whose name is *gan ‘il*), *Diša Rabia ‘il d-ṭaša* (the entrance of the *Rabia’il* of *Ṭaša*), and the key of *Qlida Samandar ‘il*.

3.2.18 Souls visit and welcome one another

- Ginzā Left

When man dies, his soul will not be alone in the Hereafter. As a righteous soul leaves the world and passes through the obstacles, it will be welcomed by other souls in the world of light. It is stated that the pure soul will be clothed in the garments of chosen ones, with eyes filled with brilliance and with wings of radiance in will converse with her and welcome her.

“When the souls saw me, they all came to welcome me. They received and greeted me, and said, ‘Son of pious, ask your father, When will the prisoners be released? When will the true promise arrive, so that troubled will be relieved?’” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, p. 65).

They (the wicked souls) want it to ask *Haiia* about the fate of the wicked souls and the length of their punishment. In reply it says:

“The wicked will remain here bound with shackles, until the Euphrates dries up from its source, and the stream of the Tigris flows out. Until all the seas are dried up, just as the rivers, springs, fountains, and wells will be. Then all who were tightly bound in the depths will be released and ascend. The souls that reside in this house will be relieved, the children of free men will be relieved, and so too will the widows troubled by the wicked. They will be rescued from the wicked, who will remain in their wickedness. Relief certainly will come to the troubled people” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, p. 66).

- Qulasta

After death, righteous souls visit one another and gather together in the House of Light, a residence in which all the souls of the forefathers are gathered together while praising *Haiia*:

“...the being whom the life summoned and bade him heal the congregation of souls, divesting the congregation of souls of the (their) darkness and clothing them with light; raising (them) and showing them that a great restoration of life exists, a place where the spirits and souls of our forefathers sit clothed in radiance and covered with light; showing the great restoration of life which is before them” (Drower, *Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaean*, p. 8).

3.2.19 Devil forces are angry because of man’s salvation

- Ginzā Left

Ginza states that *Ruha* is the enemy of man not only in his life, but also after death. It is said that when Adam dies, he leaves the body and then the soul is enveloped in radiance and light that makes *Ruha* envious and full of hatred. *Ruha* decides to imprison the soul in the world of darkness to torture her. She says:

“Now she will ascend to the House of Light. I have to block her and shut the doors of darkness, to imprison her in the Maṭrathi for a long time. I shall torture her from feeling tranquillity and living in peace” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, P. 70).

- Sidra d-nišmata

On this subject, there are two accounts in *Sidra d-nišmata*.

First account: Evil forces do not like to see the righteous and pious souls that are redeemed from the material body. When they see souls dressed in the garments of *iuzataq manda d-hiia* and going forward to the planets, they are irritated and say:

“Woe on (us) planets! For they (we) are powerless, but the works of their hands are victorious!” (Drower, *Sidra d-nišmata*, Chap. 49).

They know that this endowment is from the World of Light and it is something that never will be granted to them, so they regret and say:

“How beautiful is this radiancy, how steadfast this light, how lovely this glory and how wondrous this appearance! And they ask: ‘Who will clothe us with this radiance? Who will cover us with this light and who will shed on us this glory? And what is it that passeth before us in this guise? For it is fair, shining and bright: in this world nothing made can be compared to it!’ And they exclaim: ‘How good is kušta to the good, and Manda d-Haiia to all his chosen, (those) who stand in their bodies and dedicate themselves to the name of the Life and to becoming (thus) having worn the divine garments’” (Drower, *Sidra d-nišmata*, Chap. 49).

Second account: When a man passes along the way, if he has been a perfect man according to the Mandaean religion, he will be redeemed from the forces of darkness and ascend to the Realm of Light. This causes *Ruha*, the mother of devils, to get angry and moan when she and other demons observe the victory of the righteous soul and its

“The day on which the soul goeth forth, on the day that the perfected one ascendeth, on the day that the soul issueth from below the spheres of death, of contention, strife was thrown into the earth. Ruha’s slaves sit bewailing and the seven sit in consternation. The robe of the stars is lent and dust is cast on Ruha’s head. Hell-beasts weep and the demons of purgatories are panic-stricken. the being who brought me hither, who brought me that which was beautiful, put on me a robe, clothed me in a robe of radiance, in a wrapping of light he covered me, set on (my head) a wreath of ether and (gave me) of that which life bestoweth on the ‘uthras. He set me up amongst ‘uthras and stood me up amidst the perfected (souls). A wreath of ether he set on my head, and gloriously he brought me forth from the world. Life supported life, life found its own, its own did life find, and my soul found that for which it had looked. Renowned is life and victorious, and victorious the man who went thither” (Drower, *Sidra d-nišmata*, Chap. 98).

- Qulasta

When a righteous soul can overcome all the difficulties and passes through all these demonic stations easily, it makes demons moan and complain. When the planets (sons of *Ruha*) see the soul clothed in the vesture of *iuzataq-manda-d-haiia*, they become annoyed and start beating on their chests and saying:

“Woe on (us) planets! For they (we) are powerless, but the works of their hands [the deities] are victorious!” (Drower, *Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaean*, p. 44).

The beings of the Realm of Darkness are annoyed when they see the glory of the soul and what the deities have done to it. While they envy the soul, they ask themselves about the brightness of the soul:

“Who will clothe us with this radiance? Who will cover us with this light and who will shed on us this glory? And what is it that passes before us in this guise? For it is fair, shining and bright: in this world nothing made can be compared to it [to the soul]!” (Drower, *Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaean*, p. 44).

They know that being obedient to the rules of the World of Light is not fruitless. They talk about the goodness and faithfulness of *manda d-haiia* and *kušta* to their selected ones. While they are groaning, the righteous soul, wearing the vesture of *iuzataq-manda-d-hiia*, escapes from the planets to the house of *Abatur*.

3.2.20 Mourning is prohibited

- Ginzā Left

Lamentation and crying because of one’s death is prohibited according to Ginza. It is stated that after Adam’s death, his wife, Eve, wept and cried a lot because of her husband’s death. When dark forces noticed that she was lamenting, they expressed their sympathy and approved what she was doing; they said to her:

“Hawa, you have every right to weep and wail, you have every right to pound your chest with your fists! You are alone in this world after death of Adam” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, p. 21).

When *Haiia* notices that dark forces are trying to deceive Eve, he sends one of the celestial beings to inform her that her lamentation causes more suffering and pain for the deceased’s soul. Therefore, a celestial being (a deity) descends to Eve to lighten her sorrow; he says:

“Brighten the face of Adam and make him happy. Do not weep for him, lest he be tortured. He sits now with his father” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, p. 21).

As a result of this forbidding, it is also stated that whoever shed tears for someone’s death, is committing a sin and causes more torture for the soul:

“All who tear their garments for me commit a sin. All who spill tears for me will face seas and rivers. All who cut their hair for me will be cast into the mountain of darkness” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Left volume, p. 77).

3.3 Death in the Book of *Alf Trisar Šuialia*

As mentioned above, this treatise deals with different subjects that a Mandaean priest needs to know; therefore, in some pages, it also deals with the subject of death and the Afterlife. It likens man to an egg, the egg white is like the spirit (*ruha*), the egg yolk is like the soul (*nišimta*) and the shell is man’s body.²⁴⁷ When a man dies, the soul resembles a bird that comes out of an egg. The treatise points out that not all foetuses can leave the egg, for different reasons, for example: some eggs do not have the necessary cells to develop into a bird; some foetuses are imprisoned in the egg so they cannot get free of the shell, and die. While some die because of

²⁴⁷ E.S. Drower, *The Thousand and Twelve Questions: A Mandaean Text* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1960), 185.

cold or heat, some are killed by the mother bird. Some birds come out of the egg untimely, and some are killed by storms or rough water (Drower, *ATŠ.*, p. 185).²⁴⁸ The birds that come out of an egg are not all healthy and perfect: while some of them are crippled, some can be blind and some others can be embryonic – and so can souls. Leaving the material world, some souls are lustrous and radiant, while some are dark and spoiled (Drower, *ATŠ.*, p. 186).

Religious rules and rites are the means of development for a perfect bird that can leave the egg and fly to Heaven. It is stated that, just as pregnancy lasts nine months and in each month the baby (foetus) grows inside the womb, and the seed is covered by nine layers, so there are nine religious rites that cause the soul to grow in life or after death and leave the world as a perfect bird (Drower, *ATŠ.*, p. 186-187). These rites include:

- 1- Marriage
- 2- Coronation: wearing religious garments and myrtle wreath in religious rituals
- 3- Baptism
- 4- *Masiqta*: a commemorative sacrament for the benefit of the dead performed by priests only
- 5- *Dabahatan*: the long prayer of commemoration recited for the dead and the living at all sacraments for the dead
- 6- *Dukhrana*: naming a dead person at a ritual meal or in the prayer of commemoration
- 7- *Rahmia*: a series of prayers for daily office that should be said at morning, noon and sunset
- 8- *'ngirta*: an assemblage of pious gifts dedicated to the soul of deceased
- 9- *kana d Zidqa*: sacred food or money brought by the relatives of a deceased person to the priest for the blessed oblation

As mentioned above, all souls are not the same on leaving the material world. Souls are like a moth that is enclosed in a cocoon to develop inside it. After developing, they leave the cocoon which will be buried, and fly to the etheric world (Drower, *ATŠ.*, p. 188). A pious soul is like a dove that leaves the egg and flies freely wherever he wants (Drower, *ATŠ.*, p. 189). When a pious soul leaves the world, after having proved its innocence, *Kušta* appears like a ferryman and conducts it to the sublime of Ether (Drower, *ATŠ.*, p. 187). Pious spirits, wearing white and radiant clothes, fly to the Realm of Light while all their good deeds accompany them.

According to this treatise, the universe is divided into three layers: one, which is light, stands above, and the dark one stands beneath; and between them is the material world in which man stands. When man dies, he can fall down into the Realm of Darkness being controlled by the *Ruha* or he can fly to the Realm of Light, *Mašunia Kušta* (Drower, *ATŠ.*, p. 189-190). When man dies, he needs to prove his innocence to reside in the Ether realm; therefore, he has to pass through gates, the gates that will be opened to the pious and are closed to the wicked. From the time of death to the time of dwelling in the Realm of Light, it takes forty-five days according to the *Alf Trisar Šuialia* (Drower, *ATŠ.*, p. 190).

When a righteous soul leaves the world, it wears fair raiment and goes into the dwellings in which its innocent and pious ancestors dwell (*Škinta*), that are located inside the *Mašunia Kušta*. There, pious spirits drink of the *Iardna* (the celestial river in the Realm of Light), eat

²⁴⁸ It seems that all these similes should be interpreted as the different reasons of death, accidents, natural disasters and many other dangers that accompany man and each one could be a possible reason for death, or reasons that prevent the growth of spirituality in man.

fruits and go everywhere they desire; they eat and drink but there is no excrement amongst them (Drower, *ATS.*, p. 190). It is all light, but there is no flame or fire; it is all fruit everywhere but they do not diminish.

As mentioned before, there are many gates at which souls must stop to prove their purity; one of those mentioned in this treatise is the abode of *Abatur* in which he “...giveth to each individual soul in proportion to that which she hath, giving her his hand and helping her onwards” (Drower, *ATS.*, p. 192). This sentence indicates the importance of man in making his destiny after death. Alf Trisar Šuialia states:

“For every soul, from the very first day on which it was baptised, a tree sprouteth up at the source of the Jordan and upon it the name of that soul is inscribed. If the soul excelled in (good) deeds and in prudence, that tree flourisheth in its place and increaseth and putteth forth good fruit. It is unrivalled: its form and fruit are clean and comely, and a banquet is prepared and built up for her by her (virtues) deeds. But if that soul acted unworthily, that tree is stunted, its leaves fall off and its fruit is poor and black. Here on earth his name (that of the dead person) is hated and an evil reputation is attached to him. And when she (his soul) comes towards that which she built up, her tree, she goes towards it in a defective body” (Drower, *The Thousand and Twelve Questions*, p. 192).

Alf Trisar Šuialia expresses the unity of the deceased with his or her family after death: whether clergy or layman, man or woman, they all join their kinfolk and forefathers; they talk and question one another. They stand near the banners and under the trees in the World of Light, and submit themselves to *mara d rabutha*²⁴⁹ (Drower, *ATS.*, pp. 192-193).

3.4 Dinanukt's revelation

As we saw in Zoroastrianism, and will see in next chapter on Islam, the story of ascension to Heaven and abode of the celestial beings can be traced in many religious traditions, and Mandaism is not an exception in this case. The story of ascension in *Ginza* is related to a Mandaean character named *Dinanukt*²⁵⁰ or *Dananukt*.²⁵¹ He is a Mandaic sacred person in *Ginza* who is mostly compared by Mandaeans to Enoch of the Bible tradition. He is a learned scribe seeking for truth. He is interested to know *Haiia* and *Kušta*; he wants to know where right and wrong, construction and destruction, disease and cure and many other secrets are. He deals with a half-demon and half-book personified document that is called *Dišai* and tries to find the answers to his questions with help of *Dišai*. Finally, a celestial being whose name is *'utra din malka*²⁵² makes a revelation to *Dinanukt* and they both ascend to Heaven. On the way, *Dinanukt*

²⁴⁹ He is the Lord of the Greatness and father of the heavenly spirits.

²⁵⁰ Regarding the etymology of the word, the Mandaic dictionary states that it is probably a loan word from Iranian, in Avestan *'daēnā naoxda'* and in Pahlavi *'daēnānūxt'* which means 'talking in accordance with the religion'. See Drower and Macuch, *Mandaic Dictionary*, p.108.

²⁵¹ Drower refers to the story of *Dinanukt* and narrates the story according to the Mandaean oral sources, see E.S. Drower, *The Mandaeans of Iraq and Iran* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937), 300-305.

²⁵² *Din* means religion (Drower and Macuch, *Mandaic Dictionary*, 108), *malka* means spiritual entity or king (Drower and Macuch, *Mandaic Dictionary*, 244) and *'utra* means angels or heavenly spirits (Drower and Macuch, *Mandaic Dictionary*, 346), *'utra din malka* is one of the Mandaean angels and the guide of *Dinanukt* in his heavenly journey, it resembles *daēnā* in Zoroastrianism.

encounters purgatories or watch houses of *Zan hazaban* (the almighty king of wrath), *Ruha*, and finally he goes to the House of *Abatur*.

Ruha tries to deceive him by introducing herself as *Haiia*, but *Dişai* helps and direct him. In each of these purgatories, because of misunderstanding he supposes that the guardian of the watch house is the supreme God, but his companion warns him and reminds him of his mistake. For example, about the purgatory of *Ruha*, he says:

“Wind after wind seized Dananukht. The storms carried him and raised him upon ladder after ladder until he reached the Maṭratha of Ewath, who is Ruha, and Qananit, the poison of the scorpion hidden to darkness. Seven women were standing there. They were free, but not free. There were seven virgins, but not virgins, with bare sides, and bare breasts. They wore the garlands of adultery and prostitution upon their heads. They wooed the hearts of human beings, and bewildered both sight and mind. Myriads of tyrants stand at his service. I was about to kneel down to bow before him, but Din Mlikh, accompanying me, pulled me aside and said, “To whom are you bowing down? Whom are you praising? The House of the Eternal Father is still ahead of us!” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Right volume, p. 116).

Finally, he goes to the abode of *Abatur*, where he can see the celestial beings of the world of light, and he finds out the answers to his questions. He says:

“I saw thousands who are standing, myriads who are sitting. They were dressed in light and clothed in brilliance. Victory wreaths crowned their heads, turbans of brilliance and garments of light supported their thrones. Then I saw Hayyi, who has existed for all eternity. I saw Kushta, which has existed since the beginning. I saw the light and the brightness. I saw the wrong, and I saw the right. I saw construction and destruction. I saw disease and the cure. I saw the virtuous Elder, who has existed since ancient times, older than the one who created the earth and stretched out the sky” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Right volume, pp. 117-118).

In the abode of *Abatur*, he asks for his garment of brilliance, turban of light and a brilliant wreath,²⁵³ but he is told that he must return to the material world until his life comes to an end there. He must recite God’s name and teach more disciples (*Tarmida*)²⁵⁴ and after this he will be endowed with a turban of light, a garment of brilliance and a brilliant wreath. It is stated that after *Dinanukt*’s death, he reached what he was promised.

“Open the gate of the House of Life to me. They opened it. They appointed him to a high position of stability, and dressed him with garment of light. They crowned him with turban of brilliance, and braided a splendid wreath for his head. Dananukht stood in the Place of Light, the place in which all is the brilliance. He stood praising Hayyi” (Al-Saadi, *Ginza Rabba*, Right volume, p. 119).

²⁵³ They all are the heavenly gifts for all righteous souls when they depart the material world.

²⁵⁴ A loan word in Mandaic that means disciple, and a title that describes all the Mandaean priests.

3.5 Glossary of some Mandaean terms and names

- Abatur (Abatur d-muzunia): an outstanding Mandaean divinity sitting between the purgatories and the worlds of light and weighing souls in its scales.
- Adatan, Uidatan (Iadatan): two spirits of light who were set over the first Jordan; they sit at the door of Life and pray for the spirits and souls in the place of light.
- Aiar: the upper atmosphere.
- Aira ziua (aiar ziua): the radiant ether, the genie of the upper air.
- Alma d-hšuka: the world of darkness.
- Alma d-nhura: the world of light.
- Andiruna: a ritual hut built for marriage rites and the consecration of the priest.
- Anhura haii/ Nhur haii: a supernatural female being, holy light.
- Anuš: an outstanding uthra and one of the triad of spirits Hibil, Šitil and Anuš; one of the purgatories is called after his name.
- Arhum: the keeper of one of the purgatories with 'iur' and 'iahur'.
- Arqa d-ruha: the land of Ruha, the queen of darkness.
- Baz: a purgatory demon.
- Bhaq: a name of light spirits; he is called son of Ptahil and one of the purgatories is called after his name.
- Bihram the less: son of Ptahil, one of the celestial beings and the owner of one of the purgatories.
- Bihrat: name of a female light spirit
- Bihzad: a supernatural being.
- Braka: benediction.
- Din mlikh (din mlik 'utra): A celestial being.
- Dinanukt (Dananukt): A legendary personage in Ginza.
- Dišai: Name of a personified document or book in the story of Dinanukt; half demon, half book.
- Dukhrana: commemoration of the dead by name.
- El-spar: name of a celestial being, son of Ptahil and the keeper of the purgatory
- Gaf (Gap): a genie of the underworld.
- Gan 'il: a theophorous name.
- Ganzi 'il (Kanzi 'il): a supernatural being, son of Ptahil and possessor of a purgatory.
- Habšabā: the first day of the week (Sunday), and a personified saviour-spirit.
- Hiiia (haiia, haii): the primordial deity of Mandaean religion.
- Hapiqia mia/ apiqia mia: waters separating the world of light from the material world.
- Hauraran-ziwa: white ritual garment of light
- Hazazban: the spiritual ruler of a purgatory.
- Hibil ziua (hibil ziwa): an outstanding Mandaean genie often identified with the saviour-spirit Manda d-hiia.
- Hitpun zaba: name of a river in the underworld.
- Iahur: an outstanding genie
- Ian-haii: sporadic special female name of a celestial being.
- Iardan: running water, Jordan, river, flowing stream.
- Iupin: an angel name, a Mandaean genie.
- Iukašar: a spirit of light.
- Iušamin: a demiurge and mediator between good and evil.
- Iur: a being of light.

Iurba: name of a sun spirit and keeper of the purgatory
 Iuzaṭaq manda d-haiia: a name given to Manda d-hiia.
 Iukabar: A spirit of light, used with several epithets, the most frequent of which is ziua.
 kana d Zidqa: kana means storing-place, community and Zidqa means offering; together they are offerings in rituals
 Kanpi ʿil: an angel and one of the seven names of Abatur.
 Karkauan-ziua: a spirit of light.
 Kšaša: name of a river between this world and the other world which the dead are obliged to cross [it may be another name for Hapiqia mia].
 Kušta: [A mysterious term in Mandaean religion with several meanings. It can be compared to some extent to the Zoroastrian term Aša.] truth, good faith, sincerity, faithfulness, right dealing, plighted word, troth, pact, promise, vow, the action of giving the right hand in troth or plighting by grasping the right hand then lifting one's own hand to the lips; the ritual hand-clasp.
 Malka: A spiritual entity, of angels and higher beings.
 Malka d-nhura: an angel of light.
 Maluaša (Malwaša): sign of the zodiac, horoscope, destiny as indicated by stars and constellations, the astrological name used in religious and magical documents, distinct from the name by which a person is known.
 Mambuha (mambuga): spring of water, water which wells up; a frequent designation of sacramental water, ritual drink used in Mandaean ritual.
 Mana: spirit, soul, mind, intelligence.
 Manda d-hiia: [the knowledge of life], the outstanding saviour-spirit of Mandaean religion.
 Mara d rabutha: a title, lord of greatness.
 Mašbuta: Mandaean baptism in living water (running water), ritual immersion at the hands of a priest.
 Masiqta: The sacramental meal intended to assist the soul to rise after death.
 Maṭarta: watch, vigil, place or house of detention, prison, purgatory.
 Mia hiia uruazia: living and fresh water.
 Mia siauia: black waters
 Mšunia kušta: a world of ideas in which the prototypes of all earthly things and beings exist.
 Našuraia: As a designation of the followers of the Baptist, the guardian of mysteries, skilled in esoteric knowledge.
 Nbaṭ: a spirit of light.
 Nahra /Nhara: river.
 Nidbai: A water-uthra, one of the two guardian spirits of running water, usually mentioned with his companion Šilmai.
 Nišimta: Soul [it is the feminine form of the masculine Nišma].
 Nšab: Name of the spirit of life.
 ʿNiana: A collection of antiphonal hymns [prayers].
 ʿNgirta: letter, rite performed for the dying.
 Pihta: Sacramental wafer, bread, etc., used in Mandaean ritual.
 Pira: Fruit, used often as gnostic term as an expression of emanation; the pre-emanational fruit.
 Pta-haii: name of a higher being
 Ptahil: name of the Mandaean demiurge.
 Qadiaiil taura: a heavenly bull.
 Qananit: a name given to Ruha [the queen of darkness].

Qin: name of the queen of darkness and mother of devils, grandmother of Ur, but sometimes identified with his mother Ruha.

Qlida Samandar' il: One of the spirits of light.

Qmamir ziua: a spirit of light.

Rahmia: name given to the liturgical prayers and to the daily office prayers.

Ragl' il/Ragz' il: an uthra, son of Ptahil

Rhum-haii, In-haii, Sum-haii, Zaniar-haii: Four sons of thoroughness who surround the soul while leaving the world.

Rihmat: a theophorous name

Rišama: head of the people, ethnarch, a rank higher than ganzibra

Ruha: human spirit and the soul, the mother of devils.

Sam Hiia (simat hiia): Treasure of life, personified as a female genie often mentioned with iauar.

Sam mana samira: a spirit of light, the safeguarded Mana.

Sin: moon god, moon [sometimes it is another name for Šaur' (i)l].

Siniauis: underworld, abode of darkness, the lower earth.

Šaur' (i)l: the Angel of Death.

Šahrat: name of a ship bringing souls from the earth to the House of Abatur.

Šarat: name of a female genie

Šarhabiil (Šarhab' il): name of a spirit, sometimes male, sometimes female; also as an epithet of Šamiš (son-god) and a name given to personified scales.

Šdum: a spirit of darkness, one of the rulers of the underworld.

Šilmai: one of the pair of guardian spirits of the running water, the other being nidbai.

Šitil (Seth): Seth, Adam's son; also Ptahil's son and keeper of a purgatory.

Škinta: habitation, dwelling, abode, celestial dwelling.

Šrara: reality, truth, steadfastness, certainty, reliability, firmness, strength, sound health, stability.

Šuba šibahia: planet, demon.

Tarmida: disciple, a concrete noun now describing all Mandaean priests.

Taurii (i)l (Taur' i (i)l): name of an uthra, as a head of 366 celestial dwellings.

Tibil: earth, earthly world.

Ṭabuta (Ṭabu, Ṭabut): goodness, kindness, liberality, bounty, benefaction, a boon, gracious gift, ritual food, the loaf of ritual bread.

Ṭamušata/Ṭimušata: submersion.

'Utra din malka: name of a celestial being.

'Ur: king of darkness; son of the Ruha.

'Ušar-haii: a heavenly being

Uškinta hiia: the abode of Hiia.

'Utra (uthra): heavenly spirits, generic name given to spirits of life.

Zan uhazazban /Zan hazazban: a spirit or demon forming a pair with Zan, sometimes considered as one being; ruler of a purgatory.

Zidqa: pious offering, offertory, oblation, alms, charity, bounty.

Zihrun: Name of an uthra.

Ziu Haii: brightness, radiance, often used as an attribute or name of uthras, being of light, glorious being.

4 Islam

4.1 A brief view of Islam

Islam is the youngest world religion, revealed by the Prophet Muhammad from the Arabian Peninsula in the early 7th century. The word Islam means ‘surrendering,’ ‘accepting the will of the one, almighty God (*Allāh*). Islam is a strict monotheism. The doctrine that the Qur’ān teaches and wants people to believe in is: belief in one God and his messengers, especially Muhammad, as the last and the seal of God’s messengers, a chain which started with Adam and ends with Muhammad; belief in angels and scriptures revealed to the world by divine messengers; the last day or day of judgment in which the divine judgment will be dispensed to all (*Qu.*, 2:284; 3:83).

The revelation of God to Muhammad is called *Qur’ān*, the most sacred and the highest revelation for Muslims, which is believed to have been revealed to Muhammad word by word from God by the Archangel Gabriel and has been kept without any changes up to now. It is believed that the Qur’ān is the word of God and not only the word of God, but the last revelation from God to humankind. Arabic is the language of the Qur’ān and the sacred language of Islam.

After the Qur’ān, the very words of the Prophet (and in Shia tradition this also includes the sayings of the Prophet’s successors from his family, which means Ali, his two sons and his descendants from his second son Ḥusayn) were collected and regarded as tradition or *Ḥadīṣ* (Prophet’s words and deeds), brought together collected in books called *Ṣaḥīḥ* or *Sunan*. The teaching of the Prophet Muhammad is the creed of Islam and the core of this creed is found in the Qur’ān and the tradition. All Muslims believe in it and accept it and because of this they are called Muslim (Submitter), one who surrenders and obeys God completely in the best manner.

The five pillars²⁵⁵ of Islam incorporate the religious duty for a Muslim. Every Muslim must believe in one God and his messenger (*Ṣahāda*), say daily prayers five times in Arabic (*Ṣalāt*), fast (*Ṣawm*) in the ninth month of the Islamic calendar (*Ramaḍān*), give alms (*Zakāt*) and go on a pilgrimage to Mecca (*Ḥajj*). The Qur’ān states that all will be lost except those who believe and do righteous deeds (*Qu.*, 103:1-3). It also states that no one bears anyone’s else punishment (*Qu.*, 39:7); therefore, everyone is responsible for his deeds and should avoid violating the divine prohibitions.

As mentioned above, belief in life after death and Resurrection is an important theme of Islamic faith. Many verses of the Qur’ān mention the Last Day, a day on which people will be judged in the presence of God the Almighty. More than 29 chapters of the Qur’ān directly refer to the final day, but it is worth mentioning that only God knows the exact time of the end of the day and no one knows when the Last Day will come (*Qur’ān*, 7:187). In the course of time different branches of Islam have developed; the major Islamic sect is Sunnism and the minor one is Shiism (Shiism is divided into different branches, but the most famous one is that of the Twelve Imamist Shias, and in this study I always mean the Twelve Imamists). This project focuses on these two Islamic sects to find out their beliefs about life after death.

²⁵⁵ These all play an important role in later Islamic individual eschatology. In the next parts it will be explained how they are impersonated in the grave and save the righteous believers.

4.2 The Qur'ān and Death, adventures of death according to the Qur'ān

As mentioned before, the most important message of the Qur'ān is monotheism. Almost all verses in the Qur'ān are relevant to this idea. God has knowledge of everything. All that is in the heavens and on earth belongs to God. He is the king of the heavens and earth, he is powerful and almighty, he gives life and causes to die. God, the king of the heavens and earth, has created life and death. It is stated that there is no escaping from death: *“Every soul shall have a taste of death: and we test you with evil and good by way of trial. To us must ye return”* (Qu., 21:35). It is also stated: *“Every soul shall have a taste of death: and only on the Day of Judgment shall you be paid your full recompense”* (Qu., 3:185).

The Qur'ān insists that God has created man from clay (Qur'ān, 23:12), and then breathed into him from his spirit. He gave man life but for an appointed time because all will vanish and the entire universe is transient except God who remains without change and is eternal. The creation is not futile and God has not created people without purpose: all of them people will return to him for account: *“Did ye think that we had created you in jest, and that ye would not be brought back to us (for account)?”* (Qu., 23:115); this is what true believers confess and say: *“To Allāh we belong, and to Him is our return”* (Qu., 2:156).

No man is meant to be on earth forever and there is no escape from death. He who created death and life is powerful over everything. There is no limited time for death according to the Qur'ān, everyone in different situations with different ages may taste death:

“... We cause whom we will to rest in the wombs for an appointed term, then do we bring you out as babes, then (foster you) that you may reach your age of full strength; and some of you are called to die, and some are sent back to the feeblest old age, so that they know nothing after having known (much), and (further), thou seest the earth barren and lifeless, but when We pour down rain on it, it is stirred (to life), it swells, and it puts forth every kind of beautiful growth in pairs. This is so, because Allāh is the reality: it is He who gives life to the dead, and it is He Who has power over all things. And, verily, the Hour will come: there can be no doubt about it, or about (the fact) that Allāh will raise up all who are in the graves” (Qur'ān, 22:5-7).

As mentioned above, death is inevitable and God has sentenced man to death, but is it the end and will everything be finished at death? Does life end without any after-death existence? Is death something palpable? What happens after death if death is not the final destination? These are the questions that we here answer according to the Qur'ān in the next paragraphs.

As the Qur'ān states, God created man attentively and life and creation is not without aim. This is a question that God asks mankind in the Qur'ān. He asks man *“Did you then think that We had created you in jest, and that ye would not be brought back to Us (for account)”* (Qu., 23:115). This question indicates that in the Qur'ān creation is purposeful and everything will have a result. Elsewhere it is stated that the aim of creation is worshipping God: *“I have only created Jinns and men, that they may serve Me”* (Qu., 51:56). This is what the believers declare in their prayers and say: *“Our Lord! Not for naught hast Thou created (all) this! Glory to Thee! Give us salvation from the Penalty of the Fire”* (Qu., 3:191).

God has created man to live according to his decrees that he has revealed to his chosen prophets to guide man to the straight path, but this is not mere obedience in the Qur'ān; obeying God and then dying without any reward is not acceptable. It is a reciprocal action; it means that He is a fair judge who reckons all good deeds. It is a formula in the Qur'ān that *“Then shall*

anyone who has done an atom's weight of good, see it! And anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil, shall see it" (Qu. 99:7-8); moreover, "Allāh hath purchased of the Believers their persons and their goods; for theirs (in return) is the Garden (of Paradise)" (Qu., 9:111). Apparently, death is not the end and this world cannot be the only residence for mankind.

According to the Qur'ān, the reality of death can be experienced by people in their everyday lives. Death is something that can be experienced every day before the real death. The Qur'ān compares death to sleep, so that when man sleeps his soul leaves his body, it leaves the body but not completely, it returns back to the body if his death time has not arrived yet.

“اللَّهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْأَنْفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِهَا وَالَّتِي لَمْ تَمُتْ فِي مَنَامِهَا فَيُمْسِكُ الَّتِي قَضَىٰ عَلَيْهَا الْمَوْتَ وَيُرْسِلُ الْأُخْرَىٰ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ”

“It is Allāh that takes the souls (of men) at death; and those that die not (He takes) during their sleep: those on whom He has passed the decree of death, He keeps back (from returning to life), but the rest He sends (to their bodies) for a term appointed. Verily in this are Signs for those who reflect” (Qur'ān, 39:42).

Ṭabarī, a 10th century exegete, states under these verse that God Almighty takes people's souls while they are sleeping. In dreams, souls visit those who have passed away, which helps them get familiar with the world of spirits as much as God wishes. Those souls that have to die will be kept there, but those who have to continue life will be returned to life until the appointed time of death (time of death predestined by God).²⁵⁶ From this verse of the Qur'ān and this interpretation at least, it can be inferred that:

- 1- The Qur'ān preaches the existence of the soul after death.
- 2- Sleeping and dreams make the experience of life after death palpable for all people.

In addition to this verse, the same idea is stated in another verse that compares sleep to death.

“وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَتَوَفَّاكُم بِاللَّيْلِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا جَرَحْتُم بِالنَّهَارِ ثُمَّ يَبْعَثُكُمْ فِيهِ لِيُقْضَىٰ أَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ”

“It is He Who doth take your souls by night, and hath knowledge of all that you have done by day: by day doth He raise you up again; that a term appointed be fulfilled; in the end unto Him will be your return; then will He show you the truth of all that ye did” (Qur'ān, 6:60).

Considering the above-mentioned verses, we can assume that the Qur'ān refers to a kind of existence after death. One can follow this idea clearly in more verses in the Qur'ān. For example, when the Qur'ān talks about martyrs it wants believers not to consider them dead, but alive in the presence of their Lord and rejoicing in the generosity and reward that God has given them:

“وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا ۚ بَلْ أحيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ فَرِحِينَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَيَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَلْحَقُوا بِهِمْ مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ أَلَّا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِنِعْمَةِ اللَّهِ وَفَضْلِهِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ”

“Think not of those who are slain in Allāh's way as dead. Nay, they live, finding their sustenance in the Presence of their Lord. They rejoice in the

²⁵⁶ Abī Ja'far Muḥammad ibn i Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī: Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl 'āy al-Qur'ān*, ed., 'Abd Allāh 'Abd al-Muhsin al-Turkī (Cairo: Markaz al-Buḥūṣwa al-Dirāsāt al-'Arabīyyah wa al-Islāmiyyah, 1422 H, 2001 CE), 20: 215-216.

Bounty provided by Allāh: and with regard to those left behind, who have not joined them (in their bliss), the (martyrs) glory in the fact that on them is no fear, nor have they (cause to) grieve” (Qur’ān, 3:169-170).

The following verses of the Qur’ān can provide some clues for existence in the Afterlife. For example, Qur’ān, 4:134, which refers to the endowment of God to the righteous. The verb in this sentence is in the present tense (*yurzaqūn* يَرْزُقُونَ) and indicates something occurring. The reward of Allāh in the Hereafter can be also an example of the Qur’ān’s belief in life after death:

“مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا فَعِنْدَ اللَّهِ ثَوَابُ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا”

“If anyone desires a reward in this life, in Allāh’s (gift) is the reward (both) of this life and of the Hereafter: for Allāh is He that heareth and seeth (all things)” (Qur’ān, 4:134).

Another example that deals with life after death in the Qur’ān is Chapter 40, verses 45-46. These verses are about the chastisement of the Pharaoh and his followers in Hellfire. It is stated that the fire is brought morning and evening to the Pharaoh because of his evil deeds.

“فَوَقَاهُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتٍ مَا مَكَرُوا ۗ وَحَاقَ بِآلِ فِرْعَوْنَ سُوءُ الْعَذَابِ النَّارُ يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَيْهَا غُدُوًّا وَعَشِيًّا ۖ وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ أَدْخِلُوا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ أَشَدَّ الْعَذَابِ”

“Then Allāh saved him from (every) ill that they plotted (against him), but the burnt of the Penalty encompassed on all sides the People of Pharaoh. In front of Fire will they be brought, morning and evening: and (the Sentence will be) on the Day that judgment will be established: ‘Cast ye the People of Pharaoh into the severest Penalty’” (Qur’ān, 40:45-46).

These verses are also interpreted as indications of the life after death. The souls of the followers of Pharaoh are exposed to the fire day and night, embodied as black birds while being chastised by Hellfire. This exposure to the fire is something which is happening now and continues to the Day of Resurrection; therefore, it can be concluded that death is not the end, but a beginning to reap what man has sown on earth, and life continues even after death (*Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 20, 336-340).

Regarding the previous part, man is mortal in body but his soul will continue to live. He must expect to see the result of his deeds, good or evil. As mentioned earlier, the Qur’ān’s perspective on death is that death is something inevitable and certain, something which is always ready to take man in; and it is because of this that in the Islamic tradition, death is mostly referred to by the word *iḥtiḍār* from the Arabic root *ḤDR*, which means to be present or to become present, in the presence of something or somebody, and the dying person is called *muḥtaḍar*, which means to be at the point of death, in the agony of death, visited by death or near to death.

It is worth mentioning that whenever the Qur’ān refers to death some special terms are used about death and its coming such as: *ḥaḍara* (to become present) (*Qu.*, 4:18); *Jā’a* (to come) (*Qu.*, 6:61); *Ghamarāt* (the rigours or pangs) (*Qu.*, 6:93); *sakarāt al-mawt* (the intoxication of death, i.e. the mental confusion resulting from the agony of death) (*Qu.*, 50:19), *tawaffā*, which means to reach something or to fulfil something (*Qu.*, 16:32); *balaghat* (fully attained) (*Qu.*, 56:83). These terms can be divided into three categories according to their purpose:

- 1- The first two words refer to an action; someone or something comes or becomes present at death, like a creature that can go anywhere, and one will be ready in its presence at the time of death.²⁵⁷
- 2- The second two terms refer to the difficulties that accompany death.
- 3- The third group refers to an action or omission which should be done and fulfilled completely and perfectly.

Regarding these assumptions, these questions arise: Who or what comes at the time of death when the Qur'ān uses verbs like *ḥaḍara* and *Jā'a*? How does death happen? If the act of dying is named by words like *tawaffā* or *balāḡat* death then who or what is responsible for fulfilling this? The Qur'ān has three answers for the person or being who is responsible for the omission. In one case it states that God is responsible for taking the soul out of the body: *"It is Allāh that takes the souls (of men) at death"* (Qu., 39:42); *"... But I worship Allāh – Who will take your souls (at death): I am commanded to be (in the ranks) of the Believers"* (Qu., 10:104), and it is done because it is God who has created life and death: *"Blessed be He in Whose hands is Dominion; and He over all things hath Power – He Who created Death and Life..."* (Qu., 67:2). However, it seems that it is not only God himself who is in charge of this responsibility, but there are some other verses that show God has appointed some angels to carry this responsibility: *"(Namely) those whose lives the angels take in a state of purity, saying (to them), 'Peace be on you; enter the Garden...'"* (Qu., 16:32); *"...He sets guardians over you. At length, when death approaches one of you, our angels take his soul, and they never fail in their duty"* (Qu., 6:61) and above all the Angel of Death (*malak al_mawt*: ملك الموت) *"Say: The Angel of Death, put in charge of you, will (duly) take your souls: then shall ye be brought back to your Lord"* (Qu., 32:11).

As for why death is accompanied by difficulties, the Qur'ān describes the last moment of man's life at the time of death, when no one is able to do anything for the dying person (*muḥtaḍar*). At this moment, man is disillusioned and finds out that there is no way but death. He feels the agony of death and is aware that he must give up his soul to the life-giver:

"Yea, when (the soul) reaches to the collar-bone (in its exit), and there will be a cry, 'Who is a magician (to restore him)?' And he will conclude that it is (the Time) of Parting; and one leg will be joined with another: That Day the Drive will be (all) to thy Lord!" (Qur'ān, 75:26-29).

At death, the Angel of Death and/or other angels attend near the moribund to take the soul from the body.

"He is the Irresistible, (watching) from above over His servants, and He sets guardians over you. At length, when death approaches one of you, Our angels take his soul, and they never fail in their duty"; "Say: 'The Angel of Death, put in charge of you, will (duly) take your souls: then shall ye be brought back to your Lord'" (Qur'ān, 6:61; 32:11).

It is also indicated that angels, who are in charge of taking the soul, do not treat believers, the righteous, unbelievers and evil-doers in the same way. Unbelievers must struggle and have problems at death.

"(Namely) those whose lives the angels take in a state of wrongdoing to their own souls. Then would they offer submission (with the pretence), 'We did

²⁵⁷ It is useful to mention that after Resurrection and reckoning of the deeds, death will be sacrificed as an animal to show that those who are in Paradise or in Hell will find no other way to get rid of their final fate.

no evil (knowingly).’ (The angels will reply), ‘Nay, but verily Allāh knoweth all that ye did; So enter the gates of Hell, to dwell therein. Thus evil indeed is the abode of the arrogant.’”

“If thou couldst but see how the wicked (do fare) in the flood of confusion at death! – the angels stretch forth their hands, (saying), ‘Yield up your souls: this day shall ye receive your reward – a penalty of shame, for that ye used to tell lies against Allāh, and scornfully to reject His Signs!’” (Qur’ān, 16:28; 6:93).

At this moment, believers and righteous people receive joyful tidings from angels *“(Namely) those whose lives the angels take in purity, saying (to them), ‘Peace be on you; enter ye the Garden, because of (the good) which ye did (in the world)’” (Qu., 16:32).* It is also mentioned that hypocrites and unbelievers will be slapped and beaten on their faces and backs because of their wrongdoings and unbelieving.

“If thou couldst see, when the angels take the souls of the Unbelievers (at death), (how) they smite their faces and their backs, (saying): ‘Taste the Penalty of the blazing Fire – ‘Because of (the deeds) which your (own) hands sent forth; for Allāh is never unjust to His servants.’”

“But how (will it be) when the angels take their souls at death, and smite their faces and their backs?” (Qur’ān, 8:50-52; 47:27).

Whereas, for God’s friends are good tidings and a good life in the Hereafter:

“Those who believe and (constantly) guard against evil – For them are Glad Tidings, in the life of the present and in the Hereafter; no change can there be in the Words of Allāh; this is indeed the supreme Felicity” (Qur’ān, 10:64).

The implications of the Qur’ānic evidence given above can be summarised in the following table.

Life-taker	The status of the soul at the time of death	Interrogation, judges and place of interrogation	The reflection of deeds in the Afterlife	The final habitat
God <i>Malik al-Mawt</i> Some other angels	The soul is surrounded by angels of mercy and angels of wrath. While the former welcome it with the best tidings, the latter torture evil souls	There is no direct indication of judgment of the soul in the Afterlife or any particular angel that is in charge of interrogation	Fortunes and miseries in the Afterlife	Paradise Hell

The story of the soul according to the Qur’ān

There are many other verses that have been interpreted by different commentators as a reference to the life after death, but, as it appears, the above-mentioned verses of the Qur’ān are

explicitly concerned with theme of the Afterlife and leave no doubt that ‘the existence after death, its awards and punishments’ is one of the main doctrines of the Qur’ān.²⁵⁸

However, there are some verses in the Qur’ān that, due to the interpretations, have been categorised under the subject of life after death. For example, Qur’ān Chapter 40, verse 11, and Chapter 2, verse 28 point to two lives and two deaths, which has been interpreted by some commentators such as Ṭabarī (Persia, 9th-10th centuries CE), *Ibn al-kaṣīr* (Syria, 14th century CE), and *Qurṭubī* (Cordoba, 13th century CE) as life after death and questioning in the grave.²⁵⁹

“فَأَلَوْا رَبَّنَا أَمَتْنَا اثْنَتَيْنِ وَأُحْيَيْتَنَا اثْنَتَيْنِ فَاعْتَرَفْنَا بِذُنُوبِنَا فَهَلْ إِلَى خُرُوجٍ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ” (40:11)
 “كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَكُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمَيِّتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ” (2:28)

“How can ye reject the faith in Allāh? – seeing that ye were without life, and He gave you life; then will He cause you to die, and will again bring you to life; and again to Him will ye return. Twice shall we punish them: and in addition shall they be sent to a grievous penalty” (*Qur’ān* 2:28).

“They will say: ‘Our Lord! Twice hast Thou made us without life, and twice hast Thou given us Life! Now have we recognised our sins: Is there any way out [of this]?’” (*Qur’ān* 40:11).

There are also some interpretations of part of Chapter 9, verse 10, and Chapter 52, verse 47 that imply the punishment of unbelievers and evil-doers after death in the grave.²⁶⁰

“سَنُعَذِّبُهُمْ مَرَّتَيْنِ ثُمَّ يُرْتَدُونَ إِلَيْهِ عَذَابٍ عَظِيمٍ” (9:101)
 “وَإِنَّ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا عَذَابًا دُونَ ذَلِكَ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ” (52:47)

“Twice shall we punish them: and in addition shall they be sent to a grievous penalty” (*Qur’ān* 9:101).

²⁵⁸ Some scholars deny the possibility of the life of soul in an intermediate phase between death and Resurrection. For example, Tommaso Tesei states that “It is quite evident what the rhetorical interest is that leads the Qur’ān to focus on the description of the post-mortem fate of humanity in Heaven and Hell, rather than in the intermediate state. The rhetorical purpose is also strong in Qur’ān 23:99–100, whose point is not to provide a picture of the dead person’s condition beyond the barzakh, but to warn that repentance will not be possible once death has come. In a similar way, the recurring allusions to the motif of post-mortem oblivion are never meant to explain the intermediate state, but rather seem to reflect general concepts about the soul in relation to its final reunion with the body,” but I think it is not easy to say that the Qur’ān does not believe in an Afterlife and life between death and Resurrection, although some ambiguity is observable; however, here and there some verses portray a scene which makes life after death from the Qur’ān viewpoint possible as I mentioned above. About Tesei’s viewpoint see Tommaso Tesei, “The barzakh and the Intermediate State of the Dead in the Qur’ān” in: *Locating Hell in Islamic Traditions*, ed., Christian Lange (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 31-52.

²⁵⁹ Abī Ja’far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī: Jāmi’ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl ‘āy al-Qur’ān*, vol. 11, ed. ‘Abd Allāh ‘Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (Cairo, Markaz al-Buḥūṣ wa al-Dirāsāt al-‘Arabiyyah wa al-Islāmiyyah, 1422 H, 2001 CE), vol. 1, 448-450, vol. 20, 292; Ḥāfiẓ abī al-Fadā ‘ismā’īl ibn ‘Umar ibn Kaṣīr ibn al-Qarashī al-Damishqī, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, ed., Sami ibn Muḥammad al-salāmah (Rīyāḍ, Dār Ṭayyibah Linashr wa al-Tuzī’, 1999 CE, 1420 H), 7: 133; Abī ‘abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn aḥmad ibn abī bakr al-qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi’ li Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, ed. ‘Abd Allāh ‘Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (Beirut, al-Resalah, 2006 CE, 1427 H), 374-375; vol. 18, 335-336; Abī Ja’far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī: Jāmi’ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl ‘āy al-Qur’ān*, vol. 20, ed. ‘Abd Allāh ‘Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (Cairo, Markaz al-Buḥūṣ wa al-Dirāsāt al-‘Arabiyyah wa al-Islāmiyyah, 1422 H, 2001 CE), 292; *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 445, 448-449.

²⁶⁰ Abī Ja’far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī: Jāmi’ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl ‘āy al-Qur’ān*, vol. 11, ed. ‘Abd Allāh ‘Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (Cairo: Markaz al-Buḥūṣ wa al-Dirāsāt al-‘Arabiyyah wa al-Islāmiyyah, 1422 H, 2001 CE), 644; *Ibid.*, vol. 21, 603-604.

“And verily, for those who do wrong, there is another punishment besides this: but most of them understand not” (Qur’ān 52:47).

To sum up this part, it can be stated that the Qur’ān preaches the continuation of life after death and a substance which is taken by the Angel of Death and his helper angels that will be rewarded or punished according to its beliefs and deeds in the material world.²⁶¹

4.3 Barzakh and exegesis

The Islamic tradition introduces life after death with the term *Barzakh*. *Barzakh* appears first in three verses of the Qur’ān, 25:53; 55:19-20; 23:100. As translators and commentators have rendered and interpreted these two verses, it refers to a ‘barrier between two things.’²⁶²

“ وَهُوَ الَّذِي مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ هَذَا عَذْبٌ فُرَاتٌ وَهَذَا مِلْحٌ أُجَاجٌ وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخًا وَحِجْرًا مَّحْجُورًا ”

“It is He who has let free two bodies of flowing water: one palatable and sweet, and the other salt and bitter; yet has he made a barrier between them, a partition that is forbidden to be passed” (Qur’ān 25:53).

“ مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ يَلْتَقِيَانِ بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخٌ لَا يَبْغِيَانِ ”

“He has let free the two bodies of flowing water, meeting together: between them is a barrier which they do not transgress” (Qur’ān 55:19-20).

Thus far, we have seen the meaning of word *barzakh* in two verses of the Qur’ān; elsewhere, The Qur’ān mentions it in another verse that carries another meaning. This time it refers to a dialogue between God and people:

“ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ رَبِّ أَنْ يَحْضُرُونِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ لَعَلِّي أَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ كَلَّا إِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَائِلُهَا وَمِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ بَرْزَخٌ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ”

“And I seek refuge with Thee, O my Lord! lest they should come near me. (In falsehood they will be) until, when death comes to one of them, he says: ‘O my Lord! Send me back (to life) in order that I may work righteous in the things I neglected.’ ‘By no means! It is but a word he says.’ Before them is a partition till the Day they are raised up” (Qur’ān 23:98-100).

Apparently, this verse is a dialogue between those who have passed away and God; they ask him to let them return to the world to compensate for their evil deeds, but they are told that *barzah* stands between them and the material world until the Day of Resurrection when they will be raised from their graves. Here in this verse many translators and interpreters have translated it as barrier too, but a barrier between the worldly life and when man will be resurrected:

“The world of the grave; from death to Resurrection, life after death; life after death, between reward and punishment; a barrier between death and

²⁶¹ One can also refer to: Sebastian Günther, “Eschatologische Vorstellungen im Koran,” in *Gottesgedanken: Erkenntnis, Eschatologie und Ethik in Religionen der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters*, Reinhard Feldmeier, Monika Winet, eds. (Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 113-122.

²⁶² *Tafsīr Ṭabarī*, vol. 17, pp. 475-476, vol. 22, pp.200-203; *al-Durar al-Maṣūūr*, vol. 11, pp.193-194, vol. 14, p.112; *al-Tibyān*, vol. 7, p.498, vol. 9, p.469; *al-Ṣāfi*, vol. 4, p.19, vol. 5, p. 109; *Tafsīr Kabīr*, vol. 24, p.100, vol. 29, p.101; *al-Mizān*, vol. 15, p.228, vol. 19, p.103-104.

Resurrection, between death and returning back to the world on the day of doom; life in the grave; what remains of the world after death."²⁶³

It is apparent from exegesis that *barzakh* is considered an eschatological term in Islamic tradition, which mostly refers to the life after death or the world of spirits. Except Qur'ān 23:100, which applies eschatological concept, the other two verses are not relevant to this subject. However, it should be noted that this concept has been developed according to the Islamic traditions and narrations.

4.4 Barzah and its meaning

So far what we have seen is related to the exegesis and translations of the word *barzakh* and none of the above-cited translations and exegeses mentions the literal meaning or etymology of this Islamic term. An eleventh century CE Muslim scholar of Qur'anic exegesis and philologist, *Abī al-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn ibn-i Muḥammad* (502 AH) known as *Raghib Isfahānī*, the author of *al-Mufradāt*, defines *barzakh* as a barrier between two things²⁶⁴ which, as he mentions, derives from the Persian word *barzah* (برزه)²⁶⁵ which has been arabicised, but he does not explain more about it (*al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, p. 43). For the meaning of *barzah*, *Dehkhodā* gives different explanations, but the most important ones that may be useful for this study are *bulandī-yi kūh*, *Quleh-yi kūh* and *bulandī* (the height of the mountain, tip of the mountain, height).²⁶⁶ About the meaning of *barzakh*, *Kāšāf Iṣṭilāhāt al-Funūn wa al-'Ulūm* states that it is a Persian word which means a partition or a barrier between two things, and in the Qur'ān it refers to life after death until Resurrection (*Kāšāf Iṣṭilāhāt al-Funūn wa al-'Ulūm*, vol. 1, p. 322). Besides, Arthur Jeffery states that this is a word with a non-Arabic root for two reasons: first, it has no verbal root in Arabic, and secondly there is no evidence of the use of this word in old Arabic poetry. He thinks that this word is a loan word from the Middle Persian (*Pahlavi*) word Phl. *parasang* or *prasang*, NP. *farsakh*, which means a unit of measurement of land and roads which refers to a barrier between any two things.²⁶⁷

In addition to *Kāšāf i Iṣṭilāhāt*, Gordon Newby in *A Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam* asserts that *barzakh* is an Arabic word but with Persian background, which means obstacle and barrier; it indicates the relationship between this term and its eschatological idea.²⁶⁸ Moreover, according to the book *Alfāz al-fārsiy al-mu'arraba*, *barzakh* is a Persian word derived from word *paržak* which means crying, lamentation, grief and raising of the voice (*al-nahīb wa al-*

²⁶³ *Tafsīr Ṭabarī*, vol. 17, pp. 109-111; *al-Ddurar al-Manṣūr*, vol. 10, pp.616-619; *al-Ttibyān*, vol. 7, p.394, *al-Ṣāfi*, vol. 3, p.410; *Tafsīr i Kabīr*, vol. 23, pp.119-122; *al-Mizān*, vol. 15, p.69.

²⁶⁴ *TāJ al-'Arūs min Jawāhir al-Qāmūs* states the same meaning for *barzah*. It says:

“ما بين كل شيئين و في الصحاح: (الحاجز بين الشيين) و البرزخ: ما بين الدنيا و الاخره قبل الحشر (من وقت الموت الي القيامة). و قال الفراء: البرزخ من يوم يموت الي يوم يبعث (و من مات) فقد دخله، اي البرزخ”

See Muḥammad murtqā al-ḥusaynī al-Zabiydī, *Tāğ al-'Arūs min Ġawāhir al-Qāmūs*, vol. 7, ed., 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad al-hārūn (Maṭba'ah ḥukūmat al-Kuwayt, 1994CE/1415 H), 234.

²⁶⁵ *Dehḥodā* states that *barzah* means agriculture and the branch of a tree, see *Loğat Nāmeḥ ye Dehḥodā* (Tehrān, University of Tehrān, 1343), Letter B, part 1:6, p.886. this meaning cannot be correct for the word *barzah*.

²⁶⁶ 'Alī 'Akbar, *Dehkhudā*, *Loğat Nāmeḥ ye Dehkhudā* (Tehrān: University of Tehrān, 1343), Letter B, part 1:6, p.879. This meaning seems more possible. As for the additional final sound 'h', it could be a misreading or because of local dialects of the writer of *al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb*.

²⁶⁷ Arthur, Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1938), 77.

²⁶⁸ Gordon, Newby, *A Concise Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Oxford: One World, 2004), 42.

bikā').²⁶⁹ It is worth mentioning that no such word is attested; moreover, *ž* would be unusual in Pahlavi, and other rules of sound changes do not lead to the word *barzakh*.²⁷⁰

*“The boundary between Heavens, Hell and Earth, that prevents souls from traversing from one region to the other. For some, it is the intermediary place between Heaven and Hell, in which, however, there is no purgation of sins. In this last sense, it is better understood as ‘Limbo’ rather than ‘Purgatory’.”*²⁷¹

Regarding all the explanations and interpretations, it seems that none of the statements is convincing although they all state that this word is not originally an Arabic one, but most of them think it is Persian. Before any conclusion, it is better to look at the word through the context. As mentioned before, most commentators and interpreters have defined the word *barzakh* as barrier and partition, but in a different context. It is a barrier, but it is no longer a barrier between two seas or between sweet and salt water. It is an obstacle which prevents some people from doing something or going somewhere again. Regarding the text, the wicked ask God to let them return to the world to compensate for their wrong-doings, but a barrier prevents them, a barrier that stands between them and the life in the world; however, they are alive because they are talking with God and his angels while they have departed the material world. Seemingly, they are continuing their life, but a life beyond or above the material life. It is an intermediate state between death and Resurrection. To show this meaning, it is better to look at the exegesis and the proposed etymology of this word in the next part. It is necessary to keep in mind that there is general agreement among scholars that the word *barzakh* is not of Arabic origin, mostly that it is a Persian word that has been translated as a barrier, the time between death and Resurrection, or the grave that separates man from the Hereafter.

In previous paragraphs, the three occurrences of the term *barzakh* have been mentioned, and it was also indicated that interpreters of the Qur’ān have tended to interpret this term in all of these verses as a barrier or partition between two things. This interpretation seems plausible in two cases (*Qu.*, 25:55; 55:20), where the Qur’ān mentions the power of God in creating a barrier between two seas and two different kinds of water to prevent them from mixing together. If this was the original meaning of the term, the passage *Qu.*, 23:100 suggests that its meaning broadened and acquired an association with the Afterlife. Such interpretations can be seen even in the earliest exegesis of the Qur’ān. For example, one of the oldest interpretations of the Qur’ān, near to the Prophet Muhammad’s lifetime, is *Tafsīr Mudjāhid*, from 8th century. This work also gives the fundamental meaning of the word as ‘partition, obstruction,’ and connects the use of the term in the Qur’ān 23:100 with the grave ‘obstructing’ the dead from returning to this world.²⁷² Another interpretation from the 9th and 10th centuries, *Tafsīr Muqātil*, reads this verse as a dialogue between God, unbelievers and the Angel of Death. Unbelievers, at the time of death, ask the Angel of Death to let them return to the world to compensate for their mistakes and wrong deeds, in spite of their request, but the Angel of Death denies their wishes. They ask God to release them to go back to the material world to make up for their mistakes, but their

²⁶⁹ Iddī, Shir, *Alfāz al-Fārsiyyah al-Mu’arrabah* (Beirut: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Kātūlūkiyyah, 1988), 19.

²⁷⁰ If this etymology was correct, *p* would have become *b* and final *k* > *g*, so **barzag* would have become Arabic **barzağ*.

²⁷¹ Iddī, Shir, *Alfāz al-Fārsiyyah al-Mu’arrabah* (Beirut: al-Maṭba‘ah al-Kātūlūkiyyah, 1988), 19.

²⁷² Mujāhid ibn-i jabr, *Tafsīr al-Imām Mujāhid ibn Jabr*, ed. Muḥammad ‘abd al-Salām abū al-nīl (Dār al-fikr al-‘islāmī al-ḥadīṣ, 1989/1410), 488.

pleas are denied because *barzakh* surrounds them, and they will not be able to return to the world till the day of Resurrection.²⁷³ Ṭabarī, a famous historian and interpreter of the Qur’ān in the world of Islam from the 10th and 11th centuries, under this verse in his book *Tafsīr Ṭabarī* states:

“At the time of death, when unbelievers see death’s sentence from God about them and feel the divine torment, ask God to resend them to the world to compensate the wrong doings and heedlessness to the God’s laws, but it is impossible, because behind them there is an obstacle which prevents them till the end of the days when they will be congregated from their tombs” (*Tafsīr Ṭabarī*, vol. 17, pp. 106-107).

He also quotes some viewpoints about *barzakh* referring to it as what happens after death, events in the grave from death to Resurrection and what remains from the world (*barzakh al-bāqīyya al-ddunyā*) (*Tafsīr Ṭabarī*, vol. 17, p. 110).

Two other interpretations from 11th century, *Tafsīr al-Samarqandī* and *Tafsīr Qumī*, respectively state that God reprieves the unbelievers and the wicked till their death. At that time, they ask the Angel of Death to let them return to the world, but they hear that it is only God who can do so; as a result, they ask God to send them back to do good deeds and retrieve their life and amend their deeds, but this request will be rejected, for *barzakh* as a barrier has surrounded them. Here, they both define *barzakh* as a hindrance, the grave from death to Resurrection and the gap between two times of blowing of the trumpet on the day of Resurrection (*Tafsīr al-Samarqandī*. Vol. 2, p. 421; *Tafsīr Qumī*, vol. 2, p. 94).

Regarding all these interpretations, there is no doubt that *barzakh* from the early Islamic ages had an eschatological meaning that referred to the life after death and was relevant to the subject of death and the Afterlife in Islamic tradition. These ideas can be seen in addition to the above-mentioned interpretations, in some other early Islamic books about the terminology of the Qur’ān such as *Ma’ānī al-Qur’ān al-Farrā* (10th century CE), *Ma’ānī al-Qur’ān wa i’rābīh al-Zajjāj* from the 11th century CE, and *Ma’ānī al-Qur’ān-karīm al-Naḥḥās* from the 11th century CE. What can be inferred is that Qur’ān, 23:100 refers to the time of death or events after death (Islamic individual eschatology) so that unbelievers and polytheists ask God to send them back to the world, but *barzakh* as an obstacle between this world and the Hereafter stands between them.²⁷⁴

4.4 On the etymology of *barzakh*

Reviewing all the indications, these questions come to mind: 1. Where does this loan word come from? 2. What could its meaning in the original language be? The existence of some Iranian words in Arabic and in the Qur’ān is undeniable – words such as Paradise (*firdaws*), sin (*junāḥ*) and others like these. The evidence suggests that, the Islamic term *barzakh* is a non-Arabic word, probably from the Persian word *Frasang*. Although *frasang* is attested in Middle

²⁷³ Muqātil ibn Sulaymān, *Tafsīr Muqātil ibn Sulaymān*, ed. ‘Abd allāh Maḥmūd al-Shaḥātah, vol. 3 (Beirut: Mu’assisah al-tārīkh al-‘Arabi, 2002/1423), 165.

²⁷⁴ Abī Zakariyyā yaḥyā ibn-i ziyād al-farrā, *ma’ānī al-Qur’ān* (Beirut: ‘ālam al-Kutub, 1983/1403), vol. 2, 242; Abī ‘shāq ‘ibrāhīm ibn-i al-sirī, *ma’ānī al-Qur’ān wa i’rābīh al-Zajjāj*, ed. ‘Abd al-Jalīl ‘Abduh Shilbī (Beirut: ‘ālam al-Kutub, 1988/1408), vol. 4, 22.

Persian sources, according to the sound change rules, it could not have changed to the Qur'ānic word *barzakh*.²⁷⁵

To explore the subject more deeply, it is better to consider an exception, the semi-etymology that *al-Mufradāt* proposes for this word. As mentioned earlier, this says that this word derives from the stem *barzah*, which recalls the Avestan adjective *barəz* and the Avestan noun *barəzah* which mean respectively high and height, along with *aṅhav*, *aṅhu* from the root \sqrt{ahu} which means to be, to be available, to exist, to be alive bodily or mentally. This compound noun can be compared to the term *dūzakh* (Av. *dužaxhu*: Yt. 19.44, *daožahu*: Vd. 19.47; OIr. **daušaxva*; Mid. Pers. *dwšḥw* /*došaxw/dušox*; Inscriptional Middle Persian *dwšḥwy*; Man. Mid. Pers. *dwšwx/dušox*; Man. Parth. *dwjx/dōžax*; Arm. lw. *džox*; lit., evil existence, Hell);²⁷⁶ therefore, similarly, it could be Av. **barəzahhu*; OIr. **barezaxw*; Mid Per. *barzaxw/barzax*, 'high existence,' which could have been used to refer to life beyond this life.²⁷⁷ Apparently, this etymology matches the concept of the height of the sky, where *frawahrs* dwell (as guardian angels or souls of the deceased) and descend to help people whenever they are invoked.²⁷⁸

If one accepts this etymology for the word *barzakh*, this question arises as to why the meaning has changed from 'beyond life' or 'life beyond' to 'barrier.' Answering this question is not easy, but it can be stated that the Qur'ān divides human life into two main stages: the world and the Hereafter (*al-dunyā wa al-'ākhirah*), and because the Afterlife is between these two stages as a barrier between worldly life and Resurrection, the term *barzakh*. which mainly refers to the life beyond this material life, has taken on a secondary meaning in the Qur'ān, and although the Qur'ān uses its secondary meaning, it can be observed that the primary (eschatological) meaning of the word is mentioned in Qur'ān 23:100 too.

4.5 After death in Sunni traditions

After the Qur'ān, the second source for studying Islamic beliefs is the sayings attributed to Prophet Muhammad, his early followers and his family. In this case, both of the great Islamic sects have their own canonised books of tradition. There are six valid books of tradition in Sunni Islam. These six important Sunni tradition books are: *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Muslim*, *Sunan ibn al-Mājjā*, *Sunan abī Dāwud*, *Sunan al-Tirmidī*, and *Sunan al-Nasā'ī*. In addition to these six books, there are many other books that are addressed by Muslim scholars, such as *al-Mawṭā* by *Anas ibn Mālik*.

The *ḥadīṡ* related to the subject of the Afterlife are mostly scattered in these sources. One can find these *ḥadīṡ* mostly in chapters concerned with death and corpses, which are named 'the book of corpses' (*كتاب الجنائز*). In the next paragraphs some of these traditions will be discussed

²⁷⁵ As to whether *frasang* is an Iranian word, there is argument between scholars. Some scholars insist on the Greek root of *frasang*. See William, Smith, "Parasang," in: *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, ed. William Smith (1854), 886-887.

²⁷⁶ Mansour, Shaki, "Dūzak," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, in: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/duzak> (accessed September 28, 2015).

²⁷⁷ Shaked also has the same thought for the etymology of this term, and what he says could be good evidence for my assumptions. He says: "The koranic term *barzak*, of Persian provenance (presumably from **burz-axw* "high existence"), was also used in the Islamic tradition in a similar sense." See Shaul, Shaked, "Eschatology i. In Zoroastrianism and Zoroastrian Influence" *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, in: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/eschatology-i> (accessed September 28, 2016).

²⁷⁸ See page 45 of this study.

briefly to portray what happens after death according to early Islamic sources and sayings of the founder.

4.5.1 The agonies of death

For the person who is about to die, death is accompanied by suffering and difficulties. Seemingly, many people suffer when they are about to leave the material world. There is no exception for agonies of death; it is stated that even the prophet of God was in agony at the time of death. He asked his followers to bring him a bowl of water and splashed some of it on his face, while he was testifying to the unity of God and saying: “*Lā ilāha illallāh*” (*none has the right to be worshipped but Allāh*). *Death has its agonies,*” he left the world.²⁷⁹

4.5.2 Good tidings and the evil tidings

At the time of death, it will be distinguished whether the dying person will be one of the people of Paradise or Hell. When someone is going to die, if he has been a true believer, God wants to visit him; otherwise, God hates to visit him. It is narrated that whoever wants to visit Allāh, Allāh wants to visit him, and whoever dislikes visiting Allāh, Allāh dislikes visiting him too. A true believer loves death because it is death that makes it possible for him to visit Allāh, and he will be granted the divine endowments and mercies, but an unbeliever dislikes visiting God because he knows that punishments and tortures by God are awaiting him. The mercy of God will be shown by glad tidings when a true believer is leaving world, but unbelievers will be faced with the worst tidings at the time of death.

*“O Messenger of Allāh! All of us dislike death.” He said: “It is not like that. But when the believer is given the good news of Allāh’s mercy, His pleasure, and His Paradise, then he loves to meet Allāh and Allāh loves to meet him. Whereas when the disbeliever is given the news of Allāh’s punishment and His wrath, he dislikes meeting Allāh, and Allāh dislikes meeting him.”*²⁸⁰

4.5.3 Satan and his forces at the time of death

In addition to the glad or worst tidings that a true believer or an unbeliever faces at the time of death, leaving the world as an infidel endangers man at the time of death, when Satan and his forces try to deceive him. They surround the dying person and do their best to deceive him, and make him to lose his faith in Islam. Such a belief can be observed in the prayers attributed to the Prophet Muhammad when he was taking refuge with God from Satan at the time of death.

“O Allāh, I seek refuge with You from old age, being thrown from a high place, being crushed by a falling wall, distress, burning and drowning. I seek refuge with You from being led astray by the Shaitān at the time of death

²⁷⁹Muhammad Muhsin Khan, trans., *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1997), vol. 5, p.447, n.4449. Also in: *Sunan Ibn Majah*, vol. 2, p.460, n.1623.

²⁸⁰ Abu Khaliyl, trans., *Jāmi‘ At-Tirmidhī* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2007), vol. 2, p.440-441, n.1067.

and from being killed in Your cause while fleeing from the battlefield. I seek refuge with You from dying of a scorpion sting.”²⁸¹

4.5.4 The Soul talks with those who take part in the funeral

After leaving the body, the soul does not lose consciousness and is aware of what happens around it. It observes whatever happens. It knows who carries the body, who washes it and who puts it in the grave. It is even stated that it talks with the people who are carrying the body to the cemetery. Depending on its status before God, as believer or unbeliever, it asks for its burial ceremony to be hastened or postponed because it knows what awaits it in the world of the grave.

“When the righteous man is placed on his bier, he says: Take me quickly, take me quickly. And when the bad man is placed on his bier he said: Woe to me! Where are you taking me?”²⁸²

4.5.5 Death of true believers and death of unbelievers²⁸³

The time of death for a true believer will be lovely experience. At the time of death, a true believer visits beautiful and welcoming angels. He visits angels with good tidings while

²⁸¹ Nāsīrudīn al-Khattāb, trans., *Sunan An-Nisā'ī* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2007), vol. 6, p.289, n.5534.

²⁸² Ibid., vol. 3, p.62-63, n.1909.

²⁸³ Muḥammad ibn in Ḥaydar ibn Mahdī ibn Ḥasan has collected this tradition in his PhD, from which I quote (Muḥammad ibn in Ḥaydar ibn Mahdī ibn Ḥasan, *Aḥādīṭ Ḥayāt al-Barzakh fī al-Kutub al-Tis'ah*, PhD Dissertation, Dār ibn Ḥazm, 2004/1425, 73-75:

Most of the traditions about the time of death of righteous and wicked souls, its status and conditions, the Angel of Death and being questioned in the grave are scattered in different books of traditions, and they all mostly can be found in these books: *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī, Kitāb al-Janāiz, Bāb mā Jā'a fī 'adhāb al-qabr; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Kitāb al-Jannah wa ṣīfat al-na'imihā wa ahlihā, Bāb 'arḍ ma'ad al-mayyit min al-Jannah aw al-nnār 'layh; Sunan Tirmidhī, Fī kitāb tafsīr al-qur'ān, Bāb wa min sūrat Ibrāhīm, Sunan Ibn Mājah, kitāb mā ḡ'a fī al-janāiz, Bāb mā ḡ'a fī al-julūs fī al-maqābir, and Sunan al-Nisā'ī, Kitāb al-Janāiz.*

“إن العبد المؤمن، إذا كان في انقطاع من الدنيا، و اقبال من الآخرة، نزل إليه ملائكة من السماء، بيض الوجوه كان وجوههم الشمس، معهم كفن من أكفان الجنة، و حنوط من حنوط الجنة حتى يجلسوا منه مد البصر، ثم يجيء الملك الموت عليه السلام حتى يجلس عند رأسه، فيقول: أيتها النفس الطيبة، اخرجي إلى مغفرة من الله و رضوان، قال: فتخرج تسيل كما تسيل القطرة من في السقاء فيأخذها، فإذا أخذها لم يدعوها في يده طرفه عين، حتى يأخذها فيجعلوها في ذلك الكفن، و في ذلك الحنوط، و يخرج منها كأطيب نعمة مسك، وجدت على وجه الارض، قال فيصعدون بها، فلا يمرون – يعني بها – على مأل من الملائكة، إلا قالوا: ما هذا الروح الطيب فيقولون: فلان بن فلان، بأحسن أسمائه التي كانوا يسمونه بها في الدنيا حتى ينتهوا بها إلى السماء الدنيا، فيسفتحون له، فيفتح لهم، فيشيعه من كل سماء مقربوها إلى السماء الت تليها، حتى ينتهي به إلى السماء السابعة، فيقول الله عز و جل: اكتبوا كتاب عبيدي في عليين و أعيدوه إلى الأرض، فأني منها خلقتهم و فيها أعيدهم و منها أخرجهم تارة أخرى قال فتعاد روحه في جسده، فيأتيه ملكان فيجلسانه، فيقولان له: من ربك، فيقول: ربي الله، فيقولان له: ما دينك، فيقول: ديني الإسلام فيقولان له: ما هذا الرجل الذي بعث فيكم، فيقول: هو رسول الله، فيقولان له: ما علمك، فيقول، قرأت كتاب الله فأبه و صدقت، فينادي مناد في السماء، أن صدق عبيدي فأقرشوه من الجنة، و ألبسوه من الجنة، و افتحوا له بابا إلى الجنة، قال: فيأتيه من روحها، و طيبها، و يفسح له في قبره مد بصره، قال: و يأتيه رجل حسن الوجه، حسن الثياب، طيب الريح، فيقول: أبشر بالذي يسرك، هذا يومك الذي كنت توعده، فيقول له: من أنت فوجهك الوجه يجيء بالخير، فيقول: أنا عمك الصالح، فيقول: رب أقم الساعة، حتى أرجع إلى أهلي و مالي.”

“و إن العبد الكافر، إذا كان في انقطاع من الدنيا، و اقبال من الآخرة نزل إليه من السماء ملائكة سود الوجوه، معهم المسوح، فيجلسون منه مد البصر، ثم يجيئ ملك الموت، حتى عند رأسه، فيقول: أيتها النفس الخبيثة اخرجي إلى سخط من الله و غضب، قال: فتفرق في جسده فينتزعها كما ينتزع السفود من الصوف المبلول، فيأخذها، فإذا أخذها لم يدعوها في يده طرفه عين، حتى يجعلوها في تلك المسوح، و يخرج منها كأن تن ريح جيفة، وجدت على وجه الارض، فيصعدون بها، فلا يمرون بها على مأل من الملائكة، إلا قالوا ما هذا الروح الخبيث، فيقولون: فلان بن فلان، بأقبح أسمائه، التي كان يسمى بها في الدنيا، حتى ينتهي به إلى السماء الدنيا، فيسفتح له، فلا يفتح له... فيقول الله عز و جل: اكتبوا كتابه في سجين في الارض السفلى فتطرح روحه طرحا... فتعاد روحه في جسده، و يأتيه ملكان، فيجلسانه، فيقولان له: من ربك؟ فيقول: هاه هاه لا أدريز فيقولان له: ما دينك؟ فيقول: هاه هاه لا أدريز فيقولان له: ما هذا الرجل الذي بعث فيكم؟ فيقول: هاه هاه لا أدريز فينادي مناد من السماء: أن كذب، فأفرشوا له من النار، و افتحوا له بابا إلى النار، فيأتيه من حرها و سمومها، و يضيق عليه قبره، حتى تختلف فيه أضلعه، و يأتيه رجل قبيح الوجه، قبيح الثياب، منتن الريح، فيقول: أبشر بالذي يسوءك، هذا يومك الذي كنت توعده، فيقول: من أنت فوجهك الوجه يجيء بالشر، فيقول: أنا عمك الخبيث، فيقول: رب لا تقم الساعة.”

their faces shine as sun, bringing him the clothes of Paradise, and clothing him in them. It is narrated that the Prophet Muhammad says:

*“When the soul of the believer departs, it is received by two angels who take it up. Hammâd said: ‘And he mentioned its good fragrance and he mentioned musk.’ He said: ‘The people of heaven say: ‘A good soul that has come from the earth. May Allāh bless you and the body in which you used to reside.’” Then it is taken to its Lord, Glorified and Exalted is He, then He says: ‘Take it to the Utmost Boundary’.”*²⁸⁴

Unbelievers experience difficulties when they are leaving the material world. When an unbeliever is going to leave the material world, the ugliest angels with the worst words welcome him. He visits the angels who promise him the boiling water and blazing fire that await him. These bad events that await him are due to his disobeying God, and to his ignorance. The Prophet portrays the attitude of an unbeliever at the time of death as follows:

*“When the soul of the disbeliever departs” – Hammâd said: “and he mentioned its foul stench, and he mentioned curses”- “the people of heaven say: ‘An evil soul that has come from the earth.’ It is said: ‘Take it to the Utmost Boundary.’”*²⁸⁵

The visiting by the angels of mercy is the first of the divine gifts to the true believer. When the Angel of Death comes to a true believer and asks him to leave his body, he takes him immediately and then embalms him with the embalment of Paradise, and clothes him in the divine garments. The soul can smell the odour of musk that has been prepared for a righteous person. Surrounded by angels and fragrances, the soul ascends to Heaven. While it is ascending to Heaven, each of the angels that come into contact with him asks: *“Who is this fragrant soul?”*; other angels introduce it with the best titles that it has ever been called in the world. It arrives at the heaven of the world (السماء الدنيا) and angels open a door to help it to ascend to the heavens. In each heaven, many angels accompany it until it reaches the seventh heaven. There, God Almighty says: *“Write down my servant’s records in the ‘iḷyyīn and take him back to the earth, because he was created from it, he returns into it, and he will be resurrected from it.”*

After taking the soul back to its body, two angels come to it. They make it sit up and start interrogating him. They ask it about its God, its religion and about that man (the Prophet Muhammad who was sent as apostle of God among Arabs, but for the whole world) who was sent to them. He replies:

“‘Allāh is my God, Islam is my religion, and he is the messenger of God.’ They ask him: ‘How do you know that?’ He says: ‘I read God’s book, I believed in him and I confirmed him.’ Then a herald from heaven calls and says: ‘My servant has said the truth, so provide him with the furniture of Paradise, clothe him in the clothes of Paradise, and open him a door to Paradise. Therefore, there comes to him a perfume from Paradise, and his grave is extended to the extreme of his eyesight.’”

Whatever a man does will be the means of joy and happiness in the world of the grave. After being interrogated by two angels and being accepted by God, it is turn of man’s deeds to help him. While a fragrance from Paradise blows to him, a fragrant handsome man with a pleasant face appears before him. He says to the soul: *“I am here with the good tidings from God*

²⁸⁴ Nasiruddin al-Khattab, trans., *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2007), vol. 7, p.264, n.2872.

²⁸⁵ Nasiruddin al-Khattab, trans., *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2007), vol. 7, p.265, no.2872.

for you that will please you; this is the day that you were promised.” The rejoicing soul asks him: “Who are you that your face brings goodness?” The man replies: “I am your good deeds.” When the soul hears this, it rejoices and asks God to hasten the coming of the Resurrection, so that it may rejoin its family and its property.

What is restated in the above paragraphs is the fate of a pious soul and the events after death while it is departing the world. At the time of death, an unbeliever encounters difficulties and pains. When a wicked soul is leaving the world, ugly angels bring it worn and shabby clothes, and the Angel of Death makes it leave the body, while he tells it about facing the wrath of God. When it (the soul) sees this, it becomes terrified and hesitates to leave the body, so the Angel of Death takes the soul out like a skewer which is pulled from wet wool.

As soon as it leaves the body, it sees angels between earth and heaven who curse it and say: “Who is this malicious soul?” They call it by the most indecent titles that it has ever heard until it reaches the sky of the world. They (the angels) do not open the doors to it and a divine herald calls and says:

“To those who reject Our signs and treat them with arrogance, no opening will there be of the gates of heaven, nor will they enter the Garden, until a camel can pass through the eye of the needle” (Qur’ān, 7:40).

When such a decree is issued, God orders his angels to write down the soul’s records in *Sijjīn*²⁸⁶ (the lowest part of the earth), and then take the soul back to the earth. Because he was created from it, he returns into it and he will be resurrected from it. As soon as the soul is taken back to its body, two angels come to it and make it sit up. They ask it about its God, its religion and the man who was sent to them. When it hears their questions, it says: “Alas, alas, I do not know.” It states that it had just heard people who call him the messenger of God. Then, a divine herald calls: “He tells lies, so provide him with the equipment of Hellfire and open a door for him to the Fire.” As as they open a door for him to the fire, its heat and hot wind reach him, and his grave tightens and causes his ribs to break.

After it has been a cramped grave and felt the fire of Hell, a stinking, filthy, ugly man in a shabby cloth appears before the soul, and says: “I am here to give the worst evil tidings that make you unhappy; this is the day that you have been promised.” The frightened soul asks: “Who are you that your face brings evil?” and he replies: “I am your malicious deeds.”²⁸⁷ When the soul finds out that it is going to be accompanied by such an unpleasant companion, it asks God to postpone the coming of the Resurrection.

4.5.6 The grave talks with the deceased

The grave, as the final house of man and the first house of the Hereafter, according to Islamic beliefs, starts talking with him when he is buried in it. It addresses man and explains what kind of dwelling it is, a house in which man must dwell until the Resurrection. In the traditions, the grave is called the house of exile (بيت الغربة), house of loneliness (بيت الوحده), house of dust (بيت التراب) and house of worms (بيت الدود).²⁸⁸

²⁸⁶ It is one of the mysterious words of the Qur’ān that has attracted a lot of different interpretations, such as: the seventh and the lowest earth, a rock or well in Hell and Hellfire. If one accepts it as the Hellfire that is the lowest earth, then it matches with Zoroastrianism and Mandaism that consider Hell the lowest part of the earth.

²⁸⁷ Compare this with the embodiment of deeds in Zoroastrianism.

²⁸⁸ *Sunan Tirmidhī*, vol. 4, p. 466, no. 2460.

Depending on the status of the deceased before God, the grave welcomes the soul, or not. It is stated that when a true believer is buried in the grave, the grave addresses him and says: *“Welcome! Make yourself comfortable. Indeed, to me, you are the most beloved of those who walked upon me. Since you have been entrusted to me and delivered to me today, you shall see what I have arranged for you.”* Then, his grave will be extended, and a door to Paradise will be opened for him.²⁸⁹

In contrast to the true believer, when an unbeliever or a wicked man is buried in his grave, the grave says to him: *“You are not welcome, do not get comfortable. Indeed, to me, you are the most hated of those who walked upon me. Since you have been entrusted to me and delivered to me today, you shall see what I have arranged for you.”* Then, it becomes cramped and narrow for him so that his ribs come close to one another. Finally, God sends seventy serpents to his grave; they are so poisonous and huge that if one of them blows on the earth, no trees will grow on earth.²⁹⁰

4.5.7 Man and angels

The traditions that are related to the subject of the Afterlife are various and with some differences. For instance, as regards what happens to the soul after being interrogated in the grave, the traditions explain it differently. There are some traditions that show a true believer’s soul that is in a calm dream, but some traditions show something different. It is stated that when two angels come to ask the deceased about his beliefs in God, religion and the Prophet, if he gives the correct answer about the Prophet, then he is addressed:

*“Then a window to Hell is opened for him and he sees it, parts of it destroying others. Then it is said to him: ‘Look at what Allāh has saved you from.’ Then a window to Paradise is opened to him, and he looks at its beauty and what is in it. It is said to him: ‘This is your place.’ And it is said to him: ‘You had certain faith and you died in that state, and in that state you will be resurrected if Allāh wills.’”*²⁹¹

He asks them (the angels) to let him go to his family and share with them what he has achieved, but he will not be allowed to.

By contrast, when a wicked soul is buried in the grave and two angels interrogate him, in reply to their questions says: *“I do not know.”* Then he is addressed:

*“Then a window to Paradise is opened to him, and he looks at its beauty and what is in it. It is said to him: ‘Look at what Allāh has diverted away from you.’ Then a window to Hell is opened for him, and he sees it, parts of it destroying others, and it is said to him: ‘This is your place. You were doubtful; in this state you died and in this state you will be resurrected, if Allāh wills.’”*²⁹²

²⁸⁹ *Sunan Tirmidhī*, vol. 4, p. 466, no. 2460.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 466_467.

²⁹¹ Nasiruddin al-Khattab, trans., *Sunan Ibn Majah* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2007), vol. 5, p.375, no.4268.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 376, no.4268.

“*You did not know and you will not know.*” Then they beat him with an iron sledgehammer; all the creatures hear it except man and *jinn*.²⁹³

4.5.8 The habitat of the souls

In addition to the traditions that indicate the return of the soul to the grave, where seemingly the grave is the last house of the soul; there are some traditions that show souls in Paradise as wandering green birds.²⁹⁴ It is also quoted from the Prophet that:

*“The soul of the believer is (like a bird) flying among the trees of Paradise, until Allāh, the Mighty and Sublime, sends it back to his body on the Day of Resurrection.”*²⁹⁵

4.5.9 Souls visit one another

When the souls of the believers come to Heaven, they visit those who have died earlier. There, they greet one another and feel happy. Those believers who have died earlier ask about their friends and relatives. If they hear in reply: “*Let him be, for he was in the hardship of the world,*” it means that he is still alive yet, but if they hear: “*Did he not come here?*” they understand that he is dead, but he has fallen into Hell.²⁹⁶

4.5.10 Lamentation hurts the soul

According to Sunni Islamic beliefs, God has created man, and it is He who has appointed a predetermined time for him to live in the world. God has created life and death and finally he takes the soul when someone’s time has come; therefore, man must accept what God decrees. According to a *ḥadīth*, the Prophet has forbidden lamentation. It seems that souls can hear what their survivors do, so if they cry and lament a lot, it causes them to suffer or to be tormented. The *ḥadīth* says:

*“The deceased is punished due to the weeping of his family for him.”*²⁹⁷

²⁹³ It is also stated that when the soul is returned back to the earth, believer or unbeliever, then two angels come to interrogate it. The traditions show that they will ask it about its beliefs (about his God, his religion and the Prophet Muhammad). According to traditions, they are two bright or dark angels (ملكان اسودان ازرقان) that are named *Munkar* and *Nakīr*. If they find the deceased a believer, they say to him: “*Sleep like a bride, a bride that no one wakes except one of her family members that she likes most*”; some other traditions state that angels open a gate to Paradise in his grave and want him to see his dwelling in Paradise, when man sees its flowers and its beauty, angels say to him: “*This is your place, you believed firmly and died while you were a sincere believer, and God will resurrect you while you will be a true believer.*” But, if they find the deceased an unbeliever, they will open a door to Hell in his grave and want him to look at its heat and pain, then say to him: “*This is your house, you were an unbeliever, you were doubtful and died while you did not believe, and God will resurrect you while you are an unbeliever,*” see *Sunan Tirmidhī*, vol. 2, p.444, n.1071.

²⁹⁴ This *ḥadīth* is about the martyrs and those who were killed for God. See Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, no.1887

²⁹⁵ Nasiruddin al-Khattab, trans., *Sunan Nisā’ī* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2007), vol. 3, p.146, n.2075.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p.24, n.1834.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p.33, n.1849.

4.6 Shiism and the Afterlife (Shiite narratives)

While the number of these books by Sunni Muslims amounts to six, Shia Muslims refer to four books as their most important and valid books of tradition. The most valid and important Shiite tradition books are: *al-Kāfi* by Muḥammad ibn ya'qūb al-kulaynī Rāzī (Šaykh al-Kulaynī), *Man lā yaḥḍuruh al-Faqīh* by Abū Ğa'far Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn Bābūyih al-Qumī (Šaykh al- Šaddūq), and *Tahḍīb al-aḥkām* and *al-'Istibṣār* by Abū Ğa'far Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (Šaykh al- Ṭūsī). Beside the books mentioned, *Bihār al-anwār* by Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī and *al-Šāfi* by Mullā Muḥsin Fiyḍ Kāšānī are considered important sources of tradition too.²⁹⁸ It is worth mentioning that there is not a big difference between the Shia and Sunni narrations. What is prominent in Shia narrations is the role of the Shia Imams.

4.6.1 Satan at death

Like Sunni Muslims Shias believe that death is accompanied by difficulties that are called *sakarāt al-mawt*. One of these is that when someone is departing for the Hereafter, Satan comes to him and tries to throw doubt in the dying person's mind on his religion and beliefs, because he wants him to die as an infidel. Satan comes to him from left and right to prevent him from dying with true beliefs.

*“Satan orders one of his companions to cause whoever is going to die to doubt about his religion; he [Satan] invites him to blasphemy and infidelity. Therefore, if one of your family members is about to die, then one ought to impress upon him two decrees of faith: There is no God but Allāh, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allāh.”*²⁹⁹

4.6.2 What believers and unbelievers observe at the time of death

It is stated that even a true believer hesitates to die and wants to live longer. Because of this, he asks God to postpone his death, but death is inevitable and he must at some time die. In order to make death pleasant for a true believer, it is stated that God makes it acceptable for him with a gentle breeze.

*“When a person [true believer] is about to die, God blows two breezes to him. One of them is called forgetting (Mansiyyah), and the other one is metamorphosing (Maskhiyyah). The first one makes him forget his family and property, and the second one metamorphoses him to leave this world and be happy with whatever God wills.”*³⁰⁰

²⁹⁸ It is worth mentioning that *al-Kāfi* and *Bihār al-Anwār* provide the greatest number of traditions about after-death and the end of days in comparison with other Shia sources.

²⁹⁹ Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn Bābūyih al-Qumī, *Man lā yaḥḍuruh al-Faqīh*, vol. 1, ed. Ḥusayn al-'A'lamī (Beirut: Mu'assisat al-'A'lamī li Maṭbū'āt, 1986/1406), 93, n.350.

³⁰⁰ *al-kāfi*, vol. 3, p. 74.

4.6.3 Man hesitates to die

At the time of death, a dying person is surrounded by two groups, on one side the Prophet and his family, and on the other side Satan and his forces. But it is the Prophet who will welcome a true believer who is about to die. It is narrated that when a true believer is at the time of death, the Prophet sits near his head and Ali near his foot, then the Prophet starts talking to him and says:

“O friend of God! I have good news for you. I am the prophet of God and I am better for you than what you left in the world, then Ali comes and says: ‘O friend of God, I am ‘Alī ibn abī ṭālib whom you loved, but for your own benefit.’”³⁰¹

Then a door to Heaven will be opened to him and his position will be shown. He is free to choose the world or the Garden. A true believer prefers to leave the world for Heaven. In the meanwhile, his corpse is washed in the material world, and will be shrouded, his soul will be welcomed by the pious souls in the Hereafter who receive him with glad tidings, and they inform him about the endowments that God has prepared for him. Then he will be sent back to his grave to be interrogated.

4.6.4 Imam Ali intercedes on behalf of a true believer

The true believer is not left alone at the time of death. As the author says, the Prophet, Ali, Archangel Gabriel and the Angel of Death come to the person who is at the point of death. Ali says to the Prophet that the dying person is one of their friends; as a result, the Prophet shares this with the Archangel Gabriel and wants him to tell this to the Angel of Death; consequently, Gabriel asks the Angel of Death to be kind to him, because he has been one of the followers of the ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and his children. The Angel of Death starts talking with the dying person and says:

“O servant of God! Your pledge has been accepted, and they have accepted your innocence, Have sought help from the Great Innocence (عصمة (الكبرى)) in your life in the world [The family of the Prophet are considered innocent by Shiites]? He says: did they accept it? He replies: yes, but what is it? He says: it is the guardianship of the ‘Alī ibn abī ṭālib. He (angel) says: what you avoided, was true and you have been kept safe, and what you approached, you have reached it. Go and share with your pious descendants that your companions are the Prophet of God, Ali and Fatimah, and then he takes his soul very gently. Then they bring him a shroud from Heaven, his embalmment mixed with a fragrant musk from Heaven, and rap him in that shroud and anoint him with that embalmment, then they clothe him in a green garment from Heaven and when he is placed in his grave, a door to Heaven will be opened to him, then his grave will be extended from his right and left side, from above and bottom of his body. They say to him: ‘sleep as a bride on her bed, we promise you the kindness, fragrant herbs and endowments from

³⁰¹ *al-kāfī*, vol. 3, p. 75.

*God the compassionate. Next, he visits the Prophet's family in Gardens of Paradise and they all eat together foods and drink drinks, and he will be with them until the last Imam of the Shiite appears.”*³⁰²

The story of an unbeliever's soul differs completely from that of a true believer. It is narrated that when a wicked man is about to die, the Prophet, Ali, Gabriel and the Angel of Death come to him. Ali, who in Shia belief has the role of mediator, informs the Prophet that this person has been his enemy; the Prophet reports this to Gabriel. When Gabriel learns of his hostility to Ali's family, he says to the Angel of Death:

*“O Angel of Death, this man has hostility towards God, the Prophet of God and the family of the Prophet of God. Be angry with him and behave towards him in a rude and offensive way.’ Then, the Angel of Death says to him: ‘O servant of God! Did you have a warranty? Did you have a letter of guarantee to prove your innocence? Have you sought help from the Great Innocence (عصمة الكبرى) in your life in the world?’ He says, ‘No.’ ‘O enemy of God! I promise you the anger of God the almighty, and his punishment in the fire. What you avoided, has reached you.’ Then he takes his soul roughly and appoints three hundred Satans who spit in his face and hurt his soul. When he is put in his grave, a door to Hell will be opened to him and its hotness and fire surround him.”*³⁰³

4.6.5 The Angel of Death and the mourners

It is stated that the Angel of Death does not have a feeling of guilt when someone dies. He has surely been appointed by God to take souls out of their bodies, and he obeys what God has ordered him to do. He has no authority to postpone or hasten someone's death. When he sees the mourners who are lamenting one of their beloved ones, he says to them:

*“By God, I have not oppressed him, postponed or hastened his death, and I am not able to do so. I do not feel guilty at taking his soul. If you are happy with God's will, so be patient, praise him and thank him, and if you continue mourning and get angry or if you commit sin or crime, no one will reproach me for that; and I will come to you more and more. There is no one on the earth or waters whom I do not visit five times a day, at the time of praying, so much that I know them better than they themselves. If I decide to take a soul, I cannot do it unless God orders me to take it, and I inculcate in the mind of the true believers the points in the Declaration of Faith that there is no God but Allāh, and Muhammad is the messenger of God.”*³⁰⁴

Although the true believer does not hesitate to die, there are some who do. When such a person is facing the Angel of Death who is ready to take his soul, and the Angel of Death finds out that he is trying not to die, he (the Angel of Death) turns to the true believer and says:

“I swear to the One who sent Muhammad, I will be kinder than your parents to you when I want to take your soul. ‘Open your eyes and see!’ Then he sees the Prophet of God, the leader of the believers [‘Alī ibn abī ṭālib],

³⁰² *al-kāfi*, vol. 3, p. 76.

³⁰³ *al-kāfi*, vol. 3, pp. 76-77.

³⁰⁴ *al-kāfi*, vol. 3, p. 80-81.

Fatimah, Hassan and Hossein and the Imams of his descendant.’ Then he [the Angel of Death] introduces them to him and says: ‘These are the Prophets of God, the leader of believers, Hassan and Hossein and the Imamas of his family as your companions.’ He said: ‘So he opens his eyes and looks at them, then a Herald from God Almighty calls: ‘O thou soul, in complete rest and satisfaction (in Muhammad and his family) come back thou to thy Lord – well pleased (thyself) (guardianship of his family), and well-pleasing unto Him (to the divine reward), Enter thou, then among My devotees (i.e. Muhammad and his family). Yea, enter thou My Heaven!’ then there will be nothing more pleasant to him than releasing his soul and joining the divine herald.’³⁰⁵

4.6.6 The Soul visits his family after death

When someone dies, he will be able sometimes to come to the material world. It is stated that a true believer comes to visit his family and sees what he wants to see (the good deeds that his family members do), or does not see what he hesitates to see (the evil deeds that his family members do). These visits mostly depend on the degree of the purity of the soul, and mostly take place at sunset, on Fridays, every day, every two days, every three days (it depends on their grades); they come to this world in the shape of small birds which are accompanied by two angels and look at their house and their families. If a true believer visits his family while they are doing good deeds, it makes him happy, but if an unbeliever visits his family doing good deeds, it makes him sad, and he regrets.³⁰⁶

4.6.7 The true believer and the embodiment of deeds

When someone is near to death, his deeds, wealth and children are embodied and appear to him. When he sees them, he wants to know if they can do anything for him. He asks his property:

“By God, I was greedy for you and mean. What do you have for me? He says: ‘Take your shroud.’ Then, he looks at his children and says: ‘I was kind with you, and I was your guardian; what do you have for me?’ They say: ‘We accompany you to your grave. Then he looks at his deeds and says: ‘I was very devoted towards you and you were difficult for me, what do you have for me?’ He (deeds) says: ‘I am your partner in your grave until we are presented before our God.’ If the person has been a friend of God, therefore there appears to him a handsome, pure man in precious garments who says: ‘Welcome! I promise you the happiness, a fragrant breeze and the Garden full of bounties.’ He asks: ‘Who are you?’ and he answers: ‘I am your true deeds.’”

After visiting the embodiments of its deeds, the soul is taken back to the world. He can see those who wash him and take part in his funeral. When he is buried in his grave, two angels

³⁰⁵ *al-kāfi*, vol. 3, p. 74.

³⁰⁶ *al-kāfi*, vol. 3, p. 129-130.

with long hair that cleave the earth with their feet come to him. Their eyes are as dazzling as lightning and their sound as rumbling as thunder. They ask him:

*“‘Who is your God? What is your religion, and who is your prophet?’
He says: ‘Allāh is my God, Islam is my religion and Muhammad is my prophet.’ They say: ‘May God makes you steadfast in what you like, and in what you are happy with.’”*

Finally, they extend his sight in his grave and open to him a door to the Garden and ask him to sleep peacefully.³⁰⁷

4.6.8 Unbelievers and the interrogators

The souls of unbelievers experience pain and discomfort in their grave. When a wicked soul leaves the world, the ugliest creature of God, the filthiest and the most stinking one, comes to the soul and says: *‘I promise you boiling water and a hot blazing fire.’* Then, the soul is taken to the world, he knows the person who is washing him and those who take part in his funeral. Then he is taken to his grave, where two interrogator angels come to him. They ask him about his God, his religion and his Prophet. He replies:

“‘I do not know.’ They say: ‘You did not know and you will not be guided.’ Then, they beat on his head with an iron stick. All the creatures of God hear this sound except man and jinn. Finally a door to Hell will be opened to him and he is told: ‘Sleep in this cramped place in which we have set up lances.’ He sleeps there until his brain comes out of his nails and his flesh. Then, God leaves the soul alone with snakes and scorpions that bite him until God resurrects him from his grave.”³⁰⁸

It is necessary to mention that the traditions are sometimes a little different in details, but the general theme in all of them is the same. For example, the same author (*Muḥammad ibn ya‘qūb al-kulaynī*) states in one tradition that an unbeliever will be left alone with snakes and scorpions in his grave after being interrogated, but the other tradition says:

“... and if he was an unbeliever, they [two interrogator angels] come to him, while Satan is standing between his hands with inauspicious eyes. They say to him: ‘Who is your God? What is your religion? And who is that man who has come amongst you?’ He says: ‘I do not know.’ So they leave him alone with Satan, who takes control of him, and ninety-nine poisonous snakes bite him so that if one of them blows to a tree, no trees will grow on the earth, and a door to Hell will be opened to him and he will see his dwelling there.”³⁰⁹

Similar minor differences are found the traditions about true believers. For instance, it is stated that when a pious man gives the correct answers, a herald confirms his sayings and then they furnish his grave with furniture of the Garden, and open a door to Paradise, and clothe him in the garments of Paradise. They bring him the best things there are and ask him to sleep as a bride who sleeps; a sleep without any dream.

³⁰⁷ *al-kāfi*, vol. 3, p.130.

³⁰⁸ *al-kāfi*, vol. 3, p.130.

³⁰⁹ *al-kāfi*, vol. 3, p. 133.

4.6.9 The handsome and ugly figures inside the grave

When man is taken to the grave and buried there, the grave starts talking with him and addresses him:

“I am a muddy house, I am the house of calamity, I am the house of worms.’ Whenever a true believer and the servant of God enters into the grave, he says: ‘You are welcome! By God, whenever you were walking on me, I was happy; how can I not be happy while you are inside me?’ Then, it will be unveiled and he sees a handsome man whom he has never seen before. He says: ‘O Servant of God! Who are you that I have never seen anyone as handsome as you?’ The man answers: ‘I am your true beliefs that you believed, I am your good deeds that you did.’ Then he takes the soul to Paradise and shows him his dwelling. When soul sees his house in the Garden, the man says to him: ‘Sleep O apple of my eyes and stay here. At this moment, a fragrance from Paradise blows towards him and makes him happy, and this status continues until Resurrection.”³¹⁰

When an unbeliever dies, the grave talks with him in a rough tone. It is not happy to see him and it expresses its anger because he was walking on it when he was alive and when he is inside it.

“Shortly, you will see the results of my anger.’ Then it squeezes him very tightly as if he had been ash, and then it turns him to his first status. It opens him a door to Hellfire, and shows him his dwelling. Then an ugly man with a disgusting face goes out of the house. The soul says: ‘O Servant of God! Who are? I have not seen anyone as disgusting as you before.’ He replies: ‘I am your evil deeds that you did, I am your evil beliefs that you believed.’ Then he takes the soul to the place in which he can see his dwelling in the fire. The fire always blows to him and torments him. He must bear its searing pain until Resurrection. God leaves him alone with ninety-nine snakes that bite him and eat his flesh.”³¹¹

4.6.10 Mourning is a merit

In Shia tradition, mourning is considered something worthy, but man is not allowed to hurt himself by lamentation. It is considered a merit which will be rewarded by God; it is stated that whoever sorrows deeply, God will shadow him on the day on which there will be no shadow³¹² (i.e. Resurrection Day).³¹³ However, it is necessary to mention that mourning and lamentation should be for a limited time. A *ḥadīṣ* states: *“There is no mourning except near the*

³¹⁰ *al-kāfi*, vol. 3, p. 136.

³¹¹ *al-kāfi*, vol. 3, p.136.

³¹² *al-kāfi*, vol. 3, p. 127.

³¹³ On Resurrection Day, when all the deceased are raised from their graves, they will all be in the presence of God on a dry land in a burning sun; on that day those who have mourned will be rewarded by something which shadows over them.

grave, and then it should be stopped, because whatever happens will be heard by the deceased.”³¹⁴

Mourning is considered a merit and it will be rewarded by God Almighty. It is stated that whoever mourns with great sorrow will be clothed in a well-decorated garment and there will be a reward for him of equal value on Resurrection Day. However, it is recommended to be patient and to be happy with God’s will.

4.6.11 The believers who dwell in *barzakh* and the newcomers

Whoever dies will be welcomed by those who have died sooner. The inhabitants of the Afterlife know the newcomers and ask them about their friends and families and their survivors. This story is told by narrating two *ḥadīṣ*.⁹

“When a person passes away, the believers who know him come together and ask him about their survivors to know who are alive and who have died. If one of them has died, but has not joined them, they say: ‘Woe is him! He has fallen down into Hell.’ They say to one another: ‘Leave him alone! He has suffered bitterly from giving up the soul and squeeze of the grave.’”³¹⁵

“The souls, like worldly bodies, sit together on the trees of Paradise and compliment one another, and ask about one another. When a newcomer joins them, they say to one another: ‘Give him comfort at the present time, because he has left great sufferings behind.’ They ask the newcomer about their survivors to know what he does. If he says that one is alive and doing his own job, it makes them happy; if he says that one has passed away, but he is not with them, they say: ‘Woe is him! He has perished [he is in Hellfire].’”³¹⁶

4.6.12 Two interrogators

When a deceased person is buried in his grave, two angels come to ask him some questions. According to the traditions, the deceased will be questioned by two angels after death, who are mostly named *Nākīr* and *Munkar*, but in some traditions they are occasionally named *Bašīr* and *Mubaššīr*. It is also stated that these two pairs – *Munkar*, *Nākīr* and *Bašīr*, *Mubaššīr* – are two different angels, not different names for the same being. However, most of the traditions mainly name these two angels *Munkar* and *Nākīr*.

*“In some traditions, it is stated that two angels that are sent to the unbelievers are called *Munkar* and *Nākīr*, but those two angels are sent to the believers are called *Bašīr* and *Mubaššīr*; also some people say: the angel of the unbeliever is called *Munkar* and *Nākīr*, because when the truth was sent him, he denied and did not accept it, but the angel of the believer is called*

³¹⁴ *al-kāfi*, vol. 3, p. 115.

³¹⁵ Muḥammad Baqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 6 (Beirut: Dār ‘Ihyā’ al-Tirāṣ al-‘Arabī, 1983/1403), 269.

³¹⁶ *al-kāfi*, vol. 3, p. 137; *Biḥār al-Anwār*, vol. 6, p.269.

Bašīr and Mubaššir because they have the good tidings for him from God and the promise of great endowments and bounties.”³¹⁷

These two angels are responsible for asking the deceased about his beliefs. They are two interrogators who ask the soul about his belief in God, his Prophet and his religion. It is after this interrogation that the believer and unbeliever will be distinguished and separated; consequently, the soul will be able to see his dwelling in Paradise or Hell. A *ḥadīṣ* narrates a talk between *Imam Ṣādiq* (the sixth Shiite Imam) with one of his followers about the interrogation in the grave as follows:

“Suliyṁān ibn KHālid says: ‘I asked Imam Ṣādiq with whom the owner of the grave meets. His holiness said: ‘Two angels that are named Munkar and Nakīr come to the owner of the grave and ask him about the Prophet, they say: Who is this man whom was sent amongst you? He answers: He is the messenger of God; but if he is the follower of falsehood, he says: I do not know, but I heard that people call him the messenger of God. I do not know whether it is true or not. After that he will be beaten so forcefully that all the inhabitants of the heavens hear it except: the unbelievers and polytheists. However, if he is a believer, he will be fearless and says: Did you ask me about the prophet of God? Then, they [angels] say: Do you know that he is the angel of God? He says: I testify that he is the prophet of God, through him the divine guidance came and true religion was sent. Then, he observes his position in Paradise, and his grave will be extended for him, and they say to him: Sleep, sleep without any regret and worry; may it be wholesome to you!’”³¹⁸

4.7 Barzakh in Nahj al-balāghah

Nahj al-Blāghah as the second important book after the Qur’ān in Shia Islam is a collection of the sermons and letters of the first Shia Imam. It refers to the Hereafter and life after death several times, but there are two references that directly mention the word *barzakh*. One of them is sermon number 221 in which he talks about death and those who have died before. While he describing their position and prosperities he says:

*“They died before you, and preceded you, while they were eminent and noble. They were kings and governors over the peasants, and they were in full control on earth, and finally they entered into the Barzakh. The earth grasped them, and fed itself with their meat, and drank their blood, and they were hidden in the graves, lifeless and motionless”³¹⁹ (*Nahj al-Blāghah*, Sermon 221).*

In another sermon, while he is describing the righteous and defining their characteristics, he refers to the word *barzakh*. As the text shows, *barzakh* is definitely related to death and after death. He says:

“Although they live in this world, seemingly, they have left it (the material world) and joined the Hereafter, and are observing the other world.

³¹⁷ Muḥammad ibn-i Muḥammad ibn-i al-Nu’ṁān ibn-i al-Mu’alim ibn-i ‘abī ‘Abd Allāh al-‘Ukbarī al-Baghdādī, *Taṣḥīḥ al-‘Itiqādāt*, ed. Ḥusayn Dargāhī (Qum: Mihr, 1371), 99.

³¹⁸ *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 6, p.221-221.

³¹⁹ Ja’far, Shahīdī, *Nahj al-balāghah* (Tehrān: Shirikat i inteshārāt i ‘elmī farhangī, 1376), 253.

Seemingly, they know the secrets of barzakh, and they know how long they will reside in it. It seems that Resurrection has fulfilled its promises to them. They have unveiled the covers for the people of the world. They see what others cannot see, and hear what other people cannot hear”³²⁰ (Nahj al-Blāghah, Sermon 222).

4.8 Paradise and Hell of Barzakh

According to the traditions, what souls experience after death is not the real, or rather not the whole Paradise or Hell, but to them there will be opened a door to Paradise or Hell until Resurrection Day. However, souls experience a kind of Paradise or Hell, and moreover, there are some places on the earth which seemingly play the role of Paradise or Hell. For example, it is stated that true believers will gather together in a place which is called *Wādī al-Salām* in Iraq or near *Zamzam well* in Mecca, and the unbeliever souls are in a place which is called *Ḥiḍr al-Mawt* in Yemen. In addition to these earthly places, it is stated that pious souls will be in their *barzakh* bodies which are similar to their material bodies, they wander among trees of Paradise, drinking from their drinks and eating from their foods.³²¹

4.9 Hell, Paradise and an intermediate level (al-Nār, al-Firdaws, al-A‘rāf)

As discussed in previous parts, all souls have two potential destinations: a door to Paradise or a door to Hellfire. Although this Paradise or Hell are in fact in the world of *barzakh* and have a role of a prologue to the real Paradise or Hell after Resurrection, they can determine the status of a soul forever, as is mentioned:

“Verily, the grave is the first station of the stations of the Hereafter; whoever has been rescued from it, whatever happens to him will be easier than it [grave], and whoever has been not rescued from it, whatever happens to him later will be more difficult.”

“The grave is one of the Gardens of Paradise or one of the ditches of Hellfire.”

Although the Qur’ān and traditions do not talk about the Paradise and Hell of *barzakh*, they depict the Paradise and Hell that await believers and unbelievers after being resurrected. The following paragraphs aim to introduce the general scheme of Paradise and Hell according to the Qur’ān.

4.9.1 Hell

The number of mentions and descriptions of Hell in the Qur’ān is greater than those of Paradise. Hell, which is mostly named *al-Nār* and sometimes *al-Jahannam*, is the abode of the

³²⁰ Ja‘far, Shahīdī, *Nahj al-balāghah* (Tehrān: Shirikat i inteshārāt i ‘elmī farhangī, 1376), 256.

³²¹ *al-kāfī*, vol. 3, p. 137- 139.

unbelievers, those who disobey God's decrees and deny his Prophets. In it, they will be tortured and punished for their sins and wrong deeds.

“Know they not that for those who oppose Allāh and His Messenger, is the Fire of Hell? – wherein they shall dwell. That is the supreme disgrace” (Qur’ān 9:63).

This dwelling has been introduced to the Muslims by the Qur’ān with various descriptions. For example, it is stated that it is the worst place, an evil place, an evil bed, place of ambush, a destination for transgressors. According to the Qur’ān some severe angels stand over Hell and obey whatever God commands them; it is also mentioned that the number of these angels is nineteen.

The Qur’ān does not define exactly where Hell is located, but it can be inferred that it is below the earth. It seems to be endless and has capacity for a great number of sinners, *“One day We will ask Hell, ‘Art thou filled to the full?’ It will say, ‘Are there any more to come?’” (Qu., 50:101.* Whatever and wherever Hell is, it seems that it is very deep; it is so deep that if someone throws a stone from the top of Hell, it takes a long time to reach to the bottom. As one of the Prophet’s companions says:

“We were with the Messenger of Allāh, and we heard the sound of something falling. The Prophet said: ‘Do you know what that was?’ We said, ‘Allāh and His Messenger know best.’ He said, ‘That was a stone that was thrown into Hell seventy years ago, and it is yet on the way in (to reach the other side of the) Hell until now.’”³²²

Hell has different grades according to the Qur’ān and traditions. The Qur’ān emphasises that hypocrites are in the lowest grade of Hell. The level to which a sinner should be tortured depends on what he has done in the material world.

“To all are degrees (or ranks) according to their deeds...” (Qur’ān 6:132).

“Is the man who follows the good pleasure of Allāh like the man who draws on himself the wrath of Allāh, and whose abode is in Hell? – a woeful refuge! They are in varying grades in the sight of Allāh, and Allāh sees well all that they do” (Qur’ān 3:162-163).

Hell is an abode with different grades and different gates too. The Qur’ān mentions seven gates of Hell that each one is an entrance for a different group of sinners. The doors of Hell will be opened to the wicked people (on the Resurrection Day) and they will enter into Hell and abide there forever.

“The Unbelievers will be led to Hell in crowds: until, when they arrive, there, its gates will be opened. And its keepers will say, ‘Did not messengers come to you from among yourselves, rehearsing to you the Signs of your Lord, and warning you of the Meeting of this Day of yours?’ The answer will be: ‘True: but the Decree of Punishment has been proved true against the Unbelievers!’ (To them) will be said: ‘Enter ye the gates of Hell, to dwell therein: and evil is (this) abode of the arrogant!’” (Qur’ān 39:71-72).

The Arabic word which mostly used in the Qur’ān for Hell is *al-Nār*, which means fire; therefore, it can be inferred that this abode is full of fire, and to keep the fire burning, it is necessary to have fuel. The Qur’ān indicates that the fuel of Hell is stone (maybe this means

³²² *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 2, p.1304, n.2844.

coal) and men, those men who were rebellious and disbelievers, in addition to the gods (Pagan gods) that were worshipped by infidels and polytheists.

“...then fear the Fire whose fuel is Men and Stones – which are prepared for those who reject Faith” (Qur’ān 2:24).

“Verily ye (unbelievers), and the (false) gods that ye worship besides Allāh, are (but) fuel for Hell!” (Qur’ān 21:98).

Hell or as the Qur’ān introduces it, fire, is a place full of smoke, blazing fire and many other horrible materials that are necessary for the punishment of the evildoers. The Qur’ān in several verses talks about Hell and describes the circumstances under which the sinners are punished. To find these descriptions, one can follow the following statements from the Qur’ān:

- Fierce hot, boiling water and shadow of black smoke (*Qu.*, 56:41-44)
- A bottomless pit, fire that blazes fiercely (*Qu.*, 101:8-11)
- Shadow of black smoke (*Qu.*, 56:43)
- Shadow of smoke in three columns, no shade of coolness, fierce blaze, huge sparks (*Qu.*, 77:30-33)
- A kind of fire that darkens and changes the colour of man (*Qu.*, 74:26-29).

This fierce, blazing fire that the Qur’ān describes annihilates and demolishes everything. Not only does it burn the skin of wicked people, but also it reaches to their bones and the contents of their stomachs and their hearts and uncovers all the body organs and burns them. The Prophet Muhammad describes this fire thus:

“Fire as we know it is one-seventieth part of the Fire of Hell...it (the Fire of Hell) is as if sixty-nine equal portions were added to the fire as we know it.”³²³

The inhabitants of Hell are the evil-doers and unbelievers. They deserve the worst food, drink or clothing. The Qur’ān insists in several places on how the evil-doers will be served in Hellfire. For example, the inhabitants of Hell eat a food that has no benefit for them; that is named *Ḍarī’* and *ZaqQum*. The first one is a bitter thorny plant that will neither feed them nor delight their hunger; the latter grows in the bottom of Hell and its fruits look like the heads of demons; it causes boiling in their stomachs when they consume it.

“Is that the better entertainment or the Tree of Zaqqūm? For we have truly made it (as) a trial for the wrong-doers. For it is a tree that springs out of the bottom of Hellfire: The shoots of its fruit-stalks are like the heads of devils: Truly they will eat thereof and fill their bellies therewith. Then on top of that they will be given a mixture made of boiling water. Then shall their return be to the (blazing) Fire” (Qur’ān 37:62-68).

As the above verse shows, evil-doers after eating *ZaqQum* will drink boiling water that intensifies their thirst and cuts their bowels to pieces. In the following statements, we can see what else the people of Hell drink and eat:

- Filth from the washing of wounds (*Qu.*, 69:35-37)
- Boiling fluid, a dark fluid, a murky cold fluid (*Qu.*, 38:57)
- Boiling water that cuts their bowels to pieces (*Qu.*, 47:15)
- A drink like melting brass that scald their faces (*Qu.*, 18:29)
- Filthy water and boiling drink (*Qu.*, 14:16-17)

³²³ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 2, p.1304, n.2843.

- Fire as their food (Qu., 2:174).

The inhabitants of Hell are not only served the worst foods and drinks, but also they will be clothed in the worst garments. For instance, those that oppose God and deny him will be clothed in garments of fire, as the Qur'ān indicates (Qu., 22:19). They will be joined together in chains while wearing clothes of tar.

“And thou wilt see the Sinners that day bound together in fetters, Their garments of liquid pitch, and their faces covered with Fire” (Qur'ān, 14:49-50).

The people who deserve the worst foods and drinks will be punished severely, although whatever they eat and drink or wear is definitely an intense punishment for them. As the Qur'ān portrays, when the wicked are brought to the fire, as soon as they see the hugeness of the fire, they fear and wish they could be redeemed from such a horrible punishment (Qu., 70:11-16). The punishments in Hell vary according to the type of sin, and some traditions show this variety. For instance, it is stated that for some people the fire will go up to their ankles, for some up to their knees, some up to their waists, many others up to their collarbones and for some other people it reaches even to their necks.³²⁴ Another narration shows a man who is standing on burning wood or coal, while his brain is boiling like boiling water.³²⁵

Whatever the punishments are, the severest penalties (Qu., 40:46) increase and add to them (Qu., 16:88). The Qur'ān mentions some special punishments that we list below:

- Roasting skin and changing it for a new one (Qu., 4:56)
- Clothing in firey garments, pouring boiling water over their heads and melting their bellies with boiling water (Qu., 22:19-20)
- Increasing the fierceness of the Fire (Qu., 17:97)
- Burning faces (Qu., 27:90; 21:39; 14:50; 33:66; 54:47-48).
- Putting yoke and chains across their shoulders and pulling them forcibly to the Fire (Qu., 40:70-72)
- Blackening and darkening of their faces (Qu., 3:106; 10:27; 74:26-29)
- Encircling the wrong-doers with Fire (Qu., 2:81; 7:41; 29:55; 39:16; 9:49; 18:29).
- Chains and hammers that are used to bind them and beat them (Qu., 76:4; 73:12-13; 34:33; 40:71; 73:12; 69:30-32; 22:21-21).

As mentioned above, the Qur'ān illustrates the abode of the wicked with the most horrible and terrifying specifications, apparently to avert people from it. It is a severe warning for unbelievers and wicked people to divert them from this terrible fate.

4.9.2 Paradise

Paradise or according to the Qur'ān *al-Jannah* or *al-Firdaws* is the reward of God for righteous people and those who obey his decrees:

“I have prepared for my righteous slaves that which no eye has seen, nor ear has heard, and has never crossed the mind of any human being.”³²⁶

³²⁴ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 2, p.1304, n.2845.

³²⁵ *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*, vol. 8, p.115.

³²⁶ *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*, vol. 4, p.118.

It is promised in the Qur'ān that all believers will be rewarded with Gardens that rivers run through, with beautiful mansions that the righteous can dwell in forever; this is a great endowment from God for those who obey him and his Prophet.

“Allāh hath promised to Believers – men and women – Gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein, and beautiful mansions in Gardens of everlasting bliss. But the greatest bliss is the Good Pleasure of Allāh: that is the supreme felicity” (Qur'ān, 9:72).

The Qur'ān describes Paradise as a great Kingdom that is full of joy. No one knows what it is and what kind of joys have been prepared as a reward for pious men. A *ḥadīṣ* describes this mansion thus:

*“Bricks of gold and silver, and mortar of fragrant musk, pebbles of pearl and sapphire, and soil of saffron. Whoever enters it is filled with joy and will never feel miserable; he will live there forever and will never die; their clothes will never wear out and their youth will never fade.”*³²⁷

Paradise has different gates through which the true believers can enter (*Qu.*, 38:50), welcomed by angels with best tidings (*Qu.*, 13:23-24; 39:37). Like Hell which has different stages, Paradise consists of different stages too. Each stage is assigned to a special group of people depending on their deeds.

“But such as come to Him as believers who have worked righteous deeds _for them are ranks exalted” (Qur'ān 20:75).

“See how We have bestowed more on some than on others; but verily the Hereafter is more in rank and gradation and more in excellence” (Qur'ān 17:21).

To confirm the gradation of Paradise, below a *ḥadīṣ* is narrated. The Prophet Muhammad says that Paradise has one hundred grades or ranks:

*“... He said, ‘Paradise has one hundred grades (and ranks) which Allāh has preserved for the mujjahideen who fight in His Cause, and the extent of difference (distance) between each of the two grades is like the distance between the heavens and the earth. So when you ask Allāh for something, ask for “al-Firdaws,” which is the best and highest part of Paradise.’ I (the narrator) think he said: ‘Above it (al-Firdaws) is the Throne of the Most Merciful, and from it originate the rivers of Paradise.’”*³²⁸

Before discussing Paradise and its rivers, springs, trees, etc., it is worth mentioning that according to the Qur'ān Paradise is vast. It emphasises that its width equals the width of the whole heavens and earth (*Qu.*, 3:133). In such a vast area that the Qur'ān describes, there are some gardens under which rivers run (*Qu.*, 18:31; 2:25). When the Prophet Muhammad ascended to the Heavens, he could see Paradise, and he describes it thus:

*“... I saw four rivers flowing out from beneath Sidrat al-Muntaha, two visible and two hidden. He asked, ‘O Jibreel, what are these rivers?’ He said, ‘The two hidden rivers are rivers of Paradise, and the two visible rivers are the Nile and the Euphrates.’”*³²⁹

³²⁷ Muḥammad ibn-i ‘Abd Allāh al-Khaṭīb al-Tabrīzī, *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ*, ed. Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Ālbānī (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1979/1399), vol.3, 1566.

³²⁸ *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*, vol. 4, p.16.

³²⁹ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 1, p.90.

Beside the four above-mentioned rivers, traditions point to another river which is called *Kawsar*. It is a river that God has granted to Muhammad, his beloved Prophet. What flows in the rivers of Paradise is not only water, but wine, milk and honey. The Qur'ān says:

“(Here is) a Parable of the Garden which the righteous are promised: in it are rivers of water incorruptible; rivers of milk of which the taste never changes; rivers of wine, a joy to those who drink; and rivers of honey pure and clear...” (Qur'ān 47:15).

In addition to rivers, there are many springs in Paradise whose waters have different tastes. When the Qur'ān enumerates the bounties that God has granted the true believers in Paradise, it points to the gardens and water-springs (*Qu.*, 15:45), in particular two springs from which pious people can drink (*Qu.*, 55:50; 55:66). One of the springs that the Qur'ān names tastes like a mixture of wine and camphor.

“As to the Righteous, they shall drink of a cup (of Wine) mixed with Kāfir, A Fountain where the Devotees of Allāh do drink, making it flow in unstinted abundance” (Qur'ān 76:5-6).

The second spring which is mentioned with a different taste in the Qur'ān is called *Tansīm*. It smells of musk and whoever drinks from it tries to obey God more sincerely (*Qu.*, 83:22-28); moreover, there is another spring which is called *Salsabīl*, and its water has a taste of ginger (*Qu.*, 76:17-18).

In addition to the springs, there are many mansions and rooms, one above another, under which rivers flow (*Qu.*, 9:72; 34:37; 25:75; 39:20). In these mansions and rooms, there are beautiful and fair maidens who marry the owner of the tents (*Qu.*, 55:72).

It is apparent that Paradise is full of bounties and pleasant endowments for its inhabitants. The Qur'ān in different verses describes Paradise and its endowments:

- Full of foods, ready to serve, morning and evening (*Qu.*, 19 19:62-63)
- Gardens and vineyards (*Qu.*, 78:31-32)
- Thornless lote trees, fruits piled above one another, long-extended shade, flowing water, plenty of fruits (*Qu.*, 56:27-32)
- Pairs of fruits of every kind (*Qu.*, 55:52)
- Plenty of fruits and drinks ready to be called for (*Qu.*, 38:51)
- Shades and springs, any kind of fruit that one desires (*Qu.*, 77:41-42)
- Trays of gold and (golden) cups (*Qu.*, 43:71)
- Lying back upon couches lined with silk (*Qu.*, 55:54)
- Meat of fowls that anyone may desire (*Qu.*, 56:21-22)
- Any kind of delicious wine that smells of musk and causes no drunkenness (*Qu.*, 37:45-47; 47:15; 37:47; 56:17-19; 83:25-26).

The Qur'ān says that for those who are near to God there will be a fragrant Garden full of delight and food supplies (*Qu.*, 56:88-89). The inhabitants of Paradise also put on precious garments, gold, silver and pearls. The Qur'ān in many verses describes what the people of Paradise put on: clothes of silk, golden bracelets and many other luxuries.

“He will reward them with a Garden and (garments of) silk” (Qur'ān 76:12).

“...they shall be adorned therein with bracelets of gold and pearls; and their garments there will be silk” (Qur'ān 22:23).

“Gardens of Eternity will they enter: therein will they be adorned with bracelets of gold and pearls; and their garments there will be silk” (Qur’ān 35:33).

“...they will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold, and they will wear green garments of fine silk and heavy brocade: they will recline therein on raised thrones. How good the recompense! How beautiful a couch to recline on!” (Qur’ān 18:31).

A ḥadīṣ states that the righteous will be crowned with the crown of dignity upon their heads and wear clothes that will never become old or tattered.³³⁰ The people in Paradise will not only be rewarded with jewellery, food, drink and precious garments, but also they can gather together and talk with one another, as the Qur’ān portrays. They will be like friends and brothers, facing one another (Qu., 15:47) and talking about themselves.

“They will advance to one another, engaging in mutual enquiry. They will say: ‘Aforetime, we were not without fear for the sake of our people. But Allāh has been good to us, and has delivered us from the Penalty of the Scorching Wind. Truly, we did call unto Him from of old: truly it is He, the Beneficent, the Merciful!’” (Qur’ān 52:25-28).

Obviously, it can be concluded that the Islamic Paradise is full of material enjoyments for those who obey God’s decrees.

4.9.3 Al-A‘rāf

The Qur’ān clearly talks about two abodes for righteous and wicked people, Paradise and Hell, but there is no obvious reference to any intermediate grade for those people who deserve neither Paradise nor Hell; in other words, they are not so pious as to go to Paradise and not so malicious as to deserve Hellfire. It is in exegetical works that one can find such a place for those whose good deeds and evil deeds are equal. This role has been assigned to the Qur’ānic term *al-A‘rāf*. In fact, it is the name of the seventh sura of the Qur’ān which is named after the forty-sixth verse of the same sura.

“و بينهما حجاب و على الاعراف رجال يعرفون كلا بسيماهم و نادوا اصحاب الجنة ان سلام عليكم لم يدخلوها و هم يطمعون و اذا صرفت ابصرهم تلقاء اصحاب النار قالوا ربنا لا تجعلنا مع القوم الظالمين”

“Between them shall be a veil, and on the Heights will be those who would know everyone by his marks: they will call out to the Companions of the Garden, ‘Peace on you.’ They will not have entered, but they will have an assurance (thereof). When their eyes shall be turned towards the Companions of the Fire, they will say: ‘Our Lord! Send us not to the company of the wrongdoers’” (Qur’ān 7:46-47).

The word *A‘rāf* is plural form of *‘Urf*, which literally means height, any high land, cock’s comb or horse’s mane. From this verse of the Qur’ān, one can infer that a group (of people) are standing on heights while they are neither from Paradise nor Hell, but are looking at them and

³³⁰ *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīh*, vol. 2, 1127.

nevertheless wish to join the people of Paradise. This is what the literal meaning of this verse says; to find out more, it is better to look at what exegesis provides.

4.9.4 Some Sunni Exegesis about A'raf

As mentioned, traditions have attributed the role of the intermediate stage for those with equal righteous and evil deeds to the Qur'ānic term *al-A'raf*. In the below some of these interpretations are given.

Tafsīr Ṭabarī:

Ṭabarī, one of the greatest Muslims interpreters and historians narrates different opinions about *al-A'raf*:

- It is a veil between Paradise and Hell; inside it is full of compassion and outside it is full of torture. It refers to a group of people whose evil deeds and good deeds are equal; consequently, they stand on *A'raf* (*heights*), until God judges them and sends them to Paradise because of his mercy.
- They are a group of people who will not be punished, because of their good deeds; however, they will not be allowed to enter Paradise, because of their evil deeds. When they look at the inhabitants of Hell, they ask God to forgive their sins and let them enter Paradise.
- On the day of judgment, whoever has more good deeds will be led to Paradise and whoever has more evil deeds will be led to Hell, but there is a group of people whose evil deeds and good deeds are equal; thus, they will be stopped on a bridge (Ṭabarī interprets *A'raf* as a bridge). When they observe the pleasure of the people of Paradise, they salute them and when they see the suffering of the inhabitants of Hell, they appeal to God and ask Him to place them amongst them. Finally, they will be washed in a stream whose substance is saffron, and when they wash themselves in it, it brightens their faces and they can ask God whatever they want. Accordingly, God will forgive their sins and they will enter Paradise.
- People of *A'raf* are the scholars of the community of Islam or even angels in the body of men; a group of people whom God has sent. They know and distinguish people of Paradise from people of Hell, and ask God not to place them amongst the people of Hell and are eager for Paradise.³³¹

Tafsīr al-Kabīr by Imām Fakhr Rāzī:

Fakhr Rāzī, is one of the greatest Islamic scholars, whose exegesis is very famous in the world of Islam. The following statements are the interpretations on *A'raf* that he gives in his book, especially about people of *A'raf*:

- It is a veil between Paradise and Hell; those people whose merits and sins are equal deserve neither Paradise nor Hell; however, they will be finally granted Paradise by the mercy of God.

³³¹*Tafsīr Ṭabarī*, vol. 10, p. 208-234.

- People of *A'raf* are some angels who can distinguish people of Paradise from the People of Hell; they are some noblemen who have been always obedient to God's decrees.
- They are prophets who have a commanding view of the people of Paradise and people of Hell or they are martyrs who know wicked men and pious ones by the colour of their faces.
- They are the martyrs who have been killed in the way of God, but they have fought without their fathers' permission, so they will be placed in an abode between Hell and Paradise.³³²

Al-Kaššāf by Maḥmūd Zamakhšarī:

Like Fakhr Rāzī and Ṭabarī, Zamakhšarī states that *A'raf* is a territory high above, between Paradise and Hell. He states that here is a group of people who will eventually be given a place in Paradise, although they neglected to obey some of God's decrees. They know the people of Paradise by their faces and want to join them. Whenever they look at the inhabitants of Hell, they appeal to God and ask him to place them amongst the people of Paradise. Finally, they will be permitted to enter Paradise by God's mercy.³³³

4.9.5 Some Shia Exegesis about A'raf

Tafsīr al-Tibyān by Šaykh Ṭūsī:

Šaykh Ṭūsī, one of the most important Shia scholars, interprets *A'raf* as a veil, obstacle or something that prevents from seeing something else. He states that some have interpreted *A'raf* as a veil between Hell and Paradise. He also quotes from the Shia Imams who have interpreted *A'raf* as “a hill between Paradise and Hell on which stand all the prophets and their successors and their followers in their own era.” The successors of the prophets say to their followers: ‘Look at your pious brothers! They have entered Paradise sooner than you, so the followers salute them.’ They (followers of the successors) are greedy for Paradise and finally they will be led to Paradise by the Prophet's and the Imams' intercession. In addition to these comments, he also narrates some similar comments about the people of *A'raf*: that they are those people whose good deeds and evil deeds are equal; they are people who know and distinguish people of Paradise from people of Hell; and that they are would-be inhabitants of Paradise who are eager for it and finally will be let in.³³⁴

Tafsīr al-Qummī:

Qummī, a famous Shia interpreter, states that *A'raf* is a hill between Hell and Paradise on which the Shia Imams and their followers stand, and lead the believers to Paradise without being

³³² Muḥammad al-Rāzī Faḥr al-Dīn ibn Ḍiyyā al-Dīn 'Umar, *Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1981/1401), 91-97.

³³³ 'Abī al-Qāsim Maḥmūd ibn al-'Umar Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, vol. 3, eds. 'Ādil Aḥmad 'Abd al-Mawjūd, 'Alī Muḥammad Mu'awidh (Al-Riydh: Maktabat al-'Abīkān, 1998/1418), 445-447.

³³⁴ 'Abī Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī, *Tafsīr al-Tibyān*, ed. Āqā Buzurg i al-Ṭīhrānī (Beirut: Dār 'Iḥyā' al-Tirāṣ al-'Arabī), vol. 4, 410-415.

judged. Then the Imams address their followers who have committed sins: ‘Look at your brothers in Paradise, they have taken the lead for Paradise without being judged,’ then they ask them to look at the people of Hell; consequently, they (sinners among the Imams’ followers) ask God not to place them amongst the people of Hell, and finally, they will be delivered from going to Hell by the Imams’ intercession.³³⁵

Tafsīr al-Mizān:

This exegesis is one of the latest and most important Shia interpretations of the Qur’ān in our era. It is a collection of all the important classical exegeses through Islamic history. First of all, the author interprets the word *A’rāf* as a hill (a mass) of sand or pebbles, a cock’s comb or mane of horse and generally something which stands above other things and is high. Because of this, he concludes that *A’rāf* must be a high territory between Paradise and Hell on which a group of (people or angels?) are standing; from it they can see both people of Paradise and people of Hell and talk to them.

Tafsīr al-Mizān names these possibilities for *al-’A’rāf* on the basis of the traditions and interpretations.³³⁶

- Something between two groups
- A hill or mound between Paradise and Hell on which some sinful people sit
- A way or a road between believers and hypocrites
- Way, road, street
- The best of the creatures to whom God has been kind (people of *A’rāf*)
- A group of people whose merits and evil deeds are equal, and who finally will be led into Paradise by will of God
- The people between the era of two Prophets (اهل الفترة)
- Children of the unbelievers who die before the age of maturity
- The children of adulterers
- Selfish and arrogant people
- Angels who appear in the shape of men
- The believers of Jinns
- Prophets, who are more recognisable than other people; they stand there as witnesses to the people
- The just men of the nations who stand there as witnesses to their nations
- Pious scholars and Islamic jurists
- Some of the Prophet’s family who recognise their friends (followers) by the colour of their faces.

Regarding all these exegeses, it can be inferred that in addition to Paradise as the abode of pious people and Hell as the home of the wicked, some exegeses assign a third abode to those whose good deeds and evil deeds are equal. It is an abode between Hell and Paradise whose inhabitants will finally be forgiven and join the people of Paradise.

³³⁵ Abī Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn ‘Ibrāhīm al-Qumī, *Tafsīr al-Qumī*, vol. 1, ed. Ṭayīb al-Mūsawī al-Jazā’irī (Qum: Dār al-Kutub li-Ṭabā’i wa al-Nashr, 1404), 231-234.

³³⁶ Muḥammad Ḥusayn, al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī, *Tafsīr al-Mizān*, vol. 8 (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-’A’lamī li Maṭbū’āt, 1997/1417), 123-136.

4.10 Mi‘rāj (the Prophet’s ascension) ³³⁷

One of the greatest events in the history of Islam is the Ascension of the Prophet Muhammad to Heaven (*Mi‘rāj*)³³⁸, and his visit to his predecessors (previous prophets) in Jerusalem near the dome of rock, visiting Paradise and Hellfire, and finally his visit and conversing with God. In this part a brief account is given of what happened in that journey that is the same as the ascensions mentioned in Zoroastrianism and Mandaeism.

In the Qur’ān, there are some indications of this event, but very brief; for example, sura *Isrā’* (The Night Journey) and sura *al-Najm* (The Star). The former mentions such an event in its first verse:

“Glory to (Allāh) Who did take His Servant for a Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque, whose precincts We did bless – in order that We might show him some of Our Signs: for he is the One Who heareth and seeth (all things)” (Qur’ān 17:1).³³⁹

This verse only mentions that such an ascension has occurred (spiritually or physically?) and enabled the Prophet to witness some events. The latter sura tries to prove the words of the Prophet about his journey to those who deny him, and do not accept his claim. It also points to the conversation between God and the Prophet that took place in the highest sky where the throne of God is placed.

“By the Star when it goes down, your Companion is neither astray nor being misled. Nor does he say (aught) of (his own) Desire. It is no less than inspiration sent down to him: He was taught by one Mighty in Power, Endued with Wisdom: for he appeared (in stately form), While he was in the highest part of the horizon: Then he approached and came closer, And was at a distance of but two bow-lengths or (even) nearer; So did (Allāh) convey the inspiration to His Servant, (conveyed) what He (meant) to convey. The (Prophet’s) (mind and) heart in no way falsified that which he saw. Will ye then dispute with him concerning what he saw? For indeed he saw him at a second descent, Near the Lote tree beyond which none may pass: Near it is the Garden of Abode. Behold, the Lot-tree was shrouded (in mystery unspeakable!) (His) sight never swerved, nor did it go wrong! For truly did he see, of the Signs of his Lord, the Greatest!” (Qur’ān 53:1-18).

³³⁷ Sebastian Günther surveys briefly the story of the Ascension and its relevant literatures, see Sebastian Günther, “Paradisevorstellungen und Himmelsreisen im Islam – Grundfesten des Glaubens und Literarische Topoi,” in: *Jenseitsreisen*, Erik Hornung, Andreas Schweizer, eds (Schwabe Basel, 2011), 15-57. For more information about the Prophet’s ascension, see Frederick S., Colby, *Narrating Muhammad’s Night Journey: Tracing the Developments of the Ibn ‘Abbās Ascension Discourse* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2008).

³³⁸ This description of the Ascension is based on three main sources: Ibn Ishāq, Muḥammad, *al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, Aḥmad Farīd Al-Mazīdī, ed., Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyah, Beirut, 2004, and its English translation by A. Guillaume in: Guillaume, A., trans., *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ishāq’s Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, Oxford University Press, London, 1955; Niyshābūrī, Abūbākr ‘Atīq ibn Muḥammad, *Tafsīr i ‘Atīq i Niyshābūrī*, Ja‘far Modarres Šādiqī, ed., Bonyād i Āfarīneshhāy i Niyāvarān, Tehrān, 1380; Al-Maybodī, Rashīd al-Ddīn, *Kashf al-Asrār wa ‘Uddah al-Abrār*, ‘Alī Aṣghar Hikmat, ed., Vol. 5, Tehrān, 1376.

³³⁹ Ṭabarī narrates the story of the ascension with different accounts about it in Qur’ān 17:1, see *Tafsīr Ṭabarī*, vol. 14, pp.414-449.

In addition to the Qur'ān, this story is narrated in one of the earliest books in the history of Islam about the life of the Prophet Muhammad, 'The Life of the Prophet' (*Sīrat al-Nabawīyya*) by *ibn i Ishāq* (151 AH / 704 CE), and also by one of the famous Muslim historians, *Muhammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī* (839-923 CE), and many other historians of the Islamic world. As the narrations indicate, one night when the Prophet was in the house of one of his wives (or as some narrations say, while he was sleeping in the *Masjid al-Ḥarām*) God sent his angel Gabriel to him and shared with him the message that it was the night of his ascension. He had to take him to the kingdom of seven heavens and seven earths and their wonders from the earth to the end of the universe. Seemingly, the angel had a vehicle (*burāq*),³⁴⁰ a kind of beast that the Prophet could ride to Jerusalem and the Heavens. According to the tradition, it was an animal smaller than an ass, but bigger than a mule which is named *Burāq*. As traditions describe, it is an animal with human face, horse's head, camel's neck, lion's breast, camel's back, bull's feet and elephant's tail.

The Prophet follows Archangel Gabriel, and when he comes out of his house (or mosque), he sees Archangel Michael accompanied by seventy thousand angels, and Archangel *Isrāfīl* accompanied by another seventy thousand angels. He rides the animal to the heavens, accompanied by Gabriel. They ascend stage by stage; in each stage something happens to him or an event is revealed to him. After the first flight, they arrive at the dome of rock in Jerusalem. They enter the Mosque, and there all the prophets that had preceded him welcome him. There, they pray together while leads the prayers.

In the meantime, Gabriel reminds him that it is the time of ascension (*Mi'rāğ*). He sees a ladder (*Mi'rāğ* means ladder too) of light with its bottom is on the rock and its top in the sky, made of red gold and decorated in jewels and precious stones, and surrounded by four hundred angels on each side. He climbs up the ladder to the first heaven which is called the heaven of the World (السماء الدنيا). There, he visits an angel named *'Ismā'īl* who welcomes him. He also visits a strange rooster that has as many feathers as the number of creatures. Whenever this rooster crows, all the roosters on the earth start crowing. In the first heaven, he prays for the forgiveness of the sins of the followers of the Prophet. In the heaven of the world, he also visits Adam, the first man. He continues his journey to the second, third and fourth heaven. In the fourth heaven, he faces a great mighty angel. The angel is seated and the entire world is like a table or tray (*lawḥ*) before him. On the table, there is a beam of light and darkness. This angel is the Angel of Death, *'Izrā'īl*.³⁴¹

³⁴⁰ For more information see R. Paret, "Burāk" in: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, vol. I, ed. H. A. R. Gibb, J. H. Kramers, E. Lévi-Provençal, J. Schacht (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 1310-1311

³⁴¹ The Qur'ān does not give any name to the Angel of Death, and calls him *Malik al-Mawt*. It is in traditions and later Islamic sources that he is named *'Izrā'īl*. A 13th century text describes the Angel of Death thus: "He (*'Izrā'īl*) stops movements, and separates souls from bodies. He is in the heaven of the world, and God has created his foot on the sides of the earth and he is in the highest heaven; his face is in front of (facing) the preserved table. He has as many eyes on his body as the number of the creatures in the world. He does not take any soul, except of those whose daily bread has been stopped and whose death time has arrived... man's time of death is determined in the middle of *ša'bān* [the eighth Islamic month] of every year. He takes the souls of the monotheists with his right hand, and wraps them in a silk clothes with musk, and sends them to the highest of high; on the contrary, he takes the soul of infidels with his left hand, and clothes them in a clothes made of tar and sends them to the *sijjīn* to be punished there," see Al-Qazvīnī, Zakariyyā ibn Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd, *'Ajā'ib al-Makhlūqāt wa Gharā'ib al-Maujūdāt*, Vol. I, Ferdinand Wüstenfels, ed., 1849, p.57-58, and see also: A., J., Wensink, "'zrā'īl," in: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, vol. IV, ed. E., van Donzel, Lewis and Ch. Pellat (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 292-293.

When the Angel of Death visits the Prophet Muhammad, he stands up before him as a sign of respect, and welcomes him. The Prophet asks him to be kind with his followers at the time of death and he assures him that he is kind with all believers, and especially with the Prophet's nation. The Prophet wants to know how 'Izrā'īl understands whose soul should be taken. The Angel of Death says:

"I know because of this tablet on which the life of all the creatures has been written down. When someone's death comes, a sign appears on his/her name that makes me aware that it is his/her time to die. If the sign is white, it means that he is one of the righteous. I will command the angels of the mercy to take his soul with utmost ease from the nail of his toe to his neck, and then I take his soul and deliver it to the angels of mercy. They take it on a tray of light to Heaven and praise [salute or respect] it. On the contrary, when the sign is black, it means that he is one of the evil-doers. Then, I send the angels of torture to take his soul severely from the nail of his toe to his neck. Then I point to the left side and deliver his soul to the angels of torture who wrap it in a dark cover, and take it to Hell while all the angels curse him."

The Prophet continues his journey to the fifth and then to the sixth heaven in which he meets a bad-tempered angel who is silent. Gabriel introduces the angel: "He is 'Mālik,' the keeper angel of Hellfire." Before this, he had never spoken with anyone, but Muhammad wants him to show the lowest levels of Hell (*Darakāt*). The guardian Angel of Death obeys the Prophet and opens the door of Hell. It is written on the door of Hell: "And verily, Hell is the promised abode for them all!" (*Qu.*, 15:43). There, he sees the evil-doers under punishment and torment. For example, he says: "I saw women in shirts made of tar, being tortured in the fire. I asked: 'Who are they?' He said: 'They are the lamenters [who sing a dirge at a funeral].'"

In the sixth sky not only does he see Hellfire and the torture of the evil-doers but also he goes there to Paradise, where he is welcomed by *Riḍwān* and the guardian of Paradise. He visits the place of his followers there, and the pavilions and the streams of wine, milk, water and honey; the fountains of *Zanjabīl*, *Salsabīl*, *Rahīq* and *Tansīm*. He also hears the angels who are singing and praising God.

He passes through the Gardens and reaches a tree which is called *Sidrat al-Muntahā* (The lote tree on the boundary). There, Gabriel leaves him because he is not allowed to go further, and none of the angels are allowed to go beyond this tree; therefore, Muhammad has to continue alone. It is an abode wherein he sees the veils of light and hears the praises of the angels, and from there he ascends to the highest heaven wherein God converses with him, and then he descends to earth.³⁴²

4.11 Classical Sunni sources

To show the continuity of the eschatological beliefs of the Qur'ān and especially *hadīs* in later Islamic sources, in this study three classical sources have been conveyed to show how traditional Islam has adopted and accepted these as a part of the eschatological faith. The first

³⁴² The Shia version of the Prophet's ascension is very similar to the Sunni version, the only difference is that the role of the family of the Prophet is very prominent in the narrations, see 'Alī Rezā Zakīzādeh Renānī, *Pazhūheshī Qur'ānī va Revā'ī Darbārih yi Me'rāj-i Payāambar* (Qum: 'Entishārāt-i Zā'er, 1392).

source was written by *Ibn abī al-Dunyā*³⁴³, *Abū Bakr ‘Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Ubayd ibn Sufyān ibn al-Quraṣī al-Baghdādī*. He is a famous Arab writer from *Baghdād*. He was born in 208AH/823 and died in 281 AH/894 CE. He was the tutor of some of the ‘*Abbāsīd* princes, and is famous because of his way of life. It is said that he has had a simple life, self-denying and pious; he was an active teacher with more than 100 works; of them two are connected with the subject of death and the Hereafter. One of these books is *al-Qubūr*³⁴⁴ (The Graves) and the other one is called *Dhikr al_Mawt*³⁴⁵ (Remembrance of death). This author and his books are chosen in this study for several reasons, as follows:

- 1- *Ibn Abī al-Dunyā* lived in early Islamic times, almost two centuries after the Prophet. He lived at the time of ‘*Abbāsīds* (contemporary with *al-Ma’mūn*) an important period in Islamic history.
- 2- The author’s status among Islamic scholars.
- 3- There are many Islamic authors who have written about the Afterlife and *barzakh* such as *Suyūfī*, *al_‘Arāqī*, *ibn i Rajab*, *ibn i Qayyim*, *ibn i Ṭulūn*. They have mostly narrated in their books what *Ibn Abī al-Dunyā* said about death and life in *barzakh*.

In both of his books, the author talks about death and why people dislike it. He explains the importance of death from the Islamic viewpoint, and the advantages that it can have in man’s life. He portrays the conditions of the dying man according to the Prophet and other important Islamic figures. What happens to the dying man, what he sees and hears, his condition at the time of washing the dead and shrouding, those whom he visits after death, and the narrations relevant to death are the main subjects in both of his books.

The second book is about the fate of the soul from time of death to the final day by *Abū Ḥamid Muḥammad ibn. Muḥammad al-Ṭūsī*, known as *Imām Muḥammad Ghazzālī*³⁴⁶. He was born in 450AH/1038CE in *Ṭūs* in *Khurāsān*, and died in 505AH/1111CE in his homeland. He is a famous theologian, jurist, thinker, mystic and religious reformer. He is the composer of the ‘*Ihyā ‘Ulūm al-Ddīn* (The Revival of the Religious Science) as his great work in four volumes and each volume in four sections: *‘Ibādāt* (rituals and religious observances), and *‘Ādāt* (habits and traditions), *Muhlikāt* (depravities that lead to loss and destruction), *Munjiyyāt* (integrities that lead to salvation). He devoted the last part of the last book to the fate of the soul after death and Resurrection. *al-Durrah al-Fakhirah fī kashf al-‘Ulūm al_‘Ākhirah* (The precious pearl in search of the science of the Hereafter)³⁴⁷ is the summary of the part of ‘*Ihyā ‘Ulūm al_Ddīn* devoted to eschatological issues.

This book has been selected for two reasons:

³⁴³ L. Vaglieri, “Ibn Abi ‘l-Dunyā,” in: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, vol. III, ed. B., Lewis, V. L., Menage, Ch. Pellat, J., Schacht (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 684.

³⁴⁴ Abū Bakr, Al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb Al-Qubūr*, (Maktabat al-ghurabā al-Aṣriyyah, Medina, 2000).

³⁴⁵ Abū Bakr, Al-Baghdādī, *Dhikr Al_Mawt*, (Maktabat al-Furqān, ‘Ajmān, 2002).

³⁴⁶ W., Montgomery Wat, “al-Ḡhazālī,” in: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, vol. II, ed. B., Lewis, V. L., Menage, Ch. Pellat, J., Schacht (Leiden: Brill, 1965), 1039-1041.

³⁴⁷ For more information on eschatological beliefs and concepts in *Al_Durrah al_Fakhirah fī kashf al_‘Ulūm al_‘Ākhirah*, refer to: Sebastian Günther, “The Poetics of Islamic Eschatology: Narrative, Personification, and Colors in Muslim Discourse”, in: *Roads to Paradise: Eschatology and Concepts of the Hereafter in Islam*, Vol. 1, Sebastian Günther, Todd Lawson, eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 181-217.

1-a *I- Ghazālī's* importance in the Islamic world and history, and his influence for devout Muslims of every level of education by presenting obedience to the religious laws as an important way of life.

2- The role of his book as a complete guide for the devout Muslim on every aspect of the religious life – worship and devotional practices, conduct in daily life, the purification of the heart, and advance along the mystic way.

‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn Abī Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn Sābiq al-dīn al-Ḥuḍayrī al-Suyūṭī, known as *Jalāl al-Ddīn Suyūṭī*,³⁴⁸ is the third author whose book has been brought into this study. He was a 10th century Egyptian Muslim scholar. He compiled many books about *Ḥadīṣ*, the Qur’ān and astronomy. He was the author of the *al-Durar al-Manṣūr*, an exegesis of the Qur’ān that is well-known among Muslims. In addition to the compilation of Qur’ān exegesis, he wrote a book about the status of souls in the grave, *Šarḥ al-Šudūr bi Šarḥ i Ḥāl al-Mawṭā fi al-Qubūr*, based on the Qur’ānic verses and traditions, and then summarised that book in *Bušrā al-Ka’ib bi Liqā’ al-Ḥibīb*. Three reasons lead this treatise to be chosen: the first is *Suyūṭī's* knowledge of the Qur’ān and his importance in the Sunni Islam world, the second is the importance of the *Sharḥ al-Šudūr bi Sharḥ i Ḥāl al-Mawṭā fi al-Qubūr* as one of the sources of Islamic knowledge about the Afterlife, and the last one is that it shows the Islamic beliefs about the Afterlife beyond the borders of Mesopotamia and Iran, in one of the most important Islamic centres, Egypt.

4.11.1 The four residences of man

- *Bušrā al-Ka’ib bi Liqā’ al-Ḥibīb*

Every man has four cycles in his lifetime. The first one is in the womb of the mother. It is limited, veiled and dark. After that it is in the material world in which man grows, is accustomed to other people, and acquires goodness and evil. Next is *barzakh* which is more spacious and greater than this world; in comparison with this world, it can be compared to the womb and the material world. The last one is the world of eternity, Paradise and Hell, and in this world everything, rules and roles, differs from this world.³⁴⁹

4.11.2 The importance of death

- *al-Qubūr and Dhikr al-Mawt*

Man’s life has been predetermined by God before birth, so that whenever God decides to create one of his servants, he orders an angel to write down his daily bread, sign (whether he is a believer or unbeliever), time of death and his good fortune or misfortune. After that God appoints two angels over that man to write down his good deeds and evil deeds. They do this until his time of death.³⁵⁰ When man dies, these two angels leave him, and his soul will be

³⁴⁸ E., Geoffry, “al-Suyūṭī,” in: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, vol. IX, ed. C. E. Bosworth, E., van Donzel, W., P., Heinrichs (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 913-916.

³⁴⁹ ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn Abī Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn Sābiq al-dīn al-Ḥuḍayrī al-Suyūṭī, *Bušrā al-Ka’ib bi Liqā’ al-Ḥibīb*, ed. Majdī al-sayid Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qur’ān, 1986/1406), 22.

³⁵⁰ The Qur’ān mentions two angels that write down whatever man does: “But verily, over you (are appointed angels) to protect you – kind and honourable – writing down (your deeds): They know (and understand) all that you do” (Qur’ān 82:10-12). These two angels write down whatsoever good or bad that man does. When man

relocated in his body to answer the questions of the angels in the grave. After the questioning, the two angels who were appointed to write down his good and bad deeds come down, and hang his deeds like a scroll around his neck that will be with him until Resurrection, the time when they play the role of witnesses for the soul in his trial before God (Ibn abī al-Dunyā, *DM.*, p. 45).

- *Bushrā al-Ka'ib Bi Liqā' al-Hibīb*

People do not achieve the same status after death. Comfort and endowments are only for devoted people, because it is stated that this world is like a garden for unbelievers, and a jail for believers. Verily, a true believer at the time of death can be compared to a prisoner who is going to be released from prison, so he can do whatever he wants and go wherever he wishes, because the material world has been like a jail and a place of corruption and decay for him; by death he can get release from all of them.³⁵¹

4.11.3 The Angel of Death

- *al-Qubūr and Dhikr al-Mawt*

The Angel of Death does not forget people, and he goes to all houses three times a day to see whose daily bread (*rizq*) has been stopped from heaven, and whose soul should be taken. But when he takes the soul away, he responds to the family's lamentation and crying, saying to them:

"I am not guilty; I am only [God's] agent; I did not take his soul unless his measure was filled. I come to your houses every day and take your souls, till I find none of you that has been left alive" (Ibn abī al-Dunyā, *Dhikr al_Mawt*, p. 119).

Although it is God who has created life and death, he has appointed some angels as his agents to obey his commands and take man's soul. The master of the angels in charge of death is 'Izrā'il; he obeys God and his knowledge is from God; he even does not know whose time is to die. It is stated that he has two eyes on his face and one eye behind his head. He is a two-sided angel: for true believers he appears as a beautiful, sweet-smelling and pure young man, but evil-doers face an ugly black man whose head is blazing with fire, while smoke is coming out of it. Souls are placed in his hands by God's permission. He is seated and the world is like a spread cloth or tray upon which various foods are laid out, and he can eat each of them that he wishes (Ibn abī al-Dunyā, *DM.*, p. 126). He is also described as a man who is seated, while the world is between his knees, and a tablet on which the name of those whose death time is near is in his hand. There are some other angels under his command and he orders them to take the soul whose time is over (Ibn abī al-Dunyā, *DM.*, p. 126).

It is stated that when the Angel of Death wants to take a man's soul, the man hesitates and asks him to postpone it, but the Angel of Death says: "*Woe! Your time has passed, and you are not allowed to take a breath more, your time is up, and I do not put it off.*" Hearing this, man wants to know where he can take refuge; the Angel of Death says: "*In your deeds, and in the house that you have built.*" Man says that he has not done any good deeds, and he has not

does something good, the angel who is in charge of good deeds prays for the doer and rejoices because of him, but when man does something evil, the angel who is in charge of bad deeds become sad, and does not pray to God for the doer of the evil deeds. These two angels leave man when he dies, and they never return to this world (Al-Suyūfī, *Dhikr al_Mawt*, p.129).

³⁵¹ It resembles Gnostic (Mandaean) doctrine.

prepared himself a house. When the Angel of Death hears his answer, he promises him Hellfire, and takes his soul out³⁵² (Ibn abī al-Dunyā, *DM.*, p. 121).

When the Angel of Death wants to take out the soul of a profligate who has just been spending property and wealth, the man finds out that there is no remedy to postpone his death, and the material world has engaged him in gathering wealth to spend it for himself and then the Angel of Death takes his soul (Ibn abī al-Dunyā, *DM.*, p. 122).³⁵³ At the time of leaving the material world, the dying man faces his property and says:

“‘May God damn you! You engaged me with myself, and prevented me from worshipping and joining to God.’ When he has said this, his wealth answers: ‘Why do you curse me; you let me take control of you, you rejected piety, and married wealth and the material world. You went to the king’s parties and meetings, and you used me for evil ends, and you did not restrain yourself. If you had used me for good ends, I would have been useful for you. God has created man from soil, and has made him free to choose between good and bad.’”

- *al-Durrah al-Fakhirah fī kashf al-Ulūm al-Ākhirah*

Not only one angel, but several angels are responsible for taking the soul out of the body from different organs. The author portrays the scene in which angels are taking the soul out:

“... the angel who pulls the soul from the right foot, the angel who takes the soul from the left foot, and the angel who pulls the soul from the right hand and the angel who pulls the soul from the left hand...”³⁵⁴

- *Bushrā al-Ka’ib Bi Liqā’ al-Ḥibīb*

According to the author, the Angel of Death is responsible for taking souls, accompanied by angels of mercy for righteous souls and angels of wrath for evil souls (Al-Suyūṭī, *BKH. Ḥibīb*, p. 24).

4.11.4 The agonies of death

- *al-Qubūr and Dhikr al-Mawt*

Death is accompanied by difficulties. One of them is the danger of being deceived by Satan. *Ibn Abī al-Dunyā* reasserts an Islamic belief that Satan at the time of death is very close to man to trick him into dying as an infidel. It is stated that in two situations Satan approaches man

³⁵² It resembles the story of man and the Angel of Death in the Mandaeans’ Book of John.

³⁵³ In addition to this story, the author narrates a story which happened to one of the people of Israil (Jews). It is very interesting because it corresponds with the story of the Mandaean Book of John about the death of wicked soul. The story in *Dhikr al-Mawt* runs that when the Angel of Death decided to take the soul of one of the oppressors of the people of Israil, the oppressor said: “Is it possible for you to give me time, because I want to fulfil my promise? The Angel of Death says: ‘Away, you have no more time, because your time is full, you cannot breathe more, and your time has stopped. I cannot postpone it.’ Then, the oppressor said: ‘Where do you take me?’ The Angel of Death answered: ‘To your deeds which you sent in advance; to your house which you prepared.’ He said: ‘I have done no righteous deeds, and have not prepared a good house.’ Then the Angel of death said: ‘By no means! For it would be the fire of Hell. Plucking out his [being] right to the skull’ (Qur’ān 70:15-16), see Ibn abī al-Dunyā, *Dhikr Al-Mawt*, p.121).

³⁵⁴ Abū Ḥamid Muḥammad B. Muḥammad Al-Ṭūsī, known as Imām Muḥammad Ghazzālī, *al-Durrah al-Fakhirah fī kashf al-Ulūm al-Ākhirah*, ed. Muwafaq Fuzī al-Jabr (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qur’ān, 1995, 1415), 13.

more than any others: once at the time of death, and the other when someone is about to leave his friends (Ibn Abī Al-Dunyā, *DM.*, p. 91).

When man is going to die, Satan sits on one side, and the Angel of Death, ready to take the soul out of the body, on the other. For a dying person, being in such a dilemma is more difficult than being beaten by 1000 swords; however, a true believer is not worried because he knows that death means deliverance from the sufferings of the material world, so he relies on God, and leaves the world faithfully (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *DM.*, p. 95).

The other difficulty of death is being visited by horrible and ugly angels. As mentioned earlier, the Angel of Death visits man with different faces. While a true believer sees a lovely man, a wicked man faces an ugly figure who treats his soul very severely (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *DM.*, p. 99).

- *al-Durrah al-Fakhirah fi kashf al-'Ulūm al-Ākhirah*

The time of death time is mysterious, and no one knows it except God, but when it occurs, then some mysteries will be unveiled and some people be visited by angels. Some of them take the soul from the left foot and some from the right foot, and some of them take the soul out of the body from the right hand and some from the left hand. For some people death is as easy as the spurting of water from a water skin, but for depraved souls it is like taking out a skewer from wet wool.

Death is accompanied by agonies and difficulties. It is worse than being beaten by three hundred sword blows. The person who is going to die feels as if his stomach has been filled with thorns, and his soul is going to be extracted through the eye of needle. He thinks that heaven and earth are joined together and he is stuck between them. The Prophet describes the time of death thus:

“It is as if a thorny branch were placed in a man’s abdomen, and a strong person pulled it out, breaking off what he could break and letting the rest remain” (Ghazzālī, *al-Durrah al-Fakhirah*, p. 22).

Then the forehead sweats and the eyes see falsely, the chest goes up and down and the skin turns yellow, then the soul reaches the chest and heart, and the person can no longer talk. At this moment, some souls are even stabbed by angels with a poisoned sword in the fire. When the soul reaches the upper part of the body, Satan tries to tempt the soul to leave its faith. It is stated that he shows himself with the visage or in the form of whomever or whatever the person likes most in the world, and asks him to convert his religion to Christianity or Judaism, trying to present these as the true religions. For a believer it is a very difficult time, and only God can help people to die with true beliefs.

“Our Lord! (they say), ‘Let not our hearts deviate now after Thou hast guided us, but grant us mercy from Thine own Presence: for Thou art the Grantor of Bounties without measure” (*Qur’ān* 3:8).

At this moment, God sends Gabriel to the soul of the believers to scatter the demons who are surrounding the dying person, and this causes the person to feel calm and smile. Gabriel says to the person:

“Do you not know me? I am Gabriel, and those are your enemies from among the demons. Die in the religion of a pious monotheist (al-Millat al-Ḥanifiyyah), and the religion of Muhammad” (Ghazzālī, *al-Durrah al-Fakhirah*, p. 24).

Having heard this divine message, the soul feels calm and peace; this assistance will be the best for a believer. The dying person can see his relatives and friends who had died earlier.

When the soul reaches the throat, it lows so that all creatures except mankind hear it. This is the time that the dying person can only hear, and because of this it is recommended to recite to him the testimony of the unity of God.

4.11.5 The pious soul leaves the body

- *al-Qubūr and Dhikr al-Mawt*

When God decides to take the soul of a true believer, he orders the Angel of Death to go to him with the best tidings from God, and the good news of deliverance from the sorrows and sufferings of the material world. Then, the Angel of Death accompanied by 500 angels, carrying shroud, embalmment, fragrance and flowers of Paradise in different colours, ascend with a silk fabric with musk fragrance to the dying person. After that the Angel of Death sits near the man's head, and other angels next to him. They give him a gentle massage and spread the white silk over his body, and bring the musk close to his chin. They open a gate to Paradise to show him its charm. At this moment the hesitant soul looks at the garden, and then its family who are sitting around it (it is in a dilemma). The Angel of Death in a very kind manner, which is kinder than parents with their children, asks the soul to leave the body to the thornless 'Lote Tree' (*sidrah al_muntahā*), trees, flowers and fruits, because he knows that this soul is under divine mercy and kindness (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *DM.*, p138).

"(They will be) among Lote-Trees without thorns, Among 'Talh' trees with flowers (or fruits) piled one above another _ In shade long-extended, By water flowing constantly, And fruit in abundance" (*Qur'ān*, 56:28-31).

Hearing these messages, the soul leaves the body and receives greetings from angels surrounding it, who say:

"Peace be on you; enter ye the Garden, because of (the good) which ye did (in the world)" (*Qur'ān*, 16:32).

This is a salutation and glad tidings for those who lived in the state of purity in the material world. The soul enters Paradise, and the more devoted it is, the nearer it will be to God.

"Thus, then, if he be of those Nearest to Allāh, [There is for him] Rest and Satisfaction, and a Garden of Delights" (*Qur'ān*, 56:88-89).

When a pious soul is going to leave its body, it addresses its body and says: *"May God reward you the best. You helped me in God's obedience and restrained me from committing sins. Hail that you saved and were rescued."* In reply to such glad tidings, the corpse addresses the soul with the same words (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *DM.*, p. 139).

- *al-Durrah al-Fakhirah fī kashf al-'Ulūm al-Ākhirah*

When a believer passes away, two angels with beautiful faces in precious garments and fragrance take the soul and cloth it in the silk clothes that they have brought it from Paradise; then they all ascend together to the upper world. It is mentioned that the soul is as small as a bee, but with human characteristics. They pass through the souls that they have died before, some of whom it knows and some of them not.

Gabriel accompanies the righteous soul to the heaven of the world (*al-Samā' al-Dunyā*). He knocks at the gate; an angel asks about his identity and the person whom he is accompanying. He introduces himself and the soul of the believer with the best and dearest names that soul has ever heard. The angels welcome the soul because of its true faith and open the gates of Heaven. They continue their way to the next heaven, and there, the same thing happens: there angels welcome the soul because of its prayers. In the third heaven the soul is welcomed by angels

because of its respect for God in spite of its worldly position and possessions. In the fourth heaven, it is respected because of its fasting, good deeds and abstaining from eating forbidden foods. In the fifth heaven, angels honour the soul for its pilgrimage and in the sixth heaven for respecting its parents. The reason for honouring the soul in the seventh heaven is that it used to ask forgiveness, commanding good deeds and forbidding bad deeds. Then the gate of the seventh heaven will be opened to them and they continue their way to the great divine pavilion where the soul is welcomed for helping poor people and giving alms. The soul passes through the angels who give him the best tidings till they reach the ‘Lote Tree’ of the boundary. Gabriel knocks on the door and introduces himself and the soul. There, soul is honoured on account of its good deeds before God. It passes through the ocean of fire, light, darkness, water, ice and hail. Each of these obstacles is so deep that it takes 1000 years to pass through them. Then they reach the highest heaven where there are 8000 porches; on each of them there is a beaming moon that honours and glorifies God. If one of these moons were on the earth, people would have worshipped it instead of God. After that a herald announces: “*Who is this soul whom you have brought?*” It is said that it is the soul of so and so. At this moment God says: “*Let him approach. Truly, you are an excellent servant, O my servant.*” Man’s soul stands before God, but God reproaches him so that the servant thinks that he is one of the rejected souls, but God forgives his sins, and honours him (Ghazzālī, *DFK*, 17).

- *Bushrā al-Ka’ib Bi Liqā’i al-Ḥibīb*

When a true believer is about to leave the material world, angels with white faces descend from Heaven and come to him. They have faces as bright as the sun, carry shrouds and embalmments of Paradise, and sit near him. The Angel of Death sits near the head of the believer and says: “*O soul in complete rest and satisfaction! Come out and leave the body to the mercy and happiness of your Lord.*” After that the soul leaves the body like a drop of water that drops from the clouds, then angels embalm it and shroud it and take it upward. While they are going upwards, they meet a group of angels. They ask: “*Who is this pure soul?*” The accompanying angels introduce him to those angels with the best names and titles that he has ever heard. They continue their way to the heaven of the world and then from there to the seventh heaven. In the seventh heaven, angels say to God: “*Today a pious soul from earth came here, and whatever door that he went to, we opened it to him...our Lord this is your servant whose soul we took and you are enough for him.*” There, God Almighty orders angels to write down his name in the book where the names of the pious are listed (*Illī’īn*), and send him back to the earth (Al-Suyūfī, *BKH. Ḥibīb.*, p. 26).³⁵⁵

4.11.6 The evil soul leaves the body

- *al-Qubūr and Dhikr al-Mawt*

An evil soul faces something different after death because of his malicious deeds. God sends the Angel of Death to a wicked man and says: “*Go to the enemy of God to whom I was*

³⁵⁵ It is also stated that when God hears what angels say, then he orders them to prostrate themselves before the soul. Then God calls Archangel Michael and orders him to place this soul (النسمة) between the souls of other believers until the Resurrection, when God wants him back. After that his grave will be extended and will be furnished by silk fabric. There will be installed something like the sun that shines in his grave; a door to Paradise will be opened for him, and they show him his place in Paradise every morning and night. See it in: Al-Suyūfī, *Jalāl al-Ddīn, Bushrā al-Ka’ib Bi Liqā’i al-Ḥibīb*, 1986, p.27.

kind and merciful, and increased my blessing for him, but he did sinful acts. Say to him that this is the day of revenge.” The Angel of Death appears to him with the ugliest face that a person has ever seen. He has twelve eyes and hot spit, while being accompanied by 500 angels each of which has white-hot charcoal and melted copper and fiery whips in its hands. The Angel of Death beats him with these instruments so that it causes the soul to escape to the foot. The evil soul faints and the angels start beating on his face and back. Then soul escapes from the toes to the foot, and then to the posterior, and from there to the stomach, and finally to the throat. At this moment, he suffers the agonies of death, and the Angel of Death orders him to leave the body to the smoke and blazing fire.

When the wicked soul leaves the body, it addresses the body and says: “*May God reward you with evil and mischief! You drove me to sinful acts and you were an obstacle between me and obedience to God. You ruined me and you were ruined.*” Not only does such a person arouse God’s anger, but the earth on which he disobeyed God and committed sins curses him too.

The only being that is happy because of a wicked man’s death is the Devil. When Satan finds out that such a man has provoked God’s anger, he feels happy and says to his companions that a servant of the children of Adam has been sent to Hellfire. Meanwhile, the grave shrinks and become narrow from different dimensions. The deceased suffers because of the narrowness, difficulties and darkness of the grave; then two angels come to him, and make him sit. They ask him about his God, religion and prophet. In his reply he asserts that he does not know the answer. He is told: “*You did not know and you will not know.*” They beat him severely and say to him: “*Look above your head.*” A gate of Paradise will be opened to him and they say: “*O enemy of God! If you had been obedient to God, it would have been your dwelling.*” The deceased yearns for Paradise when he understands that such a place could have been his final dwelling. Next, a gate to Hellfire is opened to him and he is addressed: “*O enemy of God! This is your dwelling because you were disobedient to God.*” There, smoke billows toward him, and he suffers from its heat until the Resurrection (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *DM.*, pp. 140-141).

- *al-Durrah al-Fakhirah fī kashf al-‘Ulūm al-Ākhirah*

The soul of the evil-doer and unbeliever is fiercely taken out of the body. Its face is like a person who has eaten colocynth. The angel says to him: “*Go away from me, oh you evil soul of a noxious body!*” Then, the evil soul makes a sound worse than that of an ass. The Angel of Death takes the soul out, and hands it over to the guardian angel of Hell (*Mālik*). The guardian of Hell has an ugly face, and wears a black garment. He has stinking breath, and has a cloth of straw in his hand and wraps the soul with it. It is said that the soul of the unbeliever is bigger than the soul of the believer (as big as a locust). It will be surrounded in a fire bigger than Mount *‘Uḥud*.

The Angel of Death and the soul ascend to the sky. There, other angels ask its identity. There, they visit an angel who introduces himself as *Qiyā’il*; he is the angel in charge of punishing. The guardian angel of the door asks: “*Who is with you?*” He introduces the soul with the worst names and titles that soul has ever heard. The guardian angels do not open the door, as the Qur’ān says:

“...no opening will there be of the gates of heaven, nor will they enter the Garden, until a camel can pass through the eye of the needle...” (Qur’ān 7:40).

Then the angel leaves him alone, and the wind drops the soul in a far distant place. The guardian angels take him to the prison (*Sijjīn*), a place wherein evil souls reside (Ghazzālī, *DFK.*, p. 20).

4.11.7 Deeds are means of salvation

- *al-Qubūr and Dhikr al-Mawt*

Before burial, the soul is present in all situations, and observes whatever happens to his body. It is said that the soul sits on an angel's hand and watches all the actions until his burial and then they both enter into the grave (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *DM.*, pp. 158-159). Deeds will be personified in the grave and become means of salvation. It is stated that when a pious man is buried in his grave, his prayer (*Ṣalā*) stands on his right side, his fasting (*Ṣiyām*) on the left side, Qur'ān recitation and invocation of God (*Dhikr*) near his head, salutation to the Prophet (*Ṣalawāt*) and patience (*Ṣabr*) near the foot. When the [angel of] torments comes to excruciate the dead person from the right side, praying prevents it; from each corner that torments come, impersonated deeds prevent them in the same manner (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *DM.*, p. 139).

But, after burial, God sends two angels whose eyes are like lightning and their sound is roaring and raging like thunder, with visible teeth and burning breath without any kindness and friendliness to the deceased. They are called *Munkar* and *Nakīr*. They make him sit and ask: "Who is your God? What is your religion? And who is your prophet?" In reply he says: "Allāh is my God, Islam is my religion, and Muhammad is his messenger and the last one." Then they confirm what he said and leave him. At this moment, his grave expands on all sides, and he is told: "Look above your head! It is a gate to Paradise. This is your dwelling because you obeyed God, and you will be in an eternal state." To him will be opened a gate to Hellfire beneath his body that causes the deceased fear; he takes refuge in God and says: "God save me from this fire." Then, 77 gates to Paradise will be opened to him, and there come to him fragrance, flowers and breeze from Paradise; this continues until his resurrection on the last day (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *DM.*, pp. 139-140).

4.11.8 The embodiment of deeds

- *al-Qubūr and Dhikr Al_Mawt*

What a man does will be embodied and can be the means of mercy or punishment in the world of spirits. The first thing that enters with a man into his grave is his deeds which address the deceased and say: "I am your deeds and there is no one else with you except me" (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *DM.*, p. 143). It is mentioned that some good deeds such as prayers, fasting and charity can be transformed and prevent man from being chastised in the grave. Not only good deeds but also evil deeds will be transformed and cause pain and suffering for the deceased. For example it said that thieves, adulterers and drinkers are accompanied in their graves by two giant snakes that bite them all the time (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *DM.*, p. 142); it is also mentioned that in the graves of the unbelievers, there are 77 seven-headed snakes who bite the deceased until the Resurrection (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *DM.*, p. 145). Another means of punishment in the grave is the wishes of the unbelievers, they wish they could return to the world to do good deeds, but their grave will be narrowed and noxious animals like snakes and scorpions bite them all day long (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *DM.*, p. 146).

- *al-Durrah al-Fakhirah fi kashf al-'Ulūm al-Ākhirah*

It is stated that after death all his good deeds appear to the deceased in the form of a beautiful creature that calms the soul and makes his grave full of light. He will be in joy and calm while is accompanied by this beautiful and lovely creature until the Resurrection; such a

fate is for devoted souls. Their deeds are manifested in the form of a beautiful creature in precious clothes with sweet fragrance. He says to the deceased: “*Don’t you know me?*” The soul says: “*Who are you, with whom God has graced me in my exile?*” In reply the creature says: “*I am your own good deeds, so do not grieve and do not be afraid; very soon Munkar and Nakīr will enter and question you, so do not be taken aback!*” The beautiful figure helps the deceased to defend himself (Ghazzālī, *DFK.*, 24).

The first thing that appears in the grave is an angel that is called *Rumān*; it comes to the soul while it is roaming the grave and says:

“*O servant of God, write down your deeds.*’ The soul says: ‘*I do not have any ink or paper.*’ Then *Rumān* says: ‘*You are wrong. Your shroud is your paper, your saliva is your ink and your finger is your pen.*’ So he cuts a piece of his shroud and makes the servant of God write, even if he could not write in this world. He mentions his good deeds and evil deeds as if it were a question of only one day. Then *Rumān* folds up the piece of shroud and fastens it on his neck” (Ghazzālī, *al_Durrah al_Fakhirah fi kašf al_’Ulūm al_Ākhirah*, 23).

After this heavenly help, two angry angels (*Munkar* and *Nakīr*) come to the deceased and make him sit. They ask him about his God, Prophet, religion and direction of prayer. He says that Allāh is his God, Mohammad is the messenger of God, Islam is his religion, Ka’bah is his direction of prayer, and he is a follower of Abraham’s nation (*Umma*). When the angels hear his reply, they confirm him and make his grave full of endowments. They open a gate on his left side to Hell and show him snakes, scorpions, chains, burning water, tortures and the tree of *ZaqQum* which all grieve him. At this the moment the soul fears, but it is told not to be worried, because its dwelling is in Paradise. They close the gate to Hell and open a door to Paradise and say: “*Sleep in peace!*” Hearing this sentence, the soul sleeps without being aware of the passing of days, months and years (Ghazzālī, *DFK.*, pp. 24-25).

When angels ask a non-believer about his God, his Prophet and his religion, he mumbles and cannot answer correctly. Therefore, angels hit him so that his grave catches fire and causes him to burn and die for a while. Then he will be revived, and this punishment will be repeated until Resurrection. Angels tell such people that they did not know and would not know; therefore, they deserve such a terrible punishment in their graves (Ghazzālī, *DFK.*, 25,27).

It is also stated that while true believers are accompanied by a beautiful and lovely figure, wicked souls, who cannot give the angels a correct answer, will be accompanied in the grave by a dog or a piglet. Their deeds will be transformed into an animal, and they have to be in the grave with one another until Resurrection. Generally, the transformation of sins depends on the type of sin that has been committed by the soul in the material world, and one will be punished by whatever one feared on earth (Ghazzālī, *DFK.*, p. 25).

4.11.9 The grave and the soul

- *al-Qubūr and Dhikr al-Mawt*

The grave is the final house of man, and it will be personified after death to talk with the deceased. Man’s deeds influence the grave’s behaviour with him after death. When a wicked soul is buried, his grave starts complaining and says: “*I am the house of calamity, I am the house of darkness and loneliness, I am the house of worm. What made you proud of yourself when you were walking on me? If you were obedient, you would be today under God’s mercy.*” But when it

faces a righteous man, he says: “*I change your dwelling to a green garden, keep your body in light and send your soul to the almighty God, but if you were disobedient, you would be under God’s wrath and disasters.*”³⁵⁶

- *al-Durrah al-Fakhirah fi kašf al-‘Ulūm al-Ākhirah*

When the corpse of a wicked man is laid inside the grave and the earth is poured on him, the grave starts talking with him and says:

“You enjoyed yourself on my surface, but now you sorrow inside me: you ate all kinds of tasty foods on my surface, but today worms will eat you while you are inside me” (Ghazzālī, *al-Durrah al-Fakhirah*, p. 23).

- *Bušrā al-Ka’ib Bi Liqā’ al-Ḥibīb*

When a believer, a servant of God, is buried in his grave, the grave addresses him and says:

“Hail and feel at home! I like people who came in my back to me. Since I became your friend today and you came to me so you will see my favour to (for) you.’ Then the breadth of his eyesight and the door of Paradise are opened for him” (*Bušrā al-Ka’ib Bi Liqā’ al-Ḥibīb*, p. 37).

4.11.10 Earth cries, Satan yells

- *al-Qubūr and Dhikr al-Mawt*

The death of a pious man is a heavy loss for earth and sky. When a believer dies, the sky cries for his death and the earth cries, and so does even the gate through which his good deeds used to ascend to Heaven. When his soul is taken, 500 angels sit beside him, they take his soul, and wrap him in the shroud and embalment of Paradise, even before he is shrouded by the people on earth. All the angels queue from his house to his grave and pray to God for his forgiveness (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *DM.*, p. 139).

In addition to the earth and sky that cry because of a righteous man’s death, Satan yells and cries too. As stated earlier, Satan is ready when someone is about to die. When he finds out that a true believer has been released from the suffering of the material world and is going to be admitted after death into Paradise, and be welcomed and greeted by the angels, he (Satan) yells out at his companions and says: “*Woe to you! How did this servant escape from you?*” And his companions in reply to him say: “*He was innocent and infallible.*” At this moment the Angel of Death takes the soul to Heaven, and Gabriel and 70,000 angels welcome him with the best tidings from God. When they (soul and angels) arrive at the throne, they all prostrate themselves before God. He orders the Angel of Death to place the soul under the “*Lote-Trees without thorns, Among Tall trees with flowers [or fruits] piled one above another, in shade long-extended By water flowing constantly*” (*Qu.*, 56:28-31) (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *DM.*, p. 139).

4.11.11 The soul visits the souls of acquaintances

- *al-Qubūr and Dhikr al-Mawt*

³⁵⁶ Abū Bakr ‘Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Ubayd ibn Sufyān ibn al-Qurashī al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb al-Qubūr*, ed. Ṭāriq Muḥammad Saklū’ al-‘amūdī (Medina: Maktabat al-Ghurabā al-‘Ašariyyah, 2000/1420), 218-219.

A newly dead person visits his family and acquaintances after death. They welcome him, and ask him questions about their friends and families. When angels see a newcomer being questioned by other souls, they ask them to leave him alone because he has just been released from the sufferings of the journey to the hereafter. However, those who have died earlier ask him about the fate of their acquaintances, friend and families. If the soul says that one of them is dead, but they had not seen him, it means that he has fallen into the abyss in Hellfire (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *DM.*, pp. 148; 150; 152).

- *al-Durrah al-Fakhirah fi kashf al-'Ulūm al-Ākhirah*

Souls visit one another after death. It is stated that when someone dies he visits his family, friends and acquaintances who had died before. They ask the newly deceased about their relatives and friends, and if they hear in reply that so and so has died, but they have not found him among themselves, they say: “*Truly we are God’s and to Him we return! He has been sent down to the community of the pit*” (Ġazālī, *DFK.*, pp. 32-33).

- *Bushrā al-Ka’ib Bi Liqā’ al-Hibīb*

When a true believer is going to leave the material world, five hundred angels come to take his soul. After taking the soul, they all return to Heaven wherein those souls that had left world before come to visit the newcomer. They start talking with the newly departed soul and ask him some questions. They ask him questions like a live man who asks about his brothers and his friends. Meanwhile, angels prevent them from asking him questions and say: “*Be kind with him, leave him alone and let him relax, because he has recently been released from grief*” (Al-Suyūfī, *BKH. Hibīb.*, p. 28).

4.11.12 Location of the souls

- *al-Qubūr and Dhikr al-Mawt*

Souls will be divided into different groups according to their deeds and the mercy or punishment they deserve. While pious souls dwell under the throne in the bodies of white birds, the souls of evil men will be punished under the seventh earth (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *DM.*, p. 150). Pious souls can go wherever they wish, but wicked ones are like prisoners in *Sijjīn*; they are not allowed to go anywhere (Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *Qub.*, pp. 229-230). There, for both groups, the believers and the unbelievers, guardian angels have been appointed; *Ramyā’il* is the guardian of believers and *Dūmah* controls the wicked souls (Ibn abī al-Dunyā, *Qub.*, pp. 230).

- *al-Durrah al-Fakhirah fi kashf al-'Ulūm al-Ākhirah*

Souls are aware of what happens in the material world; they know their visitors, they feel sad because of their survivors’ lamentation and they can even communicate with the material world. The author of the ‘Precious Pearl’ narrates what the Prophet has said about souls being visited by survivors:

“*No one of you passes by the grave of his brother Muslim who he knew on the earth and gives him peace but that the dead person recognises him and returns peace to him*” (Ġazālī, *al-Durrah al-Fakhirah*, p. 29).

Souls are categorised into four groups after death. The first one is of those who stay on their shoulders in the grave till their body is decomposed and changed to soil, and then they leave it and wander about under the heaven of the earth. The second one is of those who sleep, and are not aware of what happens around them until the first blast of the trumpet on the day of doom. Another group stays in their graves for two or three months until their soul ascends to Heaven like birds, like martyrs whose souls are in the form of the green birds on the trees in Paradise.

The last groups are the souls of the prophets and saints who are categorised into two groups. Some stay on the earth until Resurrection and others ascend to the heavens (Ġazālī, *DFK.*, p. 31-32).

- *Bushrā al-Ka'ib Bi Liqā' al-Ḥibīb*

Souls are classified according to their deeds and their devotedness to God, with different dwellings, different clothes and different guardians. They wear different clothes, and dwell in different locations. For example, some of the righteous souls wear silk clothes (*aṣḥāb al-sundus*), they are good-tempered people; martyrs wear silk clothes (*aṣḥāb al-ḥarīr wa al-dībāj*); those who used to fast a lot smell pleasantly (*aṣḥāb al-rayḥān*). Some souls are happy, they are those whom God likes, and some are sad, they are those with whom God is angry.

Generally souls are classified into four groups according to the place where they dwell. The souls of prophets smell like musk and camphor; they dwell in Paradise, and eat and drink; at night they are like the lamps and lights under the God's throne (*'Arṣ*). The souls of the martyrs are like green birds; they drink and eat in Paradise. The souls of other true believers wander between earth and heaven. By contrast, the souls of evil-doers and unbelievers are like black birds that are punished and tortured under the seventh earth (al-Suyūṭī, *BKH. Ḥibīb.*, p. 69). Moreover, some true believers are in the seventh heaven (al-Suyūṭī, *BKH. Ḥibīb.*, p. 63), and some are in the *barzakh* of the earth³⁵⁷ and go wherever they want (al-Suyūṭī, *BKH. Ḥibīb.*, p. 64). While pious souls are in Heaven, wicked souls suffer in *Sijjīn*, the seventh and the lowest earth, a rock or a well in Hell (al-Suyūṭī, *BKH. Ḥibīb.*, p. 61).

Souls are watched over by three angels: Gabriel looks after the souls that are in the seventh heaven, but other believers are under the care of *Ramiyā'īl*. The third group is the souls of the wicked and wrong-doers; a guardian called *Duḥa* takes charge of them after death (al-Suyūṭī, *BKH. Ḥibīb.*, p. 65-66).

4.11.16 Lamentation torments the soul

- *al-Durrah al-Fakhirah fi kaṣf al-'Ulūm al-Ākhirah*

As mentioned before, lamentation by the survivors for death of a person hurts the soul. If the survivors lament for the soul, this causes it to suffer and be tortured because of their lamentation, as the Prophet says:

“Indeed the dead person is tormented by the tears of the living over him” (Ġazālī, *al-Durrah al-Fakhirah*, p. 29).

4.12 Classical Shia sources

- *Manāzil al-'Ākhirah* (The Stages of the Afterlife)

In comparison with Sunni classical sources, most Shia works on the subject were written in the last century. One of these books was written by *Shaykh Abbās Qumī*, he is one of the 14th century (AH) Shia traditionalists. He was born in *Qum* in 1875 and died in *Naḡaf* in 1941. He has many compilations such as *The Key of Gardens*, *Maḡātiḥ al-Jannān* (a Shia Missal), and

³⁵⁷ It is not clear what the author means by *barzakh of the earth*, but I think it matches with the proposed etymology of the word *barzakh*. The souls wander in a form of life beyond the material life.

Manāzil al-Ākhirah (the Stages of the Afterlife), a book about the events of the Afterlife. The latter portrays death and the adventures of the Afterlife according to Shia viewpoints.

- *al-Ḥayāt mā ba'd al-Mawt* (Life after Death)

Another book that has been consulted in this study is *al-Ḥayāt ba'd al- (mawt (Life after Death)*. It was compiled by one of the greatest contemporary interpreters, 'Allāmah Sayyid Moḥammad Ḥossayn Ṭabāṭabāī. He was born in Iran in a village near *Tabrīz* in 1321AH/1903CE. He is the most eminent philosopher and interpreter of the Qur'ān in the modern Shia world. He wrote many books. The most important one is the Qur'ān exegesis called *Tafsīr al-Mīzān* (Exegesis of the Scales). He died in November 1981. Because of his celebrity in the Shia world, and being one of the prominent contemporary jurists of the Islamic world, his book about the fate of the soul after death, called *Ḥayāt e pas az marg* in Persian or *Ḥayāt mā ba'd al-Mawt* in Arabic (Life after Death), has been selected here.

- *Sīyāḥat i Gharb*

*Sīyāḥat i Gharb*³⁵⁸ is a book about the imaginary death of the author according to the religious beliefs and traditions. It was written by *Ḥassan Najafī Qūchānī* known as 'Āqā Najafī Qūchānī, a Shia clergyman from the late 19th and early 20th century in Iran. In this book he refers to some verses of the Qur'ān and Shia traditions to portray his imaginary death journey.

4.12.1 Death has been predetermined

- *al-Ḥayāt mā ba'd al-Mawt* (Life after Death)

People fear death because they do not know death. According to a tradition, death is like a bathroom for a person who is sick and whose body is ulcerous, and death resembles a bath which rids him of all pains and ulcers. Death acts as a bath in which man can purify himself from all sins and causes him to feel happiness and delight.³⁵⁹

Moreover, death is like a bridge that transfers man from the world of pain and disasters to an extended garden full of everlasting endowments – from prison to the mansions. It is necessary to mention that this description of death is for those who are true believers and right-doers; on the contrary, evil-doers and unbelievers will be transferred from their palaces to jails to be tortured. It is narrated by the Prophet that the world is the jail of believers and a garden [Paradise] for unbelievers.³⁶⁰ By death, a believer takes off his old clothes and all the heavy yokes and burdens, and instead of them he wears clean and sweet-smelling clothes, and enjoys comfortable means of transportation and pleasant houses. In contrast, unbelievers must leave their glorious clothes and their vast clean houses for cramped houses and dirty and shredded garments.³⁶¹

³⁵⁸ The story of this book has been filmed several times by some religious institutes in Iran, and it is shown to the pilgrims of the Shia shrines; it is also available online.

³⁵⁹ Abī Ḡā'far Muḥammad ibn-i 'Alī ibn-i al-Ḥusayn, *M'ānī al-Akḥbār*, ed. 'Alī 'Akbar al-Jaffārī (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifāt, 1979/1399), 290.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 288.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*

4.12.2 The agonies of death

- *Manāzil al-`Ākhirah* (The Stages of the Afterlife)

Death is accompanied by difficulties because it causes a kind of unconsciousness. The dying person suffers not only because of the pains and diseases that he is suffering from but also because of leaving behind his family, his property and whatever he is interested in. In addition to these difficulties³⁶², gradually he observes what he could not see before. He sees the Prophet and his family accompanied by the angels of mercy on one side and Satan and the angels of wrath on the other side (Qumī, *MAkh.*, p. 12). The other agony of death is Satan who tries to deceive the soul and casts doubt on the truth of Islam and does his best to make the dying person lose his faith in Islam (Qumī, *MAkh.*, p. 18). The only remedy for such a difficulty is God; therefore, man should ask God in his prayers to return his faith at the time of death³⁶³ (Qumī, *MAkh.*, pp. 18-19).

“Prepare yourself and make all the travel arrangements. May God forgive you, verily, the herald has carried the message of death amongst you, and shorten your residence in the world, and leave the world while you have made provisions of good deeds. Verily, you have horrible and difficult stations ahead that you have to pass through and you devise no remedy for it” (*Nahj al-Blāghah*, Word. 195).

The dying person experiences two groups of angels surrounding him when he is going to leave the material world. This dualistic scene can be exemplified by a tradition that the author narrates. The narrator relates the story of the young man at the time of death. The Prophet visits him and finds him in death agonies. He asks him what he feels at that moment, and finds out that the young man is surrounded by two groups of angels, an ugly man in tattered, messy and stinking clothes, who is holding the young man’s throat, and the other one, a young handsome man in white, fragrant precious clothes. Seemingly, this young man will be forgiven by God after repenting his sins before his death and the ugly man will leave him (Qumī, *MAkh.*, pp. 14-15).

The Angel of Death visits people in different visages. A believer experiences the Angel of Death as a beautiful young man in precious garments with a chalice from Paradise in his hand, he makes him drink it to help him to forget the death agonies; an unbeliever’s soul is pierced with a hot skewer that causes him to shriek and cry (Qumī, *MAkh.*, pp. 16-17).

- *Sīyāhat i Gharb*

The author does not talk about the agonies of death, although they are an important part of Islamic eschatological beliefs. He begins with the time when he understood he had left the material body and tried to talk with his family, but could not.

*“...and I died, and I had no disease any more, and I was healthy. My family, around my corpse, were crying for me, and I was very sad because of their crying. I was telling them: ‘I am not dead, and I am not sick any more.’ No one paid attention to me. Seemingly, they did not see and hear me. I found out that I was far away from them.”*³⁶⁴

³⁶² ‘Abbās, Qumī, *Manāzil al-Ākhirah* (Qum: ‘Intishārāt i Dār al-Fikr, Qum, 1390), 11.

³⁶³ This prayer is called ‘adīlih ‘ind al-mawt, and can be found in *Mafātiḥ al-Jannān*. When someone is about to die, one of those who are sitting next to him recites this prayer for the moribund, and if possible asks him or her to repeat it.

³⁶⁴ Ḥasan, Najafī Qūhānī, *Sīyāhat i Gharb* (Tehrān: Intishārāt i Gūyā, 1377), 51-52.

4.12.3 Who takes souls at death?

- *Manāzil al-`Ākhirah* (The Stages of the Afterlife)

The author states that it is the angel of the death who takes souls at the time of death. When the Angel of Death is sent to take a soul, he takes out the soul of an unbeliever with a flaming skewer. According to the narrations mentioned in the book, the Angel of Death has two faces, a beautiful one for believers and an ugly one for unbelievers (Qumī, *MAkh.*, p. 13).

- *al-Ḥayāt mā ba`d al-Mawt* (Life after Death)

According to the Qur`ān, it is God who takes souls at the time of death, but another verse indicates that it is the Angel of Death who is in charge of this. It is even mentioned that sometimes groups of angels are responsible for taking the soul when death comes. *Ṭabāṭabāī* states that there is no paradox between these verses, because God is the source of all decrees and his will prevails over all creatures. He is the one who decides and the entire universe obeys his will. But, as he mentions, questions about these different verses even had been raised for the followers of Shia Imams. According to the narrations, followers of the sixth Imam asked him about the manner of death according to the verses of the Qur`ān that sometimes indicates God, sometimes the Angel of Death and sometimes angels as the agents in charge of taking souls. In reply to their questions he says:

*“God has made him [the Angel of Death] helpers for taking the soul, like a commander in a war who has several assistances. They take the souls and deliver them to the Angel of Death and he delivers them to Allāh.”*³⁶⁵

Ṭabāṭabāī narrates a tradition from the first Imam: *‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, “He [God] is one who takes the souls in a way that he wants, by [means of] angels or non-angels.” In the exegesis of this tradition he explains that God makes it sometimes possible for some people to die not directly by God, but their soul will be taken out by angels. This means that there are some people who are superior to angels (*‘Awlīyā al-muqarrabīn*); therefore, they are those whose souls are taken without intermediation of the angels. In addition to the first group, there are some souls that are nearer to God, and because of this closeness, God prefers to take their souls himself (*Ṭabāṭabāī*, *Al-Ḥayāt mā ba`d al-Mawt*, p. 88).

4.12.4 Angels, the soul and the companions of the Afterlife

- *al-Ḥayāt mā ba`d al-Mawt* (Life after Death)

When man is going to die, angels treat him according to his status in the world. It is worth mentioning that when God decides to take a man’s soul, it will be shaped like his worldly mould. It means that it will be embodied in an image similar to his material body; he enjoys eating and drinking in Paradise with this body (*Ṭabāṭabāī*, *ḤBM.*, pp. 143-144).

Angels, who come to take the soul out, deal with two groups of people: first, are those righteous believers who obeyed God’s decrees, and the second group are the unbelievers who rejected faith and follow evil ways. On account of this, when unbelievers are going to leave the world, angels take their souls severely (*Qu.*, 6:93), but the soul of the believers will be taken very

³⁶⁵ *Man lā yaḥḍaruh al-faqīh*, al-Shaykh al-Ṣaddūq, *Bāb Ghusl al-Mayyit*, Tradition/26.

peacefully with the best glad tidings (*Qu.*, 16:32) while angels promise them Paradise and its bounties (*Qu.*, 41:30).

God sends the Angel of Death to a believer to take his soul. It is stated that when the Angel of Death comes to a believer, the man hesitates, refuses and gets angry with the Angel of Death. But when the Angel of Death sees the man's hesitation, he assures him that he will be kinder than his father to him, and asks him to open his eyes. When he opens his eyes, he visits the Prophet, Imam Ali, Ḥasan, Ḥusayn and their sinless descendants. The Angel of Death introduces them to him and announces to him that they will be his companions after leaving the world. Then he hears a tidings from the divinity that says: "*O [thou] soul, in [complete] rest and satisfaction*" in Muḥammad and his family, "*Come thou back to thy Lord, – well pleased [thyself], and well-pleasing unto Him!*" (Ṭabāṭabāī, *HBM.*, p. 107).

4.12.5 The soul observes what happens to the body

- *Sīyāḥat i Gharb*

The author of the book states that at the time of death the soul observes whatever others do. Although his soul has left the material body, he still has the sense of belonging to the body. As a dead person, he watches those who wash and enshroud him. He is even able to see the nature and the real character of the people in the form of different animals because of their deeds.

After he has been buried in the grave, he sees some animals that attack him and this causes him to fear, but he will be released from them by some helps that seemingly are his good deeds (Najafī Qūchānī, *SGH.*, p. 52). It makes him remember this verse of the Qur'ān that says:

"...for those things that are good remove those that are evil..."

(*Qur'ān*, 11:114).

He sits alone in his grave and remembers a famous Shia invocation that says on behalf of the soul in the grave:

"Whose state is worse than me if I would be transferred to this grave, because I have not made it comfort and prepared it for sleeping, and I have not furnished it by my good deeds. Why should not I cry while I know what awaits me.... death has spread its wing over my head, and age has deceived me. Why should I not cry? I cry because of my expiration, because of my grave and its darkness; I cry because of the narrowness of my grave; I cry because of being interrogated by Munkar and Nakīr in the grave; I cry because of emerging from my grave when I will be naked [refers to Resurrection]" (Najafī Qūchānī, *Sīyāḥat i Ġarb*, p. 53).

4.12.6 The grave

- *Manāzil al- 'Ākhirah* (The Stages of the Afterlife)

The most difficult station after leaving the world is the grave. It is so difficult that the sixth Shia Imam (*Ja'far Ṣādiq*) is worried for his followers because of it. It is narrated that he was worried about *barzakh* for his followers and when he was asked what *barzakh* is, he replied: "*it is the grave from death until Resurrection*" (Qumī, *MAkh.*, p. 49).

The author states that when an unbeliever dies and is buried in his grave, 99 big serpents become dominant over him in the grave; they bite him, eat his flesh and break his bones until

Resurrection. They are so poisonous that if one of them blows on the earth no plant grows on the earth any more (Qumī, *MAkh.*, p. 33).

When man is buried in the grave, he feels its loneliness, darkness and narrowness. It so horrible that even the grave talks with men before they leave their bodies. It tries to remind them how horrible it is, by saying these words: “*I am the house of loneliness, I am the house of wretchedness, I am the house of worm.*” Moreover, the grave is a torment because of interrogation by angels – two interrogator angels in the grave, *Munkar* and *Nakīr*, who ask the deceased about his God, Prophet, religion and Imams (Qumī, *MAkh.*, p. 40).

- *Sīyāḥat i Gharb*

As he says, the grave is a horrible place; he portrays the scene in which his corpse is laid in his grave. He enters the grave because he is interested in his body. As soon as he enters the grave, he meets some animals, while he is unable to do anything.

“...and I was standing in the grave and watching. I was terrified and afraid, especially when some animals appeared in the grave and attacked my corpse, but the man who was burying the corpse in the grave did not interrupt them. Apparently, he could not see them and he left the grave. I stayed there in the grave because I was interested in the corpse, so I entered the grave and tried to dispel and scatter the animals, but they were many and overpowered me. I was so scared that my body started to cringe. I shouted for help, but no one helped me. They were busy with their tasks; seemingly, no one could see what was happening in the grave” (Najafī Qūchānī, *Sīyāḥat i Ġarb*, p. 52).

- *al-Ḥayāt mā ba’d al-Mawt* (Life after Death)

When man is going to die, leaving the material world and entering the Hereafter, his position in the Afterlife will be visualised before him. While man’s deeds, children and property are visualised, he asks them to do something for him. But his property and wealth that he was so greedy to save will not give him anything except his shroud. When he asks his family and children to help him and have mercy on him, the only thing that they can do for him is to accompany him to his grave. It is only his deeds that stay with him in his grave until Resurrection, when all his deeds, words and thoughts will be shown to him. In this situation, honest souls will be in happiness, and then a beautiful, well-shaped fragrant figure (الشخص الجميل) (الوجه طيب الرائحة حلو الهندام) appears to him and leads him to the best houses. When a righteous man meets such a lovely figure, he asks him about his identity; in reply the figure says: “*I am your good deeds and you have prepared Paradise for me*” (انا عملى الصالح، فاستعد لجنه). On the contrary, the enemy of God is faced with a figure in a shredded cloth and malodorous. The figure reminds him his dwelling in the worst place, “*For him is entertainment with boiling water, and burning in Hellfire*” (*Qu.*, 56: 93-94).³⁶⁶

4.12.7 Interrogation in the grave

- *Manāzil al-`Ākhirah* (The Houses of the Afterlife)

The worst time of the grave is the first night (*ṣab i avval i qabr*). It is the time when the soul will be questioned. When the deceased is buried, two frightening angels, whose voice is like

³⁶⁶ Ṭabāṭabāī, *al-Ḥayāt mā ba’d al-Mawt*, pp.131-132.

the sound of thunder and their eyes as dazzling as lightning, come to the deceased and ask him about his God, his Prophet, his religion and his Imams (Qumī, *MAkh.*, p. 40-41).

- *al-Ḥayāt mā ba'd al-Mawt* (Life after Death)

After the meeting with the figure, two angels with long hair and long teeth, whose sounds are like thunder and their eyes like lightening, appear to him. They ask him about his God, his Prophet and his religion. In reply to their question he declares his faith in Allāh as his God, Muhammad as his messenger and Islam as his religion. When they hear these answers, they ask God to make him remain steadfast in his beliefs. “*Allāh will establish in strength those who believe, with the Word that stands firm, in this world and in the Hereafter*” (*Qu.*, 14:27). After that his grave will be extended and a gate to Paradise will be opened to him, and he will be told: “*Enter it O apple of eyes.*” What he receives is the fulfilment of the promises of God who says: “*The companions of Garden will be well, that Day, in their abode, and have the fairest places for repose*” (*Qu.*, 25:24) (Ṭabāṭabāī, *Al-Ḥayāt mā ba'd al-Mawt*, pp. 131-133).

When the wicked man enters his grave, two angels come to ask him about his God, his Prophet and his religion; the enemy of God in their reply says that he does not know the answer. They say: “*You did not know and you will not be guided.*” They will beat him with a club of iron, and fire that causes fear in all animals on earth except Man and Jinns. Afterwards, a gate to Hellfire will be opened to him and he will be told: “*Remain in this worst state.*” Then his grave will be narrowed around him so that his brain comes out of his skull. His grave will be filled with snakes, scorpions and other dangerous insects to bite him and eat his body until the Resurrection or the time that God releases him from pain and suffering (Ṭabāṭabāī, *HBM.*, pp. 133).

- *Sīyāḥat i Gharb*

After he being buried, his grave begins to tremble as if an earthquake has struck. Two dreadful angels with horrendous bodies come into the grave, while smoke comes out of their mouth and nostrils, and fire blazes over their heads. They have fiery clubs in their hands and their voice is thunderous and makes the earth shudder. They ask the deceased about his God, his Prophet, his religion, his direction of prayer (*Qiblah*) and his Imams. The fearful soul appeals to Imam Ali for help and answers their questions. To make sure, they want to know how he has learned these answers, and in reply he says: “*This is what God has led me to.*” This answer makes them happy, so they ask him to sleep in his grave like a bride in her room (Najafī Qūchānī, *SGH.*, pp. 53-60).

4.12.8 The embodiment of the deeds (Tajassum al-'a'māl)

- *Manāzil al-Ākhirah* (The Stages of the Afterlife)

What helps or torments the deceased in the grave are his beliefs and his deeds. All his deeds will be embodied after death and cause comfort or punishment for him in the grave. It is stated that after burial six beautiful, clean and fragrant visages come to the deceased. They are man's prayers (*Ṣalāt*) that comes to the right side of the deceased, obligatory charity (*Zakāt*) on the left side, pilgrimage (*Ḥajj*) behind him, righteousness (*al-Birr*) next to his feet, patience (*Ṣabr*) next to him, and guardianship, the love of the family of the Prophet as his true successors (*Wilāyat*), which is the most beautiful visage and the most fragrant one, above his head; they all prevent any punishment or hurt to the deceased; but, the evil deeds can be embodied like a dog or 99 giant snakes who bite or sting him day and night until Resurrection (Qumī, *MAkh.*, p. 42-43).

In another narration, it is stated that when a man is buried, he smells an aromatic wind blowing to the owner of the grave and after a while observes a handsome, elegant youth who enters his grave, but after a while the narrator smells an evil-smelling wind which blows to the grave while a dog enters it too. He sees that the handsome man leaves the grave while he is wounded. When he tries to know the reason, he finds out that the elegant young man is the embodiment of his good deeds, while the wild dog is the embodiment of the evil deeds that attacks him in the grave because he been an unbeliever (Qumī, *MAkh.*, p. 65-66).

- *Sīyāḥat i Gharb*

The embodiment of deeds can be seen in this book in several indications such as:

- 1- Dreadful animals (noxious animals) attack the corpse when the corpse is laid in the grave (Najafī Qūchānī, *SGH.*, p. 52).
- 2- Two companions, an evil one and a good one, that accompany him wherever he goes.
- 3- The embodiment of the gifts from the material world: whatever good deeds that are done by the survivors of the deceased, are embodied in the Afterlife as a gift.
- 4- The embodiment of evil and good deeds as the means of reward or punishment.

Man's deeds are the only provision and help in the Afterlife, and he will be accompanied by his personified deeds. In the grave two visages visit him, one beautiful and well-shaped on his right hand and a hideous visage on his left hand, that sniff his body organs, and inspect them. After inspecting the body, they write down his good deeds and evil deeds. He notices that sometimes the beautiful one prevents the ugly one from writing down the bad deeds because he had repented of that sin. Finally, all the deeds, written on a scroll, are hung around his neck. Then they put the deceased in an iron cage and press it until all his bones squeeze together and his body essence leaves his body like oil; at this moment, he loses consciousness for a while (Najafī Qūchānī, *SGH.*, pp. 67-68).

This text stresses that everywhere the soul goes it is accompanied by its deeds, whether good or evil. The embodiment of the deeds is portrayed as two companions that accompany the soul wherever it goes, or as the means of reward or torture of the soul. It depends on the type of the deeds that he has done in the material world. He deserves a reward as the result of the good deeds and punishment as the result of the evil deeds. For example, after being interrogated, the deceased regains consciousness and finds himself in a well-furnished room along with a handsome and fragrant young man called *Hādī* (conductor or guide)³⁶⁷. He asks him: “*Who are you, and how do you know me, while I did not know you before this?*” He says:

“My name is Hādī [a person who guides and conducts], and I have been with from the beginning, and I have always been kind to you, but I have not been tangible, because you were in the material world. I am the thread of love between you and Ali ibn Abi Ṭālib and the family of the prophet, it was I who inculcated into your mind the last answer [to the angels] ...” (Najafī Qūchānī, *Sīyāḥat i Ġarb*, p. 60).

His evil comrade is called *Jihālat* (ignorance), an ugly, black, stinking, hideous companion with protruding thick lips, long teeth and a big nose, and filthy. When he asks him about his identity, he answers: “*I am your invisible being, my name is Jahālat and my title is seducer (kajro)...I am in charge of depravity and corruption*” (Najafī Qūchānī, *SGH.*, pp. 77-78).

³⁶⁷ *Hādī*, the handsome, sweet smelling and polite young man, is not only the embodiment of the good deeds of the deceased, but also he is the embodiment of the love of the family of the Prophet (see *Sīyāḥat i Gharb*, pp. 60, 61).

This evil companion accompanies him in the Afterlife as the reflection of his evil deeds in the material world. These two invisible twins are with man on his way after death. Whenever man does something of merit in this world, *Hādī* accompanies man after death as the reaction of the good deeds; he helps man to leave behind the hindrances in the Afterlife; but whenever he commits a sin, his comrade in the Afterlife will be *Jihālat*, who prevents him from advancing and causes him to fear. They are man's deeds that make ease or obstacles, and they can grasp man or release him in the stations on the way. On the way, there are some different scenes, some of which are pleasant and others unpleasant, but the soul must try to pass through them. As his good comrade mentioned, the soul travels through good and horrible places according to its deeds, and in each of them it will be rewarded or punished.

4.12.9 Devil in the grave

- *al-Hayāt mā ba'd al-Mawt* (Life after Death)

The Qur'ān reminds believers that they should remember God all the time; otherwise Satan will be their companion both in the world and after death. *"If anyone withdraws himself from remembrance of (Allāh) Most Gracious, We appoint him a devil, to be an intimate companion to him"* (Qur'ān 43/36). Such a person wishes that he was far away from such a companion: *"At length, when (such a one) comes to us, he says (to his evil companion): 'Would that between me and thee were the distance of East and West!' Ah! Evil is the companion (indeed)!"* (Qu.,43:38). About these verses of the Qur'ān, the author recalls a tradition from the sixth Imam that says: *"If the deceased was an unbeliever, the angels say to him 'Who is this with you?' He says: 'I do not know.' Then they [angels] leave him in his grave with devils"* (Ṭabāṭabāī, ḤBM., p. 149).

4.12.10 Soul communicates with this world

- *Manāzil al-Ākhirah* (The Stages of the Afterlife)

When man dies, he will be in need of good deeds that may be done by his family on his behalf. Because of such a need, they sometimes allowed to go to their worldly houses and beg for prayers and charity. Whenever they visit their families, they address them and say:

"O my family! O my children and my relatives! Be kind with us, May God bless you that you remember us. Do not forget us and be kind with us because of our loneliness. Truly, we are stuck in a dark and cramped prison with pain, sorrow and an everlasting grief, so be kind with us and do not withhold your mercy from us. Pray for us and give alms on behalf of us! May God forgive us before you become like us! Alas! We were as mighty as you. O servants of God! Pay attention to us and do not forget us. Truly, what is between your hands [wealth and property] was between our hands. We did not spend it in the way of God [fī sabīl i Allāh] and neglected charity on behalf of us]. Be aware! Sooner or later you will cry like us, but it will not be effective, so try before you become like us" (Qumī, *Manāzil al-Ākhirah*, pp. 49-50).

- *Sīyāhat i Gharb*

The soul communicates with this world when it is in need. The author mentions the visits of the soul in different situations to ask his family for help. Once, he goes to his worldly house in

the form of a bird and sits on a branch of tree. He observes what his family and relatives do while they are mourning because of his death and practising ceremonies to commemorate his death. He finds out that whatever they do is not useful for him, and their deeds do not result in any reward or gift for the soul, so being disappointed in them, he returns to his grave (Najafī Qūchānī, *SGH.*, p. 72).

Another time that the soul is allowed to visit the material world to provide help for his spiritual journey, he goes to his house as a bird and looks at his family. He observes them while they are doing useless deeds and feels sad because of this (Najafī Qūchānī, *SGH.*, p. 71-72), but whenever they do something of merit on his behalf or remember his good deeds, it makes him happy and he will be rewarded in the Afterlife (Najafī Qūchānī, *SGH.*, p. 118).

“...and they [his children] said: ‘it is better to read a sura of the Qur’ān for him, I recite the sūra al-Insān [sura 76] and you recite the sūra al-Dukhān [sura 44] ...and I flew back; Hādī had brought me a horse with a portmanteau on its back. I said: ‘Where was this portmanteau?’ He said: ‘An angel brought it and said that in a part of it there is a gift from the daughter of the Prophet, and this gift is due to the recitation of the sūra al-Dukhān; and in the other part there is a gift from Imam Ali, that is due to the recitation of the sūra al-Insān...’” (Najafī Qūchānī, *Sīyāḥat i Ġarb*, p. 118).

The third time that he visits his family, he is again in search of any kind of charity from his family on his behalf. He finds his family in a piteous situation that cause him to feel pity for them, so he prays for them for a better condition and leaves his house. When he comes back to his grave he sees a horse with a golden saddle. When he asks his good companion about the horse, he is told that this horse is the embodiment of the praying of his wife for his soul (Najafī Qūchānī, *SGH.*, pp. 92-93).

The last time that he visits his family is when he faces the prototype of the divider bridge (پل صراط)³⁶⁸; therefore, he goes to his house to see if they send him any gift by praying or charity that they may give on behalf of him. He sits on a branch of a tree and observes what his family members do and says:

“For a while I sat on a branch of a tree, I was disappointed, so I changed my place and sat on the wall. I was looking at the passers-by. They were talking about their daily works, I was very sad, and started talking with myself. It could be very good that man, while he is alive, thinks about these days and his fate. It could be very good, if one does not spend all his time with his wife and children and does not spend all for them. This world [the material world] is the world of ignorance and neglect. What a shame that man, whose wife and children were always hopeful about him and looking to help him, now wonders if they could help him, in these days that he is disjointed from heaven and earth, but no one remembers me.”

While he is thinking about himself and his family, he sees two of his grandchildren who are eating from the grapes of a grapevine which he had planted before. They remember him and respect his kindness to them by reciting some verses of the Qur’ān as gift to his soul. When he returns to his grave, their recitations appear to him as a gift (Najafī Qūchānī, *SGH.*, pp. 117-118).

- *al-Ḥayāt mā ba’d al-Mawt* (Life after Death)

³⁶⁸ In contrast with Zoroastrianism, where the divider bridge plays a role in individual eschatology, in Islamic tradition it plays a role in collective eschatology after the Resurrection.

Souls are sometimes allowed to visit their families. Souls, believer or unbeliever, visit their families after death weekly, monthly, or annually as a bird. It all depends on their status and grade before God. If a believer visits his family when they are doing right deeds, it makes him happy and he praises God because of this, but if an unbeliever visits his family doing right deeds, it makes him sad and he envies them because of the good deeds that he failed to do (Ṭabāṭabāī, *HBM.*, pp. 146-147). Moreover, it is stated that they all sit on a tree in the Garden, and ask one another about the fate of their acquaintances and whenever a new one joins them, they say: “*Let him be released, because he has just come out of great difficulties and pains*” (Ṭabāṭabāī, *HBM.*, p. 144).

4.12.11 Punishments and rewards

- *Sīyāḥat i Gharb*

Miseries and fortunes in the Afterlife take different forms. Sometimes the soul finds its grave narrow and dark, while it is alone there; sometimes its hideous companion meets him; sometimes he encounters deep valleys full of rocks (Najafī Qūchānī, *SGH.*, p. 79), wild and fierce animals and reptiles, dry, hot weather, snakes and bitter watermelons (Najafī Qūchānī, *SGH.*, p. 79, 80); in some cases it feels fatigue, thirst and hunger (Najafī Qūchānī, *SGH.*, p. 80); occasionally, it faces wild dogs that are ready to attack (Najafī Qūchānī, *SGH.*, p. 81). All of these horrible situations are because of its evil deeds; it is its wickedness that has brought it the companionship of *Jihālat* and such misfortunes. But if the soul has repented its evil deeds in the material world, it is *Hādī* that accompanies it with many bounties and endowments.

In addition to the above-mentioned cases, in its Afterlife journey, it meets different animals, some of which are its carnal wishes or evil deeds that are embodied as men in the shape of monkeys or weird animals in horrible and unpleasant conditions. It faces animals such as dog, wolf, fox, ape, scorpion, wasp, snake and mouse (noxious animals). Beside these, there are other obstacles like hot, fiery abysses, swamps and marshlands. It meets evil souls which are being punished, with torments like hot slime that melts the body, tar, storm, earthquake, hailstone and dreadful figures (Najafī Qūchānī, *SGH.*, pp. 96, 97, 99, 102, 104, 119). These torments are for sins like adultery, jealousy, indolence, greed and gluttony. These punishments does not mean eternal torture, but they are all atonements for sins.

In spite of these misfortunes, he is rewarded because of his merits too. For example, he passes through *wadī al Salām* (the Land of Peace) and is rewarded according to his righteous deeds. In these lands, he visits fruitful gardens, water ponds, water streams, waterfalls, glorious pavilions out of white silk, fragrant flowers and breeze. In addition to these, he can rest in palaces and rooms of gold and silver, in which well-shaped, uncorrupted servants, wearing precious clothes, serve him. In these palaces, he can drink beverages and eat delicious foods. All the palaces are decorated with suspended lights, and the Qur’ān is recited there in a pleasant tone all the times. In these dwellings he hears the best tidings and visits the noblest young people of the world. In addition to the bounties and companionship of the noble men, in one of these glorious tents, a *Hūrī* (nymph) who is the embodiment of his good deeds welcomes him. He can even visit some holy characters and saints. They welcome him, and grant him robes. He visits some of his friends and acquaintances, who greet one another and ask about other members of friends and family (Najafī Qūchānī, *SGH.*, pp. 83, 86, 88, 93, 106, 107, 108, 125).

4.12.12 Barzakh

Two of these Shia books try to define the term *barzakh* by referring to the Qur'ān and traditions.

- *Manāzil al-`Ākhirah* (The Stages of the Afterlife)

The author of *Manāzil al-Ākhirah* states that *barzakh* is the grave from the time of death until Resurrection by quoting a *ḥadīṣ* from the sixth Shia Imam who said to his followers:

“...I swear to God that I am worried about you because of *barzakh*. The narrator said: ‘What is *barzakh*?’ He said: ‘Verily, it is the grave from death to Resurrection” (*Qumī, MAkh.*, 49).

- *al-Ḥayāt mā ba`d al-Mawt* (Life after Death)

A chapter on life after death is devoted to the meaning of the term *barzakh*. Since Ṭabāṭabāī has philosophical viewpoints on Islamic discussions, and he has tried to put a philosophical interpretation on the Qur'ān in his exegesis *al-Mīzān*, he tries to convey the philosophical meaning of *barzakh* too. He states that this world is not just a simple being, a mono-dimensional world, which is only material, but a combination of several worlds. It consists of different worlds such as the corporeal world and corporality (عالم الجسم و الجسمانيات) that occupies place, can be felt and includes time, the second world is the world of the names of God (عالم اسما الله) which deals with unity of God, his attributions, and his names; the next world is the world of reason (عالم العقل) which is similar to the allegorical world that Plato describes, it is the world of spiritual visages; the fourth world is a world between feeling and wisdom, out of space and out of time, it is called the world of illustration (عالم المثال) and finally the world of *barzakh* (عالم البرزخ) which is between this world and the Hereafter, between the abstract and the material in which all deeds such as prayers are embodied and reflected. It is the world of reward and punishment between this world and the world to come that it is between death and Resurrection (Ṭabāṭabāī, *HBM.*, pp. 117-124).

In spite of some philosophical explanations of the world of *barzakh*, like other interpreters, the author of *al-Ḥayāt mā ba`d al-Mawt* gives different definitions for the word *barzakh*: a hindrance, obstacle and separation between two things; a space between Hell and Paradise;³⁶⁹ the end and conclusion between this world and the Hereafter, after the death and destruction of creatures; after death, the Hereafter from death to Resurrection, that whoever dies enters. But referring to Qur'ān Chapter 11, verses 105-108, he accepts the traditional definition for this term; *barzakh* is a time after death in which man will be rewarded or punished because of his beliefs and deeds; it is a stage between the world and Resurrection (Ṭabāṭabāī, *HBM.*, pp. 125-129).

4.13 The place of Paradise and Hell of *barzakh* in Sunni and Shia traditions

In previous parts, it was mentioned that man has two destinations after life: Paradise and Hell. In addition to these, it was stated that some interpretations consider a third destination for those whose good and evil deeds are equal. But it seems that the Hell and Paradise that the Qur'ān describes are different from the Hell and Paradise that some of the traditions narrate

³⁶⁹ It is the only case in references in this study where *barzakh* equates with *al-`A`rāf*, a stage between Hell and Paradise which resembles Catholic ‘purgatory’ or ‘limbo’ and Zoroastrian ‘*hamēstagān*.’

about the Afterlife. To distinguish these two types of Paradise and Hell, the Paradise and Hell of the Afterlife are called the Paradise and Hell of *barzakh*. According to the traditions, souls are rewarded or chastised in places on the earth. Seemingly, life after death is a kind of life beyond material life, but not in Heaven; apparently, it is somewhere on the earth. Some of these indications are stated below.

Sunni traditions state that:

The souls of the believers are like green birds or in the throats of green birds, wandering on the trees of Paradise.³⁷⁰ It is also believed that souls are divided after death according to their rank and status before God, so that some of them will be in the highest Heaven; a group of them are in the throats of birds or in the shape of the birds on the trees in Paradise; some are wandering behind the gates of Paradise and some souls are imprisoned in their graves. It is even mentioned that wicked souls are in *Wādī Barahūt* or in a well in *Ḥiḍr al-Mawt* (both are in Yemen), and the souls of believers are in the well of *Zamzam* (in Mecca). All these souls are in *barzakh*, but while pious souls are free to go everywhere they wish, the souls of unbelievers are imprisoned in the seventh earth near Satan.³⁷¹

Shia traditions state that:

The Paradise of *barzakh* is located in *Wādī al-Ssalām* (a place between *Kufa* and *Najaf* in Iraq) or on *Qubbah al-Ṣakhrāh* (dome of the rock) in Jerusalem, and its Hell is in *Wādī Bara hut* or *Ḥiḍr al-Mawt*.³⁷² Moreover, it is stated that God has created a Paradise in *al-Mağrib* (west) where the Euphrates has its source, and the souls of believers go there from their graves every evening. There, they eat fruits and enjoy its bounties; they meet one another and when sun rises they leave, and wander in Heaven between earth and sky.³⁷³ He has also created a Hell in the *al-Mašriq* (east) for the souls of unbelievers. There, they eat from its bitter fruits and stinking hot waters, and when at sunrise they go to the *Bara hut* which is the hottest land in the world, and then they go to Hell in the evenings.³⁷⁴ Beside Paradise and Hell in west and east, the souls of believers visit the family of the Prophet in the mountains of *Raḍawī* in which they eat and drink from their foods and drinks, and talk with them in their gatherings.³⁷⁵

To sum up the argument, it can be stated that both Sunni and Shia classical sources denote a special stage to the life after death. This life is based on the verses of the Qur'ān and traditions. In this stage the soul will be reckoned and experiences the prototype of Paradise or Hell. The most prominent feature of this life is the embodiment of the deeds (religious duties like praying, fasting, etc.) that makes the next world life pleasant or unpleasant for the soul. Although both Sunni and Shia have similar traits like questioning in the grave by two angels, and the importance of Islamic beliefs like the unity of God and the prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad for the salvation of the soul, Shia narrations develop a series of beliefs that distinguishes Shia from the Sunni. In Shia sources, Imams play an important role in life after death. They are either saviours of the soul or themselves rewards in the Afterlife. They play the role of the party of *Allāh* against Satan and his forces that try to deceive the soul. However, it

³⁷⁰ *Jāmi' al-Kabīr Tirmidhī*, Vol. 3, p.277, n.1641; *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, Vol. 1, p.466, no.1449; *Sunan al-Naasā'ī*, p.231, n.2073.

³⁷¹ Abī 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Abībākr, Ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyyah, *Kitāb al-Rrūh*, Vol. 1, 1432, p.274-297.

³⁷² *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 6, p.268,287,289,291; Vol. 27, p.307-308; *Furū' al-Kāfi*, Vol. 3, p.243, 246.

³⁷³ *al-Kāfi*, Vol. 3, p.138.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 138-139.

³⁷⁵ *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 27, p.308.

should be mentioned that the embodiment of deeds in Shia classical sources is more prominent than the Sunni sources. The most important feature of both these traditions, especially in Shia traditions, is the place of the Afterlife. It is mostly in the grave (*qabr*) that souls will be reckoned and seemingly it is in the grave that a door to the gardens of Paradise or a pit of Hell opens to the soul. However, in addition to the grave as the scene of reward or chastisement, both Sunni and Shia sources assign some real geographical places to the abode of souls, which strengthens this theory that *barzakh* mainly means another dimension of life beyond material life.

5 Analysis and conclusion

5.1 Analysis of the evidence and the theory of “Religionbund”

Individual eschatological ideas in Zoroastrianism, Mandaism and Islam bear remarkable resemblances in spite of the different histories of these three faith systems. The following paragraphs aim to present the main individual eschatological ideas of these three belief systems according to the sources consulted in this study.

First of all, it should be stated that all three of these faith systems devote a special stage to life after death (a period between death and the end of time). They share the idea of a kind of life beyond material existence. It is very similar to the Islamic concept of *Barzakh* that is probably an Iranian idea. However, their perspective on this concept is completely different. Apparently, in Zoroastrianism and Mandaism, the place and time of death is devoted to the souls which are to be reckoned in order to enter Paradise or Hell according to their merits. The only difference is that in Mandaism, this special stage functions as a refinery to purify the soul to reach higher stages of salvation, whereas in Zoroastrianism it functions as the last stage in which the soul receives the final reward or punishment before the Resurrection and the final struggle to defeat the arch-demon and his forces and reconstruct the world as it was before the attack of the demonic forces on the good in creation. In Islam, it is a temporary period in which souls must wait until the Resurrection when they will be reckoned and deserve Paradise or Hell; however, they experience some form of recompense during this stage.

According to the Avesta and other Zoroastrian sources, the fate of the soul after death is represented by the following principles:

- 1- The key idea of Zoroastrian eschatology is that the fate of the soul after death is determined by its moral and religious actions.
- 2- Reckoning of deeds comes three days after death, and the soul experiences Paradise, Hell or an intermediate stage (*Hamēstagān*) in the Afterlife.
- 3- The Demon of death is in charge of taking the soul, so it can be stated that Zoroastrians have a negative perspective on death.
- 4- The belief in a non-physical part of a person (*Ruwān*) that contains her/his character, thoughts and feelings and continues to exist after death.
- 5- The dwelling of the soul around the body for three days and nights.
- 6- A dualist world of demons and *Yazads* that surround the soul while man is about to die and even after leaving the body.
- 7- The embodiment of worldly deeds in form of a beautiful maiden or a hag (*daēnā*) as the reflection of good or evil deeds.
- 8- The judgment and interrogation of the soul at the dawn of the third night after death.
- 9- An eschatological structure (*Činwad puhl*) built over Hell that helps the righteous people to cross it to Paradise, and the wicked fall down to Hellfire.

10- As *Hādōxt Nask* and *Vendīdād* state, at least two destinations exist in the Afterlife as the result of deeds: Paradise and Hell; the third habitat for those with equal good and evil deeds is mentioned in other parts of the Avesta like Yasna 33:1.³⁷⁶

Mandaism establishes some principles for the destiny of the soul according to the Left Ginza, and a part of the Right Ginza and other Mandaean sources as follow:

- 1- In Mandaism, the soul's journey starts three days after death. During this journey toward the world of light, the soul will be reckoned. Depending on the moral and religious actions on earth (a combination of moral and belief eschatology); the soul reaches the Realm of Light or Realm of Darkness.
- 2- Belief in a non-physical part of a person (*Nišimta*) that contains her/his character, thoughts and feelings and continues to exist after death.
- 3- Due to the importance of the soul in Mandaism, death is considered a way of salvation that helps the soul escape the material world.
- 4- A celestial being that is responsible for taking the soul out of the body (Mandaean psychopomp).
- 5- A dualist world which is full of demons and angels that surround the soul.
- 6- The embodiment of the righteous and evil deeds as divine or devil figures in the Afterlife.
- 7- Houses of detention on the way of the soul. Wicked souls will be refined in these stages to ascend to the Realm of Light. Souls whose sins are so great that they do not deserve to be refined in the Watch House fall to the world of darkness until the final time that the Supreme Being makes a decision for them.
- 8- Obstacles that prevent souls from ascending to the Realm of Light.
- 9- Interrogation of souls in the Watch Houses.

Islamic individual eschatological beliefs can be followed in two sources: the Qur'ān and *ḥadīṣ* (tradition). The Qur'ān, as the main source of Islam, devotes some verses to the fate of the soul at the time of departure from the material world, and apparently sets a word - *barzakh* - apart, for the life subsequent to the material world and considers it as a barrier that prevents the deceased from returning to that world. The central features that can be inferred from the verses of the Qur'ān are:

- 1- The most important idea of Islamic eschatology is that the main reckoning of the dead will come on Resurrection Day; however, souls experience some forms of recompense before that.
- 2- The fate of the soul after death is determined by its beliefs and deeds on earth.
- 3- An angel, sometimes accompanied by other angels, is in charge of taking the soul.
- 4- Belief in a non-physical part of a person (*Nafs, Rūḥ*) that contains her/his character, thoughts and feelings and continues to exist after death.
- 5- Being punished or rewarded by angels of mercy or wrath as soon as the soul leaves the body.
- 6- A kind of life or existence in which souls remain until the Day of Resurrection. There, souls have good or bad experiences.

³⁷⁶ Philippe Gignoux, "*HAMĒSTAGĀN*: a word of uncertain etymology, used in Pahlavi literature to designate the intermediate stage between paradise and hell" in: *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hamestagan> (accessed January 16, 2017).

The simple Qur'ānic portrait has been drawn with more detail in the traditions and classical Islamic sources. The following are, in brief, the common principles of different accounts:

- 1- The main reckoning of the dead will come on Resurrection Day, and the fate of the soul after death is determined by its beliefs and religious duties on earth.
- 2- The two-dimensional angel (beautiful for righteous souls and ugly for evil souls) who takes the souls with the help of his companions.
- 3- Welcoming angels with precious or torn garments, fragrance or stink, good tidings and bad tidings.
- 4- Being surrounded by heavenly or satanic forces (for example, in Shia tradition, on one side, the Prophet and his family members and on the other side Satan and his companions).
- 5- The interrogation of the soul in the grave by two angels (according to some Shia traditions two beautiful angels for righteous souls and two ugly angels for wicked souls).
- 6- Punishment in the grave (for example being punished by noxious animals).
- 7- The fortunes and miseries of the world of the Afterlife in the grave.
- 8- The embodiment of deeds in the grave as means of reward or torture. The embodiment of deeds as evil and divine figures in the way of the soul (a handsome young man or an ugly man).
- 9- The grave plays an important role in the tradition such that *barzakh* is called '*Ālam al-Qabr* (the world of the grave).

As stated above, Islamic tradition sets a word apart for the Afterlife. According to the sources, this special time or place is called *barzakh*. It can be a title for a kind of (metaphysical) life beyond the material (physical) world. A prominent indication of this world or form of life beyond material life can be found in the narrations about the story of ascension. This form of existence beyond the material world can be seen in all three religions mentioned here. According to the stories of ascension, in these three faith systems, some special characters can ascend to this world, communicate with its beings, see its stages and then return to the material world (the ascension of Zarathustra in Zoroastrianism, the story of Dinanukt in Mandaeism and Prophet Muhammad's Mi'rāj). This concept agrees with the supposed etymology and meaning of the term *barzakh*.

As mentioned before, *barzakh* could be an Iranian term. Although the term *barzakh* cannot be found in the existing Zoroastrian sources, this idea can generally be deduced from the evidence. This idea can be reconstructed from the Zoroastrian concept of *Frawahrs* and their abode, according to the Avestan sources. In all the Zoroastrian sources, there are many indications of *Frawahrs* (Avestan *Fravašay* [man's immortal soul, the guardian angels during his lifetime]). The *frawahrs* live in the summit of heaven '*barəsmuuō. ... ašnō*' and ascend to the earth whenever they are invoked by people. Seemingly, their dwelling is somewhere beyond the earth or any kind of life beyond material life. Whatever *frawahrs* are – the soul of the deceased or the guardian angels (sometimes, *Frawahrs* are considered the souls of people) – their abode is in the heights and they descend from the heights where seemingly all souls continue their life until the Resurrection. This is reminiscent of the concept of 'high existence' or 'a life beyond' that can be supposed in that era to have been called *barzakh*.

As mentioned earlier, some scholars believe that in Sasanian times two forms of Zoroastrianism were active, a dominant or state version which is reflected in the Pahlavi sources,

and the version of Zoroastrianism that could have been the religion of the lay people, Seemingly, what we have today as Zoroastrian sources are mostly the viewpoints of Zoroastrianism as the state religion of the Sasanians. However, it is possible that in the oral tradition of Zoroastrian laymen this word (*barzakh*) was maintained, and used to refer to the other form of life beyond the material life. In late ancient times, due to contacts between Arabs and Zoroastrian Iranians, this word and concept or idea was introduced to the Arabs, and was later accepted in Islam. Some other Persian words in Arabic and early Islamic sources like Paradise (*firdaws*), sin (*junāh*), etc. are all religious terms that seem to support the idea of religious interaction between Iranians and Arabs in late ancient times.

The etymology of *barzakh* can be reconstructed inductively through the sound change rules and historical morphology. Apparently, *barzakh* could be derived from an Old Persian word. The Old Iranian word could have been **barezaxw*; and the Avestan form could have been **barəzaŋhu* which changed to **barzaxw/barzax* in Middle Persian. It is a compound word made from two parts: the first one is *barəz_*, an adjective which means ‘high’ and the second part is *aŋhu_*, a noun from the root \sqrt{ah} that means ‘to be.’ This compound noun can literally be translated as ‘a high existence’ or is better explained as ‘a life beyond,’ which can be defined as a life beyond the material life or a kind of existence above the material world.

If one accepts this etymology for the word *barzakh*, the question arises as to why the meaning has changed from ‘beyond life’ or ‘life beyond’ to “barrier.” It can be stated that, according to the Qur’ānic viewpoint, man’s life is restricted to the world and the Hereafter *al-dunyā wa al-’ākhirah* (.) الأخره الدنيا و While we are alive and living in this world we cannot experience the Hereafter and when the Hereafter comes, then no one can return to the world. Moreover, death is a gap between life and the Hereafter, so *barzakh* could be considered as a barrier that separates these two worlds. This is an intermediate stage which belongs to the souls of the departed, where they will be interrogated, punished and rewarded according to the quality of their material life, their beliefs and their deeds. They are also able to communicate with the material world in different ways, so it can be considered a life beyond the earthly life and as a barrier between death and Resurrection. This is the secondary meaning of word *barzakh*, which becomes dominant in Islamic traditions, in spite of the fact that it still bears its original eschatological meaning.

With regard to the above mentioned principles of Zoroastrian, Mandaean and Islamic eschatological beliefs, these three belief systems bear resemblances that should be surveyed more carefully.

- **The divisions of the world**

The Zoroastrian universe is divided into three parts:

- 1- The material world in the middle (the middle part is a combination of evil and good)
- 2- Above it to the south is Paradise and the world of light (it is all goodness and is the abode of *Ohrmazd*, *Amahraspandān* and *Yazads*)
- 3- Below the material world, is the abode of the great demon and Hell (the lower part is dark and stinking, and is the dwelling of *Ahremen* and other demons).

To a certain extent, a similar division can be observed in Mandaeism. The only difference is that in Zoroastrianism south is the direction of good beings, whereas in Mandaeism north is the direction of good beings. In the latter faith:

- 1- Below, toward the south, is the Realm of Darkness.
- 2- Above, toward the north, is the Realm of Light.

- 3- Between these two, lies the material world which is the mixture of light and darkness (the material world is the creature of both dark and light forces).

The Islamic tradition gives various and sometimes contradictory information about the world's divisions. It portrays a vertical world, but neither good nor evil. According to the texts consulted in this study, the more upwards one goes, the nearer one is to the abode of holy beings. According to the story of the Prophet's ascension, he goes upward to the first, second and finally to the seventh heaven to reach the holiest of holies or the throne of God. It is worth mentioning that not only was he able to observe Paradise in the heavens but also he could observe Hellfire in the fourth or sixth heaven. Apparently, Hell is the most disgusting place and the Realm of Light is located near the abode of the angels.³⁷⁷

However, it can be seen that:

- 1- God and his realm are located in the Heavens.
- 2- According to some traditions, it can be inferred that Hell is located under the earth in the depth of the material world.³⁷⁸

• The soul & death

As mentioned, all these religions introduce a non-physical part of a person that contains her/his character, thoughts and feelings and that continues to exist after death.

- 1- *Ruwān* in Zoroastrianism
- 2- *Nišimta* in Mandaeism
- 3- *Nafs*³⁷⁹ in the Qur'ān, *rūḥ* and *nasamah* in the traditions.

After death, the soul, which is a non-physical part of the person, continues to exist in an unseen world beyond this material life. According to Zoroastrian and Mandaean sources, the soul remains on the earth for three days and nights,³⁸⁰ and observes what happens to the body.

These religions express different views about death. Zoroastrianism considers death something devil. *Ohrmazd* has created man, has endowed him life, but this is *Ahremen* who attacks man and causes death. He causes death by creating the demon of death. In Mandaeism the soul is very valuable; it is worthier than the body, so that by death, one gets release from the material world which is the creation of demons. Although both physical and spiritual salvation is important in Islam, the soul is placed in a prominent position as an endowment from God. Death

³⁷⁷ Considering the Qur'ānic term *Sijjīn* and many other references to Hellfire in the Qur'ān, it can be inferred that Hell must be beneath the earth, nevertheless, making a decision about the Qur'ān regarding the position of Hell and Paradise according to the information mentioned in this project is not an easy task and needs more research.

³⁷⁸ Christian Lange, *Locating Hell in Islamic Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 12-15.

³⁷⁹ For more information see E. E. Calverley, "Nafs" in: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, vol. VII, ed. C. E. Bosworth, E., van Donzel, W., P., Heinrichs (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 880-883.

³⁸⁰ It can be interesting to know that in many of the cities of Iran, the bereaved commemorate the deceased in the morning of the third day (it depends, some families have such a commemoration in the morning of the third day after death, and some in the third morning after the burial ceremony) mostly in a mosque. Such a custom recalls the third day ceremony of Zoroastrians for the deceased in a fire temple, and the time can be comparable with the judgment of the soul at dawn following the third night after death. It is even customary among traditional families to take some flowers and sweets to the cemetery at dawn after the first night after burial; this is called in Persian *Čašm Rōšanī*, a usual custom for visiting a person who has bought a house recently. Seemingly, they behave the same way with a deceased person who has been recently buried, so it can be concluded that like Zoroastrians and Madaeans they think that the soul is present and has close contact with the survivors at least in the first three days after death.

can be a release from pain or it can be the beginning of pain, it depends on the beliefs and deeds of the person. It can be inferred that in Islam death is multi-dimensional. It can be a mercy for righteous souls and a misfortune for the wicked.

- **The Angel of Death and his companion**

In all these three faith systems, it is believed that a psychopomp is responsible for taking the soul out of the body.

- 1- In Zoroastrianism, it is *Astwihād* that does this. Moreover, in Zoroastrian tradition, he is not considered an angel, but a demon who attacks man when he wants to take the soul out; he is considered a horrible demon that, with the help of other demons, takes the soul harshly.
- 2- Such a responsibility, in Mandaism, lies with *Šaur'ī (i)l* and on just one occasion with *Qmami Ziua*, but as mentioned in the foregoing chapters, mostly with *Šaur'ī (i)l* in Ginza. What Mandaean sources show is that *Šaur'ī (i)l* is only a mediator; it is only in the Mandaean Book of John that he seems very severe and perhaps cruel to souls, a negative role which is somehow comparable with the role of the psychopomp in Zoroastrianism, but generally he is a celestial being in charge of taking souls, obedient to God's decrees.
- 3- In the Qur'ān, no specific name is devoted to the psychopomp, and it is always named by an attribute or title rather than a name, *Malik al-Mawt* (angel of death). In later Islamic sources he is called *'Izrā'īl*. He is in charge of taking souls along with some helping angels. Apparently, in the Qur'ān, he does not have any positive or negative character but is only one of the angels who obeys God's commands. In later sources, in *ḥadīṣ* and later Islamic classic references, his character is further developed. He has a bi-dimensional character: for righteous souls he seems beautiful and lovely, while for wicked souls he appears horrible and frightening. Sometimes, he is portrayed with a demonic character, something that in the Qur'ān is absent. This horrible character of *'Izrā'īl* is similar to the demons and *Yazads* that are present near the dying person at the time of death. Seemingly, the Islamic Angel of Death carries the features of both of the Zoroastrianism good and evil forces.

- **The white and black world of the Afterlife**

- 1- Zoroastrianism portrays a white and black world of the Afterlife. When someone is about to die he is surrounded by demons like *Astwihād*, *Wizarš*, *Wāy ī wattar* on one side, and *Yazads* like *Sroš* along with *Rašn* and some other heavenly beings on the other side. They fight with each other to grasp the soul.
- 2- Mandaism also portrays a black and white world of the Afterlife. When the soul is leaving the body, it is surrounded by demons and celestial beings – demons who scare the soul and try to entrap it in the Watch Houses, and celestial beings who descend to help righteous souls. In Mandaism such a dualistic world can be seen in all the stages the soul goes through until it reaches the House of *Abatur* which is the gate of the Realm of Light.
- 3- The Qur'ān portrays a scene in which righteous souls are welcomed by angels of mercy with heavenly gifts, and the wicked souls meet angels of wrath who beat them

(they are all angels, who treat righteous and evil people differently). This status is similar in Sunni Islam; although Satan and his forces appear on the scene too; this black and white world becomes stronger in Shia Islam, where on one side the Prophet and his family, and on the other side Satan and his forces surround the dying person. Seemingly two parties, those of the good and those of the evil forces, try to grasp the soul, and finally it is the faith and deeds of the man that determine to which group he belongs. These good and evil forces that are present at the time of death are similar to those in Zoroastrianism: *Astwiḥād*, *Wizarš*, *Wāy ī wattar* on one side, and *Yazads* like *Sroš* along with *Rašn* on the other side at the time of death.

- **Interrogation**

All these three religions portray an interrogation scene that souls must pass through, a kind of judgment that is passed on souls.

- 1- In Zoroastrianism, souls will be judged near the *Činwad puhl* by three *Yazads* (*Srōš*, *Rašn* and *Mihr*) on the basis of good thoughts, good words and good deeds (moral eschatology).
- 2- It seems that Mandaism develops a similar idea. Mandaean sources refer to the questions that the soul deals with in several stations i.e. questions about her sign, her witnesses and her religious name. This interrogation or judgment becomes prominent in the House of *Abatur* in which souls will be weighed on scales. As in Zoroastrianism, the scale plays a prominent role of measurement with the exception that in Mandaism it is the soul which is weighed, but in Zoroastrianism deeds, words and thoughts are weighed. Seemingly, the interrogation plays the role of an initiation or rite of passage in which souls pass through a stage prior to reaching a more perfect one, whether good or evil.
- 3- Although in the Qur'ān there is no direct indication of the interrogation of souls in the Afterlife, *ḥadīṣ* and later Islamic sources devote a part of the Afterlife to the interrogation and judgment of souls. This judgment happens in the grave and is called questioning in the grave. Two angels (*Munkar* and *Nakīr*) with horrible features appear to the deceased to test his beliefs (belief eschatology).³⁸¹ It is after the judgment that the righteous and wicked souls will be distinguished.

- **Welcoming souls, miseries and fortunes**

One of the features for comparing the life after death in these three religions is the gifts that are given to souls.

- 1- In some Zoroastrian sources, it is stated that precious clothes and thrones as a divine reward will be given to righteous souls.
- 2- In Mandaism, when angels come to the soul, they bring it precious clothes and crowns of light.

³⁸¹ Although they are angels, the demonic features in them are stronger than the angelic ones. In Shia Islam a second group of angels is added to these interrogators. The former is in charge of questioning evil souls and the latter for righteous souls. The white and black scenes are stronger in Shiism.

- 3- According to the Qur'ān, when the soul is leaving the material body it will be welcomed or beaten by angels of mercy or wrath. In *ḥadīṣ*, it is stated that when a righteous soul is about to leave the body, the angel of death along with other lovely shining angels comes to the soul, bearing precious clothes and the fragrance of Paradise for the righteous, or some exactly opposite gifts for the wicked.

One of the interesting points common between these religions is the material bounties and endowments that are given to righteous souls after death. Although such a materialistic Paradise is more distinct in Islam and Zoroastrianism, it can be traced in Mandaicism too. Foods and drinks are prestigious rewards that are presented to souls.

- 1- According to Zoroastrian sources, when a pious soul enters Paradise it is welcomed with the best food (the mid-spring butter), the best fruits and drinks.
- 2- In addition to the precious crowns of light, a newcomer soul in the Realm of Light will be served drinks and foods.
- 3- When a pious Muslim soul has been interrogated, a gate will be opened for it and it will be served bounties of Paradise such as a fragrant breeze. What is given to souls as a reward is not only a spiritual bonus but material too: precious clothes, fragrance, the carpets of Paradise, flowers, foods and drinks.

- ***Daēnā*, a common Zoroastrian idea**

- 1- One of the most prominent features of Zoroastrian eschatology which can be traced in all the Zoroastrian sources from Avestan to Persian *Riwāyāts* is the embodiment of deeds in the guise of a beautiful maiden for righteous souls and an ugly hag for the wicked. When the soul meets this figure and asks her who she is, she introduces herself with this sentence: “*I am your Dēn*”; she represents the person’s deeds, the personification of his thoughts, words and actions.
- 2- In Mandaicism, this idea (personification of deeds) can be seen in *Ginza*, when the soul is waiting for its companions. First of all it confronts ugly faces that want it to accompany them, but it refuses. After that some beautiful faces appear and approach it, and the righteous soul goes with them. The personification of deeds can be seen in other forms and means of salvation.
- 3- Although the Qur'ān states that every man will see the result of his deeds, the idea of the personification of deeds is absent in the Qur'ān. This idea can only be traced in *ḥadīṣ* and later sources.³⁸² The embodiment of deeds in the guise of a beautiful or ugly person is one of the most important eschatological ideas of Zoroastrianism that can be seen in Islamic eschatological beliefs too.³⁸³ The other forms of the personification of deeds are the embodiment of praying, fasting, pilgrimage, alms-

³⁸² Although the Qur'ān rewards righteous souls with beautiful virgin maidens in Paradise, there is no indication that they are the embodiment of the deeds, but as the Qur'ān states, they are endowments from God as the rewards of the righteous deeds of the true believers. Besides, it is mentioned in the Qur'ān that the body organs will testify against their owner, but one can find no further scene of embodiment.

³⁸³ As both religions state, this figure is the result of the transformation and embodiment of the deeds after death. The only difference is that in Zoroastrianism it is a maiden that appears to the soul, but in Islam a lovely young man.

giving, and the like in the grave that surrounds the soul and protects it from the miseries of the Afterlife.

- **Paradise and Hell**³⁸⁴

Where souls dwell in the Afterlife is another criterion for comparing individual eschatology in Zoroastrianism, Mandaism and Islam.

- 1- In Zoroastrian sources, after being judged on the bridge, all souls will be divided between Paradise, Hell and an intermediate level which is called *Hamēstagān*.
- 2- Mandaism divides the dwelling of souls into three parts: the Realm of Light that is the final destination of the righteous soul, Watch Houses or houses of detention where evil souls will be tortured according to their sins to become pure enough to enter the Realm of Light, and finally the Realm of Darkness that is for those evil souls that do not deserve to enter the Realm of Light at any price; so they will be sent to the Realm of Darkness until Resurrection, when *Haiia* decides what to do with them.
- 3- The Qur'ān assigns Paradise and Hell to righteous and evil souls respectively after being resurrected, but a kind of Paradise and Hell or, one might better say, the prototype of Paradise and Hell in the Afterlife can be inferred from some verses of the Qur'ān. However, it can be seen that in later Islamic sources, next to Paradise and Hell, the idea of an intermediate place for those with equal good and evil deeds has been developed by the extension of this idea to the Qur'ānic term *al-A'rāf*. According to some exegesis, it is a place between Paradise and Hell for those whose good deeds and evil deeds are equal, an idea which is very similar to the *Hamēstagān* in Zoroastrianism.³⁸⁵

It is important to restate that after death, souls are only shown the prototype of Paradise and Hell. The real Paradise and Hell will be delayed until Resurrection Day. Especially in *ḥadīṡ*, one can see that all the good or bad experiences happen in the world of the grave. However, according to the some of the Islamic traditions, the opposition of Paradise and Hell can be inferred; for example, when the soul has been taken out of the body, it must ascend to heaven to visit God, and after that it is sent back to the earth, into its grave. In addition, according to the descriptions in the Qur'ān and other Islamic sources, wicked souls fall into Hell, into a well in the bottom of Hellfire, while righteous souls wander under the throne in the heavens above the world. These viewpoints could be evidence for a life beyond material life, a kind of spiritual life.³⁸⁶ There are also some traditions that show souls on earth in an earthly Paradise or Hell, in

³⁸⁴ About the Hell and Paradise of the Afterlife one can find many similarities with Jewish and Christian traditions in the 'Extra-Canonical Apocalypses' such as the second book of Enoch, Apocalypses of Zephaniah, Peter, Paul and the Apocalypse of the Virgin. See Richard Baukham, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish & Christian Apocalypses* (Leiden: Brill, 1998).

³⁸⁵ It is necessary to mention that if one accepts such a place, there is no indication in Islamic sources to show whether there is an intermediate place in *barzah*; but it is mentioned that *al-A'rāf* is one of the dwellings of the Day of Resurrection.

³⁸⁶ It does not necessarily mean that such a concept or idea has been developed under the influence of Zoroastrianism. Similar concepts can be seen in Judaism and Christianity in the stories that are related to the ascent to Heaven, See Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish & Christian Apocalypses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Adela Yarbo Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism*, ed., John. J. Collins (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 21-53.

Wādī al-Salām, near *Zamzam* well or in *Ḥiḍr al-Mawt*, sometimes in Paradise among trees and sometimes wandering between earth and heaven.

- **Satan and souls**

As mentioned earlier, one of the shared issues in these three religions is the presence of Satan or the arch-demon and his companions near the dying person. The presence of demons by the dying person is distinct in Zoroastrianism; demons try to grasp the soul. In Mandaism, Satan has no role at the time the soul is to be taken, but demons and demonic creatures are very active on the way of the soul toward the Realm of Light. The Qur'ān does not refer directly to the presence of any demon at the time of the soul's leaving the body;³⁸⁷ it is the interpretations and *ḥadīṣ* that refer to the role of Satan who tries to deceive man at the time of death.

- **Lamentation**

Seemingly, lamentation and mourning are forbidden in Zoroastrianism, Mandaism and Islam. It can be seen that crying and lamentation can be a means of punishment for the soul after death.

- 1- Zoroastrianism indicates that tears will be gathered and form a river which makes going forward for the soul difficult.
- 2- Mandaism forbids survivors to mourn or lament because of someone's death, as *Giṅza* states, lamentations and mourning cause the soul to suffer greatly after death.
- 3- Islamic traditions (especially in Sunni Islam) state that tears and lamentations cause the soul to be tortured in the world of the afterlife, although such a thing becomes less prominent in Shiite Islam because mourning is considered a merit that deserves reward.

- **Gathering of souls in the Afterlife**

According to the sources of these three belief systems, the world of spirits is not a world of loneliness. Souls visit and talk with one another in the Afterlife.

- 1- In Zoroastrianism, when a newly deceased soul enters the community of the pious souls who had died earlier, they gather around him, welcome him and ask him about their families, friends and other survivors; at this moment they are asked to leave the newcomer alone because he has just left behind the material world and judgment on the bridge.
- 2- Mandaean sources show that when a soul enters the community of the pious souls in the Realm of Light, other souls ask it about the punishments of those who have been captured in the purgatories or in the stations by demons to atone for their sins.
- 3- Likewise, Islamic tradition portrays a newcomer soul who is surrounded by other pious souls that ask it about their acquaintances to see whether they are alive or dead, or to see whether they are in Paradise or Hell. At this moment a herald asks them to

³⁸⁷ In the exegesis of the Qur'ān, one can find indications of the presence of Satan who tries to deceive the dying person at the time of death.

leave the soul alone because of the difficulties and pains that it has endured in the material world and the interrogation in the grave.³⁸⁸ In the same way, although the Qur'ān refers to scenes in which wicked souls and righteous souls talk to one another or souls that visit one another in Paradise or Hell on the Day of Resurrection, it is *ḥadīṣ* that devotes a part to the dialogue between the newcomer and other souls in the Afterlife.

To sum up this part, it can be observed that these three faith systems bear resemblances in some details of the Afterlife. In addition to the general idea of the 'life beyond' that these religions share with its special function in each, they have some similar ideas like the division of the world, the Angel of Death, the role of Satan, Hell and Paradise, and the intermediate stage between these two, as well as the embodiment of deeds.

The table below shows the prominent features of the events of the Afterlife in Zoroastrianism, Mandaicism and Islam.

SUBJECTS	Zoroastrianism	Mandaicism	Islam	
			Sunnism	Shiism
Any kind of existence after death	<i>Ruwān</i> <i>Bōy</i> <i>Frawahr</i>	<i>Nišimta ruha</i>	<i>Nafs (Qur'ān)</i> <i>Rūḥ</i> <i>Nasma (h)</i>	<i>Nafs (Qur'ān)</i> <i>Rūḥ</i> <i>Nasma (h)</i>
Life-taker (s) Psychopomp (s)	<i>Astwiḥād</i> , sometimes assimilated to the demon <i>Wāy ī wattar</i> (the Evil Wind)	<i>Ṣaur' (i)l</i> , just one indication of the spirits of light, who are called <i>Qmamiṛ ziua</i> i.e. the life-taker	<i>Malik al-Mawt</i> (the Angel of Death) (Qur'ān) Some other lower-rank angels (Qur'ān) <i>'Izrā'īl</i>	<i>Malik al-Mawt</i> (the Angel of Death) (Qur'ān) Some other lower-rank angels (Qur'ān) <i>'Izrā'īl</i>

³⁸⁸ One can find several Qur'ānic indications of the dialogues between the habitants of Paradise and Hell in the Hereafter.

SUBJECTS	Zoroastrianism	Mandaeism	Islam	
The state of the soul at the time of death	Being surrounded by good and evil forces; wandering around for three days and nights	Most of the texts portray the state of the righteous soul which is welcomed by four sons of perfection who carry glorious clothes of light, a crown and flowers	It is surrounded by the Angel of Death, angels and Satanic forces; while the righteous soul sees the Angel of Death as beautiful being accompanied by other angels of mercy carrying perfumes, precious clothes and welcoming it with the best tidings, evil souls are surrounded by the Angel of Death as a horrible being, accompanied with angels of wrath while carrying stinking materials, slapping the moribund, and “not-welcoming” him with the worst tidings	A dualistic world, the on one hand he is surrounded by Prophet, Ali and his children, the Angel of Death, angels and Satanic forces; while the righteous soul is visited by the Angel of Death as a beautiful being accompanied by other angels who are angels of mercy carrying perfumes, precious clothes and welcoming him with the best tidings; on the other hand, evil souls are surrounded by the Angel of Death as an horrible being, accompanied with angels of wrath while carrying the stinking materials, slapping the moribund, and “not-welcoming” him with the worst tidings
The role of the angels at the time of death	The good forces try to help the soul not to be grasped by evil forces	They surround the soul, and ask it to leave the material world while bringing it glorious clothes of light, a crown and flowers from the World of Light	The angels of mercy welcome believer souls with heavenly gifts, and the best tidings, but evil souls are slapped while receiving torn clothes and the worst stinking materials	The angels of mercy welcome believer souls with heavenly gifts, and the best tidings, but evil souls are slapped while receiving torn clothes and the worst stinking materials
The relation between soul and body	The soul is aware of the body and what happens to it; it wishes it could be joined with the body once more	The soul wanders around the body for three days and nights and wishes to re-join the body, it is distressed when it observes the body being eaten by birds and worms	The soul is aware of whatever happens to the body. The evil ones regret and damn the material body, while the righteous ones pray for it and leave it easily	The soul is aware of whatever happens to the body. The evil ones regret and damn the material body, while the righteous ones pray for it and leave it easily

SUBJECTS	Zoroastrianism	Mandaicism	Islam	
Interrogation	Being interrogated by three Yazdān (gods) for his thoughts, words and deeds	All souls encounter different Watch Houses (purgatories) on their way to the World Above, and they are interrogated by the keepers of the Watch Houses; moreover, they are interrogated in the House of <i>Abatur</i> , where <i>Abatur</i> , a divine being, weighs man's deeds on his scales	Souls are interrogated about their belief in God and the Prophet. In addition to belief in God and the Prophet, some traditions refer to Religion (Islam) and the Qur'ān too.	Souls are interrogated about their belief in God and the Prophet, religion, the Qur'ān and the successors of the Prophet from Ali and his children.
Interrogators	<i>Rašn, Srōš and Mihr</i>	Demons, the keepers of the Watch Houses, <i>Abatur</i> of the Scales (<i>Abatur d-muzania</i>)	Being interrogated by two angels named <i>Nakīr</i> and <i>Munkar</i> . Some narrations refer to an angel who is called <i>Rumān</i> and who precedes <i>Nakīr</i> and <i>Munkar</i> . He tries to interrogate the soul and get it ready for the main interrogation by these two angels	Being interrogated by two angels named <i>Nakīr</i> and <i>Munkar</i> . Some traditions name another pair of angels, <i>Bashīr</i> and <i>Mubashshir</i> . While the first pair are in charge of wicked souls, the second are in charge of righteous souls.
Place of interrogation	At the top of or near the <i>Činwad puhl</i> at the peak of (<i>Čagād</i>) Mount <i>Dāiī</i>	Watch Houses (<i>Maṭarta</i>) and the House of <i>Abatur</i>	In the grave	In the grave
The role of Satan and evil forces	They try to grasp the soul; the salvation of the soul makes them angry; they mock the wicked souls in Hell	Demon forces try to grasp and trap the souls in the Watch House by asking and deceiving them	Tries to deceive the moribund at the time of death. He gets angry with those who are saved. He accompanies the evil-doers in their graves.	Tries to deceive the moribund at the time of death. He gets angry with those who are saved. He accompanies the evil-doers in their graves.
Means of salvation (the embodiment of deeds)	Deeds that are personified as a beautiful maiden or and an ugly being	Deeds, religious rites, alms and prayers are the means of salvation after life in the form of letters or companions that help the soul to get release from the Watch Houses	Deeds and religious practices are personified in the grave and help the soul in its afterlife world. Deeds are embodied in the form of a beautiful or ugly man according to the man's deeds in the material world.	Deeds and religious practices are personified in the grave and help the soul in its afterlife world. Deeds are embodied in the form of a beautiful or ugly man according to the man's deeds in the material world.

SUBJECTS	Zoroastrianism	Mandaicism	Islam	
The perspective about death	Death is the means of the evil forces to destroy the good creatures of God	Death can help the soul, as a divine being that originally belongs to the Realm of Light, out of the material world and the Realm of Darkness.	Life and death are both created by God. Death can be considered good or evil, it depends on the state of the man's deeds in his worldly life.	Life and death are both created by God. Death can be considered good or evil; it depends on the state of the man's deeds in his worldly life.
Paradise	<i>Wahišt</i> , the best existence	<i>Alama d-nhura</i> or World of Light, where celestial beings live	<i>al-Ġannah</i> , <i>al-Firdaws</i> are two common titles for Paradise beside many others.	<i>al-Jannah</i> , <i>al-Firdaws</i> are two common titles for Paradise beside many others.
Hell	<i>Dušox</i> , the worst existence	<i>Alama d-hšuka</i> (<i>Siniauis</i>) or World of darkness where the infernal beings live	<i>al-Ġahannam</i> , <i>al-Nār</i> are two common titles for Hell beside many others.	<i>al-Jahannam</i> , <i>al-Nār</i> are two common titles for Hell beside many others.
Intermediate level between Paradise and Hell	<i>Hammistagān</i> , a neutral place between Hell and Paradise for those whose good deeds and evil deeds are equal	There is no intermediate level for those whose good deeds and evil deeds are equal, but those who deserve the World of Light but because of some sins cannot enter it are purified in Watch Houses and then enter the World of Light.	It is mentioned directly in the Qur'ān, but some scattered <i>ḥadīṣ</i> and interpretations of the Qur'ān refer to such a level on the day of judgment that is called <i>al-A'rāf</i> .	It is mentioned directly in the Qur'ān, but some scattered <i>ḥadīṣ</i> and interpretations of the Qur'ān refer to such a level on the day of judgment that is called <i>al-A'rāf</i> .
The place of souls after death (location of Paradise and Hell)	Paradise is located above the <i>Činwad puhl</i> in three stations (to the south): month station, star station and sun station, above these three is the station of the Infinite Light. Hell is under the bridge, beneath the earth (to the north)	A triploid world, the world of light above, the world of darkness at the bottom and the mixture between these two; righteous souls are in the World of Light to the north, wicked souls reside in the Realm of Darkness at the bottom to the south and those who need to be purified to enter the World of Light are wandering in the purgatories in between.	There are many indications: they can be in Paradise whose width is the earth and heavens; they can be underneath the earth; they are in Heaven (both Hell and Paradise according to the Prophet's observation of Heaven and Hell on the Night of Journey); they can be in their graves; they are may be some special places on the earth.	There are many indications: they can be in Paradise whose width is the earth and heavens; they can be underneath the earth; they are in Heaven (both Hell and Paradise according to the Prophet's observation of Heaven and Hell on the Night of Journey); they can be in their graves; they are may be some special places on the earth.
Mourning and Lamentation	Prohibited	Prohibited	Prohibited	Allowed, and considered a merit

Similar eschatological subjects

5.2 Conclusion

Ideas about death and the Afterlife are not created in a vacuum. These beliefs are formed and developed under different situations in different eras and areas. The formation of new beliefs and the development of ideas can be due to the communications and contacts between societies and cultures that make religious interactions possible.

In late ancient times, Sasanian Iran, the vast land of diversities, had brought different cultures and beliefs together. In that time, Zoroastrianism was the state religion of the Sasanians. According to some scholars, at least two forms of Zoroastrianism were active: the state religion (that is, the religion of the royal families and clergy) and the religion of the laymen. In addition to Zoroastrians, some other religious communities such as the Jews, Christians, Manichaeans, Mandaean and Buddhists were preaching and practising their own beliefs, rites and customs. This conglomerate (Sasanian society) which had made contact and interaction between these religious forms possible was inherited by the Arabs and Islam. As mentioned in the introduction, some of these beliefs originated inside Sasanian Iran and some had origins outside this society. This study surveys individual eschatological ideas in Zoroastrianism, Mandaeanism and Islam, three faith systems with different backgrounds, and introduces some of the key concepts of the eschatological ideas of these religions and the similarities between them.

Each of these faith systems was an organised set of ideas and ways related together as a whole for particular purposes. One of these ideas which was introduced apparently by Zoroastrianism in late ancient times was the idea of the 'life beyond' or 'high existence,' the continuance of life after death as recompense for good or evil 'thoughts,' 'words' and 'deeds.' In the sources of these three faith systems consulted in this study, the idea of 'life beyond' material existence and continuance of life after leaving the material world can be observed. This idea, which could be a perpetuation of the Zoroastrian idea, plays an important role in each of these religions, and has been organised to achieve different and particular purposes.

In Zoroastrianism the recompense of 'thoughts,' 'words' and 'deeds' occurs shortly after death. Souls will be interrogated near the 'divider bridge' in a trial that is held by three divine beings, and will be sent to Paradise, Hell or the intermediate stage according to their 'thoughts,' 'words' and 'deeds.' As in Zoroastrianism, in Mandaeanism the scenario of recompense ensues shortly after death, but with a different function. It is organised to achieve the dominant gnostic aim which is the purification of the soul to reach the higher stages of salvation and finally the 'world of light.' After leaving the material world, which is a combination of good and evil, the soul ascends to the 'world of light.' On the way, the soul encounters 'Watch Houses.' There, the soul will be questioned about its beliefs and performance of religious duties. The righteous soul passes through the 'Watch Houses' easily, whereas the wicked soul must atone for its evil deeds to become pure enough to enter the 'world of light.' In addition to the 'Watch Houses,' another trial is held in the 'House of Abatur' for souls before entering the Realm of Light. However, there are some souls that are so evil that they will be sent directly to the 'world of darkness'; there, they will remain till the 'End of Days' when the 'supreme God' will determine and decide their fate. According to the main teachings of Islam, the main scenario related to the interrogation of deeds comes after the Resurrection. However, the soul experiences some form of reward or punishment in the 'Afterlife' between death and Resurrection that is introduced by the term *barzakh*. When one leaves the material world, one will be interrogated in the grave by two angels and then will be shown the prototype of Paradise or Hell in this *barzakh*, which is also called the 'world of the grave.' The key eschatological ideas of these three faith systems can be summarised as follows:

- 1- In Zoroastrianism and Mandaism the key idea is that the judgment of the soul and its final fate will be determined three days after death. This means that Paradise and Hell (or the intermediate stage between them in Zoroastrianism or the filtration stage of souls in 'Watch Houses,' in Mandaism, are reached shortly after death. In these two belief systems souls do not look forward to the End of Days for the final judgment.
- 2- Although in Islam the final judgment on Resurrection Day determines the ultimate fate of the soul, the soul experiences a kind of life after leaving the material world (from death to Resurrection). In Islamic sources, this stage is introduced by the term *barzakh*. This implies that the soul will already have experienced some form of recompense during this stage before the Resurrection.
- 3- The key idea of Zoroastrian and Mandaean eschatology is that the fate of the soul after death is determined by one's moral behaviour (good thoughts, good words, good deeds) and religious actions and rituals.
- 4- The main idea of Islamic eschatology is that the fate of the soul is determined by its true religious beliefs and religious duties.

In spite of these significant differences, some remarkable similarities can be seen between these three belief systems:

- 1- The strongly 'dualistic' portrayal of the Afterlife.
- 2- The embodiment of evil and righteous deeds (*daēnā*) in the figure of a beautiful or ugly person (in Zoroastrianism it is a female figure, but in Islamic traditions it is male. In Mandaism no gender is determined).
- 3- The existence of an intermediate stage between Paradise and Hell, a basic Zoroastrian idea, which has been developed to the Islamic term *al_ A'rāf* according to some exegeses. Apparently, this role is taken by the 'Watch Houses' in Mandaism.
- 4- The negative character of the life-taker in Zoroastrianism that is mirrored by the dualistic characteristics of the Islamic (and to some extent in the Mandaean Book of John) life-taker (the demon/angel life-taker). The Mandaean life-taker is a neutral character.
- 5- The gathering of the souls in the Afterlife and the dialogue between them.
- 6- The interrogation and questioning of souls.

How can these similarities be explained in spite of the different backgrounds of these religions? It seems that the main explanation for these detailed similarities, in spite of different functions, could be 'acceptance' and 'adaptation'. This 'acceptance' and 'adaptation' can be organised into two phases: 1. the general idea and 2. the details. It seems that in late Ancient Iran, due to the contacts between Iranians, Arabs and some gnostic communities in Mesopotamia, the idea of 'high existence' or the 'life beyond' was introduced to the latter two groups. This idea was so attractive and convincing that was accepted by their thinkers. Although this Iranian idea was accepted by the Arab and gnostic thinkers (or the pre-Mandaeans, pagans of Mesopotamia, according to the theory of van Bladel), it was adapted for their own purposes. As mentioned before, while in Zoroastrianism the scene is one in which souls will be rewarded or punished and become ready for the 'freshening' of creation in Resurrection, in Mandaism, it plays the role of the refinery of souls, though the fate of very pure souls or very wicked ones is determined in this stage too. Apparently, this idea, which was introduced by some Arab thinkers to the Arab communities, appeared in the revelation of the Prophet Muhammad as a barrier

between ‘the material life’ and ‘Resurrection,’ when according to the Islamic teachings souls experience some form of recompense before the main judgment after Resurrection Day.

The second phase is the ‘acceptance’ and ‘adaptation’ of some eschatological details. This could have happened for the Mandaeans during their long history of contact with Zoroastrianism, whereas it could have happened for Muslims after the conquest of Iran by the Arabs. In that era, when most of the religious teachings were passed on through oral transmission, some ideas like the dualistic portrayal of the Afterlife, the embodiment of deeds, the existence of an intermediate stage between Paradise and Hell, the negative characteristics of the life-taker, the wandering of souls for three days and nights in the material world, the gathering of souls in the Afterlife, and the interrogation and questioning of souls in a divine trial could have been introduced to the Muslim and Mandaean communities. This could have happened in various ways. For example, in the case of Islam, it could have been brought about by some of the converts who were brought up with a Zoroastrian mental map and who, after their conversion, introduced these ideas to the Muslim communities, or it could have been as a result of the contacts between gnostic and Muslim thinkers with Zoroastrians that the former two groups became acquainted with these ideas. However, it should be mentioned that apparently the ‘acceptance’ of these ideas was done in a way such that they harmonized with the main teachings and principles of the religion playing host to them.

To clarify this ‘acceptance’ and ‘adaptation’ some examples are given. In Zoroastrianism, the embodiment of deeds ‘*daēnā*’ appears on or near the ‘Divider Bridge.’ There appears to the soul a beautiful ‘maiden’ (for the righteous soul) or a ‘hag’ (for the wicked soul) that accompanies the soul to Paradise or falls with it to Hell. According to Islamic sources, the embodiment of deeds appears as a handsome young ‘man’ or an ugly angry ‘man’ in the grave, after the interrogation of the soul, as a companion in *barzakh*. In Mandaeism the beautiful or ugly faces (with uncertain gender) appear to the soul while the soul is waiting for its companions to accompany it on the way to the Realm of Light or pass through the ‘Watch Houses.’ Another example can be the Zoroastrian idea of the intermediate stage ‘*hamēstagān*’ for those whose good and evil deeds are equal. According to the Zoroastrian sources, this stage appears in the Afterlife whereas according to some Islamic traditions, this stage will appear after the Resurrection. In Islamic sources this concept is referred to by the Qur’ānic term ‘*al_ A’rāf.*’ In Mandaeism, the intermediate stage between the ‘Realm of Light’ and the ‘Realm of Darkness’ appears differently and plays a completely different role. According to Mandaean sources, the intermediate stage consists of ‘Watch Houses’ in which souls will atone for their sins to become pure enough to enter the World of Light. Another scene is the scene of the divine ‘trial.’ In Zoroastrianism, the trail for the soul is held near the ‘Divider Bridge,’ whereas in Mandaeism the questioning takes place on the way of the soul toward the Realm of Light several times and also in the ‘Watch Houses.’ Moreover, all souls must be weighed (judged) in the ‘House of Abatur’ before entering the ‘Realm of Light.’ In Islam, the interrogation of the soul is carried out in the grave by two angels. While in Mandaeism and Zoroastrianism, since souls will be recompensed shortly after death, they will be questioned about their ‘thoughts,’ ‘words’ and ‘deeds’ shortly after leaving the material world, whereas in Islam souls in the grave will be questioned mostly about their beliefs because the main trial for ‘words,’ ‘thoughts’ and ‘deeds’ will be held after the Resurrection. The idea of the demonic Zoroastrian ‘life-taker’ is mirrored in the Mandaean and Islamic traditions and to some extent in the Mandaean concept of the demon/angel life-taker. In both Zoroastrianism and Mandaeism the ‘dualistic’ portrayal of the Afterlife, a stage full of demons and divinities, is observable. Whereas the Qur’ān mentions the angels of wrath and

angels of mercy who welcome the soul or not, in Islamic traditions this ‘dualistic’ portrayal is mirrored in the ‘angels’ and ‘Satan’ and his forces; and in Shiism, the ‘angels,’ the ‘Prophet’ and his ‘family’ are on one side and ‘Satan’ and his forces are on the other.

Apparently, both Mandaism and Islam have accepted some Iranian eschatological ideas, but in a way that, generally, they all achieve or serve the Islamic and gnostic world-view and beliefs. This system of acceptance of some new ideas helps them to maintain their ‘natural’ features. Consequently, although one can observe striking similar terms between some eschatological ideas in these three faith systems – for example in Zoroastrianism *ruwān* (soul), *Astwīhād* (the Angel of Death), *dādwārīh* (judgment), *Činwad puhl* (divider bridge), *wahišt* (Paradise), *dušox* (Hell), *garōdmān* (House of Song, Paradise) and *hammistagān* (an intermediate place between Hell and Paradise); in Islam *rūh* (soul), *barzakh* (Limbo), *al-jannah* (Paradise), *al-nār* (Hell), *al-a’rāf* (an intermediate level between Paradise and Hell); in Mandaism *ruha* (spirit), *nišimta* (soul) and *maṭarta* (purgatory), *alma d-nhura* (world of light) and *alma d-hšuka* (world of darkness) – they have different functions for different purposes.

How could this ‘acceptance’ and ‘adaptation’ have happened? With regard to the definition of the word culture (see p.21 of this study), religious ideas and concepts are an important part of the cultural capital that can be carried from one generation to the next, and from one group to the other groups (cultural transmission). The contact between generations in a society and the contact between different societies could make the cultural transmission and, as a result, the transmission of religious ideas possible over time. This could lead one to find some similarities in the categories, constructions and types of meanings that religions use in different belief systems.

With regard to the types of similarities between languages (see p. 21 of this study), one can find a variety of similarities between faith systems due to a host of factors: 1- universal properties, 2- chance, 3- borrowing or diffusion, 4- genetic retention and 5- parallel development. Amongst these factors, borrowing i.e. to adopt into one (here religion) from another, is a legitimate and natural strategy when religions have contact. However, we mentioned that there are fierce arguments against the idea of *borrowing* which generally results in the idea of religious *syncretism* or *hybridity* (see p.20 of this study).

In the case of ‘original ideas,’ this assumption cannot be true for Mandaism and to some extent for Islam. As some scholars state, Mandaism could be a gnostic interpretation of Judaism which as a result of contact with other beliefs in its neighbourhood adapted some of their ideas; or one may accept that the origin of Mandaism is to be traced back to the Mesopotamian pagans who tried to maintain pagan beliefs while adapting some of the ideas in their neighbourhood in a form of a new belief system. In any case and whatever the origin of Mandaism is, the explanations of similar features in Zoroastrianism and Mandaism as the results of a ‘common origin’ or a set of ‘original ideas’ makes no sense. Mandaism has apparently adapted some Zoroastrian ideas in addition to adapting other beliefs from other systems, but in accordance with gnostic (or pagan) dominant features. In Islam, the first and the main source, the Qur’ān, in spite of some references to the status of the people at the time of death and the direct reference to Barzakh, provides little evidence for some of these ideas (some of the eschatological details) which are mainly observable in traditions attributed to the Prophet or exegeses that were compiled after the conquest of Iran by Islam. However, it should be mentioned that one cannot call Islam a syncretic religion, because it was mainly formed on the basis of the revelations to the prophet Muhammad (Qur’ān).

As for going back to a similar root, it is obvious that neither Zoroastrianism nor Mandaeism and Islam belong to the same root. Zoroastrianism is basically an Indo-Iranian belief system, whereas Islam is an Arabian religion with roots in Abrahamic faith systems. In the case of Mandaeism, as mentioned earlier, at least two possible origins are supposed for Mandaeism: Jewish beliefs and the beliefs of the Mesopotamian pagans.

Parallel development cannot be a good explanation for the resemblances between these three faith systems either. If one accepts such a reason, it means that both Mandaeism and Islam developed similar ideas independently without any influence from a common outside idea. In the case of the term *borrowing*, however, both Mandaeism and Islamic tradition have been influenced by some Iranian eschatological ideas; the ‘borrowing’³⁸⁹ does not mean that they have copied or taken Zoroastrian ideas and used them in their religious belief systems. It is obvious that the function of these ideas in Mandaeism and Islam differs from their function in Zoroastrianism. Apparently, neither Mandaeism nor Islam borrowed the same ideas with the same functions. According to their sources, the function of these ideas in Mandaeism and Islam is not the same as in Zoroastrianism, as mentioned before. When one says that a belief system has borrowed an idea, this means that the idea has been copied or taken directly into that belief system, whereas, in this case, it does not seem so. On the basis of the sources consulted in this study, apparently both Mandaean and Arab and Muslim thinkers encountered some Iranian or Zoroastrian eschatological ideas. They adapted these ideas to suit the dominant features of their belief systems. This ‘encounter,’ ‘acceptance’ and ‘adaptation’ were all generally at the service of the world-view and beliefs of that belief system. A good example is the idea of the intermediate stage between Paradise and Hell in Islam. Apparently, Muslim and Mandaean thinkers, who were inspired by this idea in Zoroastrianism, accepted it and adapted it in accordance with Islamic and gnostic teachings. This stage was referred to by the Islamic term *al-rāf* or shown by the idea of the Houses of Detention that is assigned to the Mandaic term *Maṭarta* in Mandaeism. Another example could be the embodiment of deeds. In Zoroastrianism, thoughts, words and deeds are personified as a beautiful woman or a hag after the soul has been interrogated. Both Mandaeism and Islam, which were inspired by this idea, develop a similar idea, but we can see that in both of these religions, even the religious duties like praying, pilgrimage, fasting, baptism, etc., are personified and presented to the soul; in Islam in the grave, in Mandaeism on the way of the soul to the House of Abatur. It should be mentioned that Islam, which had some teachings about the ‘Afterlife’ rooted in the Qur’ān, accepted, adapted these new adapted ideas in the words and teachings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad.³⁹⁰ However, it is important to say that although both of these religions accepted some of these ideas, these ‘borrowed’ features were adapted to suit the ‘borrowing’ religious system. This means that in

³⁸⁹ According to the definitions, borrowing means: “to take or copy someone’s ideas, words etc and use them in your own work, language etc” or “to use (an idea, saying, etc.) that was thought up by someone else.” See <http://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/borrow>; <http://www.learnersdictionary.com/definition/borrow> (accessed April 12, 2017).

³⁹⁰ Such beliefs can be mostly found in ḥadīths, sayings that are attributed to the Prophet and his companions. Such an attribution could be because of the legitimacy and acceptability that they needed to be accepted in the core belief system. These new ideas were accepted in the core of religion in the form of sayings attributed to the founder of the religion and his early followers for more legitimacy. It should be mentioned that this study does not treat the Qur’ān as the revelation of the Prophet Muhammad, but as the words attributed to the Prophet, his companions and other later Islamic sources.

both cases, the dominant features of the religion's teachings informed the way such new concepts were understood.

Regarding all the resemblances, it can be inferred that Zoroastrianism may have influenced both Mandaean and Islamic individual eschatology. Both Mandaeism and Islam accepted some of the eschatological ideas of Zoroastrianism insofar as these influences did not contradict the basic and fundamental principles of the former two religions. It seems that the resemblances between Zoroastrianism, Mandaeism and Islam can be explained on the basis of the theory of 'Sprachbund' that refers to a geographical area with distinctive boundaries including languages from two or more language families sharing significant traits (see p. 28). Due to different factors, it can be stated that a *Religionbund* (something similar to the Sprachbund) was formed in late ancient Iran. The pre- Mandaean and Arabs were in contact for a long time (long time religious contact), and the later migrations of the Arabs to different parts of Sasanian Iran that harboured various belief systems are major factors in forming a contact region. Apparently, the Sasanian Empire was a loosely knit and externally open society, involving different types of religious groups (despite some occasional radical and extreme kinds of behaviour), which made the interaction between these groups possible. Zoroastrian eschatological ideas that had drawn the mental map of the majority of Sasanian citizens, and were transmitted from one generation to the next were exposed to other ethical and religious groups (as a result of long-time contact or rapid conquest and migration). In this ready to hand situation a Religionbund could have arisen.

To some up, it can be stated that the contact between belief systems from different backgrounds (families) in a geographical contact region could lead to the introduction of some ideas to the religions existing in that era and area. In such a model, which focuses on the contact between religions originating in, or influenced by the same regional culture, two or more religions could bear resemblances as a result of 'acceptance' and 'adapting,' while maintaining their 'natural' and 'principle' features. This is what this study calls 'Religionbund.' According to the data provided in this study, the definition of 'Religionbund' is:

"Religionbund is a geographically delimited area including religions from two or more belief systems that share a fair number of significant common traits which are reasonably distinctive."

Thus, on the basis of this theory, Zoroastrianism, Mandaeism and Islam, which were in contact for a long time in a delimited area, share a certain number of traits which are reasonably distinctive while having been adapted to the dominant features of each religion.

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